Perspectives on Children and Young People

Deevia Bhana

Gender and Childhood Sexuality in Primary School

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For Adiel and Nikhil

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Contents

Chapter 1
Making a Place for Gender and Sexuality in the Early Years of Primary Schooling

This book is an ethnography of teachers and children in grades 1 and 2, and presents arguments about why we should take gender and childhood sexuality seriously in the early years of South African primary schooling (Bhana 2002). The book builds on the work of Thorne (1993), Blaise (2005), Francis (1998), Epstein and Johnson (1998), MacNaughton (2000), Renold (2005), Paechter (2007), Robinson (2013), Kane (2013), Renold et al. (2015) and others; and engages with poststructural feminist, masculinity and sexuality studies, and queer frameworks to address important questions about the primary school as a critical site for the production of gender and sexuality. When I first entered the schools as an ethnographic researcher, teachers asked questions about the legitimacy of a study that involved six, seven, eight and nine year old children. They argued that there was nothing to know, nothing to see, nothing more to find out as children rarely knew anything about abstract matters such as gender and sexuality. These ideologies are consistent with themes running through current research about children, but "they are rarely, if ever, about children's own social and cultural worlds"; rather they are based on "dubious claims and little empirical research" about children's active agency in constructing gender and "doing, being and becoming" sexual (Renold et al. 2015: 4). "Children are children", teachers would say to me, "just kids", "still young" and "gender, doesn't matter". In so doing a discursive strategy was formed based on childhood as a stage of innocence, a natural process, with boys and girls occupying predictable gendered positions, which teachers argued, unfolded with age and stage of development. Childhood innocence was thus sustained and promoted through a complex system where children were emptied of gender and sexuality. As Renold (2005: 39) notes, "The idea that sex/sexuality is something that is peculiar to adults and adulthood or even 'older' teenage childhood is both short-sighted and dangerous." Given the existing research which raises concerns about the ways in which children's own experiences are captured by adult discourses promoting childhood as time of gender and sexual innocence, the book

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provides empirically rich data to enable theoretical engagements with the politics of gender and childhood sexuality in the early years of South African primary schooling.

What kind of childhood is being promoted when boys and girls are made to be gender innocent and sexually innocent? The book aims to discover how boys, girls and their teachers make sense of gender and sexuality. What are the everyday gendering and sexualising practices in the early years of primary schooling? How are teachers implicated in this process? How do boys and girls experience and enact gender and sexuality? What are the effects of these processes in and outside the classroom? What are the different ways that boys and girls take up to resist and challenge the gendering that surrounds them? Under what social conditions are gender and sexuality produced? In gaining insight into how teachers produce knowledge of children, gender and sexuality and how boys and girls live out their gendered and sexual selves, the book attempts to refocus on children and childhood and to think about what this means for addressing a gender progressive reform agenda in the early years of primary schooling.

Taking issue with dominant conceptualisations assuming children's gender and sexual innocence, the book questions the epistemological foundations of childhood discourses that produce innocence. In the chapters that follow, the paradox between teachers' dominant and contradictory narratives of childhood innocence and children's own conceptualisation of gender and sexuality are set in motion. The key question here is not whether gender and sexuality matter to children but how it is produced and under what circumstances. The book focuses on children's gendered and sexual cultures inside the classroom, with peers, in heterosexual games, in the playground and through boyfriend-girlfriend relationships. It examines the nuances and finely situated experiences which draw attention to hegemonic masculinity and femininity where boys and girls challenge and contest relations of power. The book focuses on the early makings of gender and sexual harassment and shows how violent gender relations are manifest even amongst very young boys and girls. Beyond the simplistic portrayal of children as unprotesting and passive recipients of childhood innocence, the book argues that the early years of primary schooling are a key site for the production and reproduction of gender and sexuality. The major theme in the book is that children are not blank innocent sheets on which gender and sexual patterns are stamped. Children are actively invested in gender and sexuality and they do so by drawing on social and cultural resources to accommodate, negotiate and contest gender and sexual relations.

I got to know the boys, girls and their teachers who populate this book, through close-focused examination of the everyday gendered and sexualised practices in four primary schools, differentiated by poverty and plenty, race and class (Bhana 2002). To this end, the book illuminates the inescapable intertwining of gender/sexuality and the social conditions in which they are produced. By focusing on the discursive production of gender and sexuality, considerable attention is given to the social/structural conditions in order to develop a key argument in this book concerning the complexity of agency, culture, poverty, violence and structural inequalities in the early years of primary schooling (Parker 2009; Farmer 2006;

Hunter 2010; Parkes 2015; Bhana 2016). Beyond dichotomies, the book explores the myriad ways in which the production of gender and sexuality is shaped by the interconnections between race, class, structural inequalities, fragile environments and the *actions* of boys and girls as they navigate their gendered and sexual selves (Renold 2005). As such it is important to locate children and to begin with where children are at, to address specificities and local variations in understanding of gender and childhood sexuality in the primary school.

The overarching aim of this book is to interrupt the silence and reiteration of gender as irrelevant and children as sexually innocent within the early years of primary schooling. The silence around South African children between the ages of 6 and 9 has serious implications in the context of male privilege, gender and sexual violence and inequalities. Starting early to address the iniquitous nature of gender and sexual relations remain an important theme throughout the book. To this end the book sets out to do the following:

- locate dominant teaching discourses and notions of childhood innocence within culturally specific contexts;
- focus upon children's negotiations of gender/sexuality among their peers, within the classroom and in the playground as key sites for interrupting dominant teaching discourses;
- demonstrate how young children's lives are socially and culturally embedded and articulate with the broader socio-political and cultural context of South African life; and
- draw upon the wide field of feminist theory underlined by sophisticated analyses of power to critique the function and the effects of the childhood innocence discourse at these sites.

In joining the broader international conversation about gender, sexuality and childhood in the primary school (Renold et al. 2015; Martin 2011; Bartholomaeus 2015), the book sets out to provide a focus from the South, nuanced by structural inequalities, material realities and social distress alongside increasing mass poverty and increasingly concentrated wealth. The study is set against the broader social context in South Africa where gender inequalities are acute and cluster around male violence and hegemonic toxic patterns of masculinities (Bhana et al. 2009). As Morrell (2001) notes, South Africa remains a patriarchal society where men from different race and class contexts are often beneficiaries of and complicit in the maintenance of male power. Not all men in South Africa are violent although violent masculinities are increasingly evident in the country (Ratele 2015).

Scholars have argued that economic conditions, migration, a history of colonialism and legacies of apartheid have created masculinities that are aggressive and prone to violence (Shefer 2014) Dominant masculinities are entwined with the risk of contracting HIV, and create particular vulnerabilities for girls and young women and in turn reinforce gender inequalities.

It is estimated that 6.4 million people are infected with HIV, which is about 12.2 % [of the total South African population] (Shisana et al. 2014), with distinct gendered patterns. In the KwaZulu-Natal province of the country (and the setting in

this book) women between the ages of 15 and 24 are five to six times more likely to be infected with the disease than men of the same age. Various studies have pointed to poverty, gender and cultural norms, age inequalities, coerced sex and women's inability to negotiate safe sex within the context of male sexual privilege and entitlements (Gibbs et al. 2014; Bhana 2015). The scourge of rape and sexual violence exacerbates women's vulnerability with 62,649 cases reported between 2013 and 2014 (South African Police Services 2014) causing Posel (2005) to raise questions about the moral fabric of South African society and the 'scandal of manhood'.

Schools have not been spared from the scourge of gender and sexual violence and everyday forms of gender inequalities (Human Rights Watch 2001) leading Bhana (2012) to argue that girls are not free in and out of the South African school. Scholars have identified schools as highly problematic where schools can be frightening places where violence, the threat of violence and hurt can derive from certain gendered practices (Human Rights Watch 2001). These practices relate to the conceptualisations of positions and power relations that are disadvantageous to girls and to boys. In schools, age hierarchies mean that boys and girls are subordinated by adults, which is exacerbated by teachers' use of corporal punishment despite being proscribed by law (Department of Education 1996). Boys' often control school space and violate girls' activities and engage in sexually harassing cultures. This is part of the larger structures in the country where male domination is both recognised and critiqued for putting women and girls at risk (Human Rights Watch 2001). This is made more complex when boys often contest adult relations of power, with evidence suggesting that boys' use of violence in schools is also directed at teachers (Morrell et al. 2012). This is made worse still when schooling does not provide boys and girls with the space and the skills to contest the taboos and the gendered practices that silence and hurt them.

In working with teachers to end gender violence at schools and address gender in HIV prevention, Bhana et al. (2009) reveal how difficult it is to promote more positive male responses towards altering gender relations where violence against women and girls is often a declaration of male power and male teachers are complicit in the expression of masculinity and violence. In light of the context of gender inequalities and violence, compelling arguments have been made about the need to focus on boys and men to transform unequal gender relations and the social arrangements that sustain unequal relations of power (Gibbs et al. 2014). The ways in which masculinities are produced and reproduced are fundamental to shaping the way in which women are perceived and thus crucial for reducing and ultimately eradicating violence (Ratele 2015; Shefer 2014).

The inadvertent effect of the context in which gender inequalities are produced, is the construction of the child as a victim of sexuality and in need of protection without also recognising children's capacities and competencies. The exclusive focus on children as being 'in need of protection' denies the recognition that children are sexual. The argument that children are sexual should not detract, however, from the heinous sexual/gendered crimes in the country where young girls in particular have been victims of sexual violence. There is of course a strong case

to be made for the continued focus on children as victims of sexuality and of girls' as especially vulnerable to rape. Under these circumstances the question of children as sexual agents, with competencies and capacities to express, feel and think sexuality becomes complex. The argument however, is that recognising children as agents rather than victims holds great potential to address the issues that matter from the perspectives of children themselves. When children are constructed as victims only, there is little possibility of engaging with them as knowers, as people who are able to have a say in their own lives. When dominant discourses render children as innocent with no gender, it is difficult to address children as capable of engaging with sexuality in ways that foreground their own experiences.

In South Africa, the focus on children under ten and the constructions of gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling has not yet been subjected to systematic close scrutiny. The book thus weaves into the established body of research as it takes heed of and pays attention to agency, structure, gender and sexuality and addresses an age group that is often overlooked. This book considers the very specific, under-interrogated and under-theorised role of gender and sexuality in South African early primary school settings in order to problematise it—and politically to advance the call made by Alloway (1995) many years ago that starting at eight to intervene might be too late. How the early years of primary schooling can support the national commitment to gender equality in South Africa and vitalise work for gender reform within is an underlying concern.

In the following section of this chapter, I explore a range of theoretical concepts that draw from an understanding of power which takes heed of agency, structure, gender and sexuality that refocuses the conceptualisation of gender and sexuality in the primary school. The chapter then introduces the school sites and the implications of doing research in four different social settings. The chapter ends with an overview of the book and a summary of each of the chapters in this book.

Theoretical Toolkit of Power: Feminist, Social/Structural Thinking

The concerns about the discursive framings of children as lacking agency resulting in the silencing of gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling, led to the strategic use of theory in this book. The book uses an eclectic assemblage of ideas, concepts and theorisings in relation to power. In this sense the book draws on a range of scholarship on gender, sexuality and complex understandings of power offered by social constructionists, poststructural feminists—such as Renold (2005) and MacNaughton (2000)—sexuality and queer theorisings (Parker 2009; Butler 1990); masculinity studies (Connell 1995) and structural violence (Farmer 2004). I draw on this theoretical 'toolkit' as it offers a multidimensional understanding of power and helps to understand the micro-macro mediation of gender and sexuality.

Like Anyon (2009: 4) I deploy a "theoretical arsenal of powerful concepts" to expose how children capture and are captured by simplistic assumptions of childhood, the paradox and contradictions in teaching discourses and children's active agency as gendered and sexual beings. The 'theoretical arsenal' permits an understanding of the subjects in this study within and between micro and macro processes as the book connects teachers', boys' and girls' discursive strategies within the broader context and by addressing 'structural violence', race, class and sexuality (Farmer 2004). Identities and discourses are produced, appropriated and challenged within early primary schooling sites as daily lived experiences within specific historical contexts. These multidimensional modalities of power are put to work as a way of understanding the subjects in this study.

A key concept is this book is childhood. Social constructionists, drawing from the sociology of childhood studies, argue that childhood is a social category; it is never fixed, always fluid, changing and dynamic (James et al. 1998). Social constructionists suggest that children are active agents; and their agency is reflective of, not determined by, their social contexts (Bhana 2016). Instead of understanding childhood through discourses of sexual innocence, social constructionists suggest that children are capable and competent social actors (Renold 2005). As Butler (1990) notes gender and sexuality is not what you have but what you do through everyday practices. Doing gender is not a simple matter but a highly complex and contradictory process, especially in childhood when rigid notions of masculinity and femininity are used to define and differentiate boys from girls (Keddie 2003; Renold et al. 2015).

Of significance to this book, is the move beyond essentialist and sex-role explanatory frameworks that assume a simplistic, fixed biological characteristic in boys and girls as natural subjects who occupy predictable power positions and a static conceptualisation of childhood. The suggestion that childhood is socially constructed and that children can occupy a range of subject positions rather than static is useful. If boys and girls are not fixed, but active and resist what possibilities does this hold for the early years of primary schools to become the possible sites for the development and encouragement of resistance for boys and girls? I attempt to show why teachers hold on to certain meaning, how boys and girls act in the ways that they do and what sexual and gendered messages they give and are given. I ally myself with Thorne (1993: 4–5) in trying to bring "children into the center of sociological and feminist thought" (4) in ways that "are grounded in the concept of possibility".

My intention in the book is not to rehearse the theoretical literature and debates around children, childhood, sexuality, agency, and structural violence because they already exist (Bhana 2016). It book builds on scholarship in the west which rejects the taken for granted assumptions of childhood innocence. The most recent work by Renold et al. (2015), *Children, Sexuality and Sexualisation* and Robinson (2013), *Innocence, Knowledge and the Construction of Childhood*, provide substantial theoretical framings in relation to sexual innocence and the pervasiveness of heterosexuality as children give meaning to their gendered selves. In the US, Kane's (2013) *Rethinking gender and sexuality in childhood*, argues for a

reconceptualisation of gender and sexuality in the early years. *Theorising Sexuality* by Jackson and Scott (2010) also provide significant theoretical forays into childhood. From the UK Renold's (2005) *Girls, boys and junior sexualities* increases our knowledge of childhood sexuality through empirically driven theorising about boys and girls. Combined, the established work provides a rich basis to underscore the importance of gender and childhood sexuality. This uses feminist poststructural perspectives, and queer theorising within the broad ambit of the 'new' sociology of childhood studies (which argues for children's agency whilst complexly situated within a highly regulatory environment where children are often seen as innocent and without power and capabilities to act on their situations). Earlier work too, has shaped the field of gender, childhood sexuality and schooling. In 1998 Epstein and Johnson made important claims about the schooling of sexualities and such arguments have pervaded the field about the policing of gender and sexuality and the idea that sexuality is both 'everywhere and nowhere'. Tobin (1997) has been important in setting the stage for putting sexuality in childhood studies whilst showing both regulation and the transgression of sexuality in childhood. The established body of research is helpful in developing the argument that childhood and sexuality are not inimical to the actual lives and everyday lives of children however gender and sexuality are highly regulated, policed and the borders of acceptable childhood create widespread forms of sexual stigmatisation as Thorne (1993) in her classic book *Gender Play* has illustrated. Boys and girls weave into these relations of power whilst transgressing established gender and sexual norms. At the same time teachers create and reproduce gendered ideologies rooted in outmoded understandings of child development, socialisation and gender roles which make gender (and sexuality) a frivolous concern in childhood as MacNaughton (2000) and Tobin (1997) suggest. One of the central aims of this book is to situate gender and sexuality at the centre of how we conceptualise and theorise children's agency in and approach to everyday life in primary schools whilst demonstrating the regulation and boundaries through which teaching discourses operate. Moreover, by paying attention to teachers and children in diverse primary school settings, the book shows how race, class, gender and sexuality cut through gendered discourses and practises that have effects for how masculinities and femininities are expressed setting limits to children's agency.

Rethinking Sex/Gender Models: Feminist Poststructuralism

How do we begin to understand the differences between boys and girls especially when differences are assumed to be based on biology and sex-role socialisation rather than historically constituted? The taken-for-granted assumptions range from childhood innocence, to children are too young to know, through gender and sexuality do not matter, to theories of biological determinism, sex-role socialisation and developmental appropriate practice (DAP) which see learning in terms of ages and stages of development (MacNaughton 2000; Paechter 2007; Connell 2012;

Robinson 2013; Renold et al. 2015). These understandings serve to reproduce the idea that children are separate from the socio-cultural context in which they live and are thus separate from gender, race, class or power that is part of the context. In particular, reliance on these theories promotes the idea that children are blank sheets on which gender patterns are stamped. Within these frames children are constructed as powerless, unprotesting and passive recipients of knowledge (Epstein and Johnson 1998; MacNaughton 2000). Tobin (1997) suggests that dominant discourses have banished sexuality from their vocabulary. Within gender development and sex role socialisation power is constructed as repressive. With development theory children develop in stages so that children at age seven or eight are considered less developed. Sex-role socialisation assumes that children do not have the competence to make meaning of their lives but are socialised by others, including their parents as adults who have power over them. The overall assumption is that children in the early years of growth do not possess the competence to make sense of their behaviour. Power is made to be negative. Adults are considered to have power over children and ultimately shape who children become. Biology and sex-role socialisation are simple reproductionist theories based on categorical thinking which have focused on what the dominant group does to the subordinated group or what men do to women (Connell 2012). This perspective has tended to stress external social structures and the accompanying one-dimensional view of power as repressive. The explanatory trope in this argument slides from domination to freedom involving oppressive social forces versus the human agent. This kind of analysis is based on the notion that power represses, blocks and divides and from which the individual has to escape. The political practices are thus determined by releasing the human agent from the chains of oppressive structures.

A persuasive argument has been made against multiple oversimplified theories which take for granted the definitions of masculinity and femininity, and which assume that they are universal, unchanging and ahistorical categories (Ghaill 1994: 4) and which cannot explain the complexity of everyday lived experience and its incapacity to handle issues around power. Rather, the school as a site that deploys specific gendered practices and engages with constructions of masculinity and femininity is more conflictual and contradictory than essentialist models of the school have tended to suggest. Understanding the complexity and the dynamism of power is key. In recognising primary schools as sites of historically varying contradictions that actively construct gender identities, Thorne (1993: 199) argues against the ideas of gender as static and ahistorical, postulating "power is central to the social relations of gender". Gender power in primary school sites is thus fluid and changing, which essentialist models tend to discount.

In moving beyond the simple interpretations of power, feminist poststructural theories drawing from Foucault (1980) have emphasised that power is dynamic. Rather than offering a static version of power, poststructural theories emphasise complex causality. As far as essentialist versions of gender are concerned, the binary construction of boy or girl remains privileging one over the other. For example it is argued from essentialist standpoints that gender is about what boys do to girls. In other words what underlies a political practice is premised on breaking

free from the shackles of male oppression and repression. In this instance boys are perceived to have power. The lack of power was attributed to socialisation that begins in the family and is reinforced in schools. Sex role socialisation and gender development theories based on a delayed discourse of age and stage of growth, understand gender in terms of what society does to children, what parents do to children or what teachers do to children. In this instance children are constructed as passive recipients of received knowledge in which power also oppresses. There is increasingly a mounting critique against these explanations of behaviour (Connell 2012). Such approaches assume that definitions of masculinity and femininity are unchanging, universal and unitary. Power is fixed. Deterministic arguments assume that people become who they are because of socialisation. That is, society has power over people. Adults (parents and teachers) have power over children and that boys have power over girls because of socialisation or biology. This way of theorising leads to the perception that boys and girls cannot decide how to do their gender. Children according to this schema of thinking do whatever they are told as unprotesting blank sheets. Such a position creates a view that individuals are passive to the social messages around them (Davies 1989).

There are many flaws in the idea that roles are simply reproduced. The ideas of resistance and change in social relationships cannot be accounted for by theories positing power as a fixed entity. Complex approaches to power have meant that people are not passive recipients of socialisation, nor biologically fixed and psychologically determined. People actively construct and impact upon the world shaping their lives and others. To construe gender as essentialist or biological is to deny the relations between people as being in flux, changing and open to change. Social relations are thus always power relations: masculinity and femininity are relational concepts that have meaning in relation to each other (Connell 1995). Connell (1987) concludes that socialisation and sex role theories are flawed because they do not account for the changes in gender relations. In asking the question about how gender and sexuality is produced in the early years of primary schooling, I shift attention from the idea that power is oppressive to how power is exercised in specific institutional contexts. A central focus is how teachers, boys, and girls, are positioned and position themselves in these early schooling contexts.

Feminist poststructuralism, as a loose framework, has provided fresh ways of thinking about gender identity and children, which broaden the existing frameworks that guide thinking about children and gender (Davies 1989; Renold 2005) thereby acting as a corrective to the multiple oversimplifications of common sense theories. Poststructuralist perspectives argue that a person cannot exist outside the social and is therefore, always socially constructed. People cannot interact with others independently of the social world in which they live. Poststructuralist thinking is concerned loosely with discourse, power, meanings (knowledge) and identity. Meaning is influenced by power and power influences meaning. Identities are thus never fixed but are constantly produced. Identity is not transparent and simplistic but has to be constantly won in the interplay of power, meanings, culture and history (Ghaill 1994).

In the next part of this section I provide details of important concepts to illustrate the complex ways in which the subjects in this book position themselves. I begin with discourse. Foucault (1977) has argued that there is nothing fixed about the subject: instead people are positioned and position others in discourse. Discourse interlocks with meanings, power and identity. Burman (1994) refers to discourse as a socially organised framework that defines the limits of what can be said and done.

Discourses are those:

> … practices, that systematically form the objects of which they speak … Discourses are not about objects; they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention (Foucault 1977: 49).

"How does discourse function? Where is it to be found? How does it get produced and regulated? What are its social effects? How does it exist?" (Bové 1990: 54). Once a discourse becomes 'normal' it is difficult to think and act outside it. Within the rules of a discourse, it makes sense to say only certain things, limiting what can be said and done. Discourses enable particular groups of people to exercise power in ways that benefit them (Weedon 1997). For example, the common sense assumption that 'boys will be boys' means that violence, aggression, competition are naturalised and its harmful effects for others are concealed because of the power that is attached to these meanings. Put another way, discourses are the "viewpoints and positions from which people speak and the power relations that these allow and presuppose" (Best and Kellner 1991: 26). Power is thus embedded in discourse because of the ability to construct people in particular ways. Discourses point to particular ways of being normal and right (Davies 1993). Boys will be boys, for example, assumes and naturalises boys' violence and aggression. Discourses thus constitute particular ways of *getting gender right*. What is right and normal is socially constituted and produced in discourse. Discourses are thus constitutive of people and their actions. Rarely do we align children and sexuality. This is because our dominant adult discourses attach power to childhood innocence and at the same time to adults. Boys and girls in schools operate from positions of subordination in relation to age, race, language and ability. But the construction of childhood innocence may not align so comfortably with children's lived everyday gender (and sexual) experiences. There are strong contradictions about how to be a male or female, which inhibit and enable the potential for redefinition (Epstein and Johnson 1998). Identity is actively constructed. This means that identities are produced as people interact. They do so not in linear ways but engage with social circumstances to produce and reproduce identities. Active construction means that certain positions are taken up and others not. These ideas incorporate the notions of contradiction and agency. People are passively positioned in certain discourses but can simultaneously be positioned as active in other discourses.

In order to show the complexity of living gender, I use the idea of dominant discourses to show how ideas have currency amongst adult teacher narratives forming a regime of truth about children. Specific discourses refer to the ways in which race, class, culture, gender and sexuality make a difference to, and contradict, dominant discourses. Momentary discourses refer to the episodic and shifting

means as children make gender and sexuality. I constitute children's subjective worlds as momentary discourses in/through which knowledge, power and identity are associated. In the interplay between domination and freedom there are moments that are modified, mobile, not permanent. These are the moments when children articulate in ways that suggest the instability and fragility of fixed ways of thinking about children in the making of gender (and sexuality). These are powerful moments that are fluid, shifting and episodic. I call them momentary discourses because they emerge as quickly as they disappear. Significantly the momentary discourses shake the habitual ways of thinking about children and gender but can at the same time reinforce it. Children actively construct their gendered identities. For boys and girls in this study, the momentary discourses mean understanding what they think, what positions they take up, how they do so and evaluating their choices. It also means identifying the discourses that position them in certain ways and not others. Moreover, it means that there are positions available that can be taken up which may not be harmful to those experiencing gender inequalities. Research has demonstrated that children can and do take up positions within a context of constraint and possibility (Renold et al. 2015; Robinson 2013; Kane 2013). For example Epstein (1993: 130) in her study of race, shows how "very young children (under the age of seven) can engage with difficult issues and reflect on their own feelings and reactions, provided they are given the appropriate opportunities, encouragement and scaffolding to do so." Thus meanings, power and identity are made in/through discourse. Power relations are always maintained and disrupted in discourse.

The next term discussed is power. Foucault (1980: 98) maintains that power is:

> Never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as commodity or a piece of wealth. Power is exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation.

We may be powerless in an instance while positioning ourselves (or being positioned) as powerful in another discourse. Power does not come from above nor is it a [form of] violence. Foucault points out that power is a complex strategy. In this sense Foucault argues that power is not reducible to physiological capabilities or labour. According to Foucault, power is not something that can be "acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away; power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations" (Foucault 1978: 94). Power is dynamic, transient, unstable and tense. A state of domination exists for example when a child is subject to the arbitrary and unnecessary authority of a teacher but power can be productive. Power is a strategic game. Foucault (1978: 129) captures this in the following way:

> To exercise power over another, in a sort of open strategic game, where things can be reversed, that is not evil.

What is important then is to analyse relations of power in order to learn what is being produced; reversible strategic games. The idea that power is not possessed but exercised in ways that produce and reproduce inequalities in the interplay of shifting and mobile relations appealed to me and best explained what I saw and observed in schools. Power is never stable but in flux:

> Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault 1978: 93).

Everyone is ensnared by power but we can modify its grip in specific conditions and as a strategy. The repudiation of a fixed identity means that gender is not fixed but people are positioned in discourse. There are thus clear challenges to essentialist and deterministic accounts of gender. There is no essential male or female; instead the dominant discourses of gender position all people as male or female and provide the narratives about our practices as men and women. In this sense the possibility of creating alternative discourse exists. There are alternate choices available to be different from the right or dominant ways of being boy or girl. They offer the individual different modes of subjectivity. Subjectivity describes who we are and how we understand ourselves consciously and unconsciously:

> By 'subjectivity' we mean here the particular ways in which a person gives meaning to themselves, others, and the world. Subjectivity is largely the product of discursive networks which organize and systematize social and cultural practice (Davies and Banks 1995: 46).

However, our choices about who to become, how to give meaning to our lives and others, are shaped by the political strength of discourses. How we live our everyday lives, our social-cultural relations within our world, depends on a range of discourses, the extent to which we have access to them and their political strength (Weedon 1997). There are always contradictory discourses about who to become but because some discourses have more political strength than others, they dominate and put pressure on us to adopt the dominant version. The dominant ideas of how to get gender right are oppressive. They are oppressive because they are invested with power, involving unequal relations that produce and reproduce borders (Steinberg et al. 1997). Steinberg et al. (ibid. 12) claim:

> In gender relations it is not only the relations of power between men and women that are the problem; it is also the way in which masculinities and femininities are constructed as separated categories that describe and circumscribe individual persons.

Against the idea that masculinity and femininity are static constructs is the idea that every relation is one of change, flux and instability. The borders between masculinity and femininity can be reproduced but can change and are open to change. This supports the idea that the borders are fragile and fluid, opening and closing to change because they are "points of danger" (Steinberg et al. 1997: 14). For example, contrary to essentialist arguments, being a boy and a girl is not fixed. Slip ups can and do occur but they are actively policed through recourse to misogyny and homophobia. This places pressure on people to get gender right by adopting 'normal' patterns of conduct.

An understanding of m*asculinities* is crucial to this book, as earlier sections of this chapter have shown. Drawing from Connell, masculinities are multiple. There is not just one pattern of conduct in all times and places. In different contexts masculinities vary according to different cultures and different periods of history (Connell 1995) and masculinity changes over time. There are different patterns of masculinity, different ways of being a boy. These differences relate to the interlocking dimensions of race, class and sexuality (Ghaill 1994). More than one kind of masculinity can be found in a given cultural institution. These differences mean differential access to power, practices of power and effects of power (Haywood and Ghaill 2001). There are definite relationships between the different kinds of masculinities. Differences depend on categories of hierarchies, inclusion and exclusion. Masculine and feminine identities exist in relation to each other. The gender processes propose masculine and feminine identities as distinct and then privileges a hegemonic form of masculinity in relation to femininities and other types of masculinities. In contemporary society, one pattern of hegemonic masculinity is most respected. The patterns of conduct that are associated with hegemonic masculinity are usually authoritative, aggressive, heterosexual, physically brave, sporty and competitive (Connell 1995). This hegemonic masculinity is more respected than other patterns. It is celebrated, presented as an ideal and invested with power. The important point is that different forms of masculinity exist together and the hegemonic form has to be constantly struggled for and is subject to challenge. Hegemonic masculinity can be quiet and implicit but it can also be violent, as in the case of racist or homophobic violence.

Constructions of gender, masculinity and femininity are inextricably linked to sexuality. Sexuality is fully social and goes beyond biological definitions to include cultural and historical processes that shape and are shaped by subjects (Parker 2009). In the social construction of sexuality, masculinity and femininity are structured in relations of power that are underpinned by gender. The dominant assumption of masculinity and femininity are based on heterosexual relations. Using the idea that gender is a performance serving the interests of heterosexuality, Butler (1990: 33) argues that gender is a "repeated stylization, a set of repeated acts." These ideas of identity and sexuality are also broadly understood as queer theory. What is interesting about queer theory for this book is that it involves the constant questioning about the 'normal' identity of children as they struggle to get their identity right. Queer theorising questions the normal ways of getting gender right including the heterosexual compulsion and the norms attached to the category boy and girl, best summed up in the following way:

> Queer theory is linked to a form of politics which deliberately seek to break down the fixed boundaries between hetero/homo, gender and other binaries, to multiply sexual categories and ultimately to dissolve them, insisting that 'queer' itself is not some bounded community, or not only so, but is everywhere (Steinberg et al. 1997: 9).

The important idea here is the questioning of fixed categories and the idea of power as not unidirectional, but everywhere. Whilst constant questioning and

critiquing of sexual (and gender) boundaries are important they must also take into account social and cultural processes.

In the final part of this section on theory, I draw attention to the concept of structural violence in order to understand the production of power within the context in which it operates. Galtung's (1969: 168) developed the notion of structural violence to illustrate "the systematic constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures". In this book an understanding of boys, girls and sexuality demands attention to the material, social and cultural conditions which impact on the production of identity. Issues of race, class, gender and sexuality that constitute cultural dynamics are significant. Thus, whilst I have focused on discourse, power, gender and sexuality as part of the normalising processes with power constructed as productive, it is important to recognise the social location and the material realities as they impact on identity and create the conditions for power relations (Bhana 2016). As noted earlier in this chapter the social and economic inequalities in South Africa are deep and wide. The legacies of apartheid have created intimate links between race and class. The tragedy in South Africa relates to the systematic structural inequalities where the African poor, albeit with changes since the end of apartheid, remain the majority. These structural inequalities weigh heavily on the experience of South African children.

Extending Galtung's (1969) notion of structural violence, Farmer (1996) draws attention to people's suffering and restricted agency under the brutal structural conditions within the political economy. Farmer (2004) argues that life choices are structured and constrained by race, class and gender inequalities and widening poverty increases the burden on the poor. Whilst I am critical of reductionist and determinist accounts of children's agency, Farmer (1996, 2004) suggests there is a need to keep the materiality of everyday life in tension with what people can do. Farmer refers to the 'materiality of the social' to underscore the importance of and deep connection between social life and materiality where the adverse outcomes of structural inequalities—including violence, terror and death—have a "final common pathway" in the material. A dynamic tension exists between the materiality of everyday schooling and children's exploration, experience and expression of gender and sexuality.

What Farmer's theorising implies for this book is that childhood under particular social conditions is inimical to agency and hostile to their well-being. For those living on the edge of the poverty, the contextual dimensions provide limited opportunities. Against a deterministic assessment of boys, girls and their agency, I argue with others that gender and sexuality can only be understood in relation to its social context (Weeks 1986). However, to erode children of agency under monolithic accounts of states of domination do not address nuanced ways in which agency is developed and thwarted and fails to consider the multiple dimensions of power, discourse and the active ways in which agency is enacted even in the most extreme setting. Instead of understanding agency as determined exclusively by the materiality of the social, the understanding of gender and sexuality as a negotiated process whilst located in and under conditions of abject poverty is important. Moreover, it is indeed imperative in South Africa to challenge conceptions of the

poor as docile and weak and pathetic victims of structure. This is made more complex by the association of race and class where the majority of the poor remain African. Thus as Robinson (2013) and others (Renold et al. 2015) argue, children do make choices but these choices are made under and within specific social and cultural processes. Agency and vulnerability must be considered in tandem with each other, which permits an understanding of children as active whilst limited and shaped by broader social and cultural conditions in which they operate power (Parker 2009).

Researching Gender and Sexuality in the Four School Multi-sited Ethnography

Contextualising the Schools

The four schools in which the teachers and children are located are in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa in the greater Durban area. The legacies of colonialism and apartheid have impacted upon the social/racial landscape. Whilst *isiZulu* remains the language of the majority of African people in the province, English and the legacies of British colonial symbols and cultural values remain prominent including the widespread use of English amongst the different racial groups. In many instances English is the mother tongue of the white minority, Indians and coloured people. In the colonial world, though, the word 'Zulu' was used to categorise all black people in the province. Under apartheid the racial superiority assumed by the colonialists was legalised. Race continues to remain salient in South Africa. The racial categories of apartheid—African, Indian, white and coloured (mixed race)—are still in use and these identities are used to identify people in the country especially in the context of social redress. The term Indian derives from the indentured migrant labourers who arrived in the country in the 1860s to work on the sugar cane farms of Natal. (There were also so-called 'passenger Indians' who paid their own fare and arrived as British subjects. Whereas the indentured labour population was largely concentrated in Natal the others migrated inland, usually as traders and shop owners. Interestingly the Indian population who arrived around 1860 outnumbered the White population by 1904.) Under the Group Areas Act (1950), different residential, social and livings spaces were created separating the races from each other. The impact of colonisation and apartheid has meant fractured, uneven patterns of living that provided fertile ground for the creation and maintenance of ethnic and racial identities and hierarchical systems based on race. Historically it is the rural African population who live in harsh conditions with minimal access to resources. Migrant labour created the context where Africans were limited to working class positions in the cities. African townships that were close to cities were engineered by apartheid to keep Africans separate, apart and economically impoverished. The provision of schooling

continues to reflect this differentiation and is historical. White schooling reflects the material and resources of privilege with Indians, coloured and African resources allocated based on racial hierarchies. Schools are also divided according to fee paying and non-fee paying. Historically schools regarded as well resourced are fee paying, including many former Indian and white schools, whereas township and rural African school are fee-exempt. Schools in poor African contexts also rely on state funding for school nutrition and do not have regular access to cleaners, which means it becomes incumbent upon children to ensure the cleanliness of the school. It is thus not incidental that race and class overlap to the extent that they do. Despite major efforts the country since the end of apartheid in 1994 to address poverty and racial inequalities, the schools albeit with changes, continue to reflect class discrepancies.

The Schools and Participants

The four schools reflect the race and class dimensions that are the product of historical processes. The research sample was purposive and comprises one former white school with a majority white population from a middle to upper income context (*Westridge*); one former Indian lower middle income school with a majority Indian population including white and African (*Umhlatuzana*); one former poor working class all-African township school (*KwaDabeka*) and one poor impoverished all-African rural school about an hour away from Durban (*Umbumbulu*)—all pseudonyms. Altogether I visited 12 classrooms and 12 female teachers in each of these classrooms in grade 1 and 2—four in *Westridge* (Mrs A, B, C and D) with an approximate class size of 28, two in *Umhlatuzana (*Mrs E and F) and approximately 36 children in each class, three in *KwaDabeka* (Mrs G, H and I) with an average class size of 40 and three in *Umbumbulu* (Mrs J, K and L) with almost 36 children in each class. Whilst the schools are highly differentiated in race and class terms, my intention is not to set the schools up against each other but to explore how power was produced across the school sites.

Study Details

The aim of this section is to justify the general methodological approach that has been utilised in this study, which is shaped by the concerns and discussions that have been raised in the text thus far. My research favoured a methodological approach that provided the means through which the empirical and theoretical data could focus on power relations and capture the multi-sited school contexts in terms of race and class. The research involved just over a year study of boys, girls and

teachers. My investigation was ethnographic, using observations and unstructured interviews and conversations. The methodological multi-sited focus was selected in order to show how different positions of power are lived by boys and girls and how teachers are implicated in this. In order to understand this I had to place myself inside schools. My methodologies attempt to research what usually happens in practice. I wanted to come as close as possible to what was usually happening and what was usually being constructed through everyday classroom/playground activities. The schools and the subjects in this book are not representative of schooling contexts in Durban or the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I focus on how subjects approach and practise their lives, with gendered/sexual meanings and how meanings reflect their experiences. I spoke to teachers and made conversation with children and observed them in their everyday ordinary worlds. The advantage of ethnography is that children's experiences, like adults, are taken seriously and I was able to listen to what they say. My enquiry makes power central and is close to the following understanding of ethnography:

> … ethnography and the subject are organized in relations; thus, neither can be secured in advance of such relations … each ethnographic project is necessarily different from the next because the participants and their cultures are different (St. Pierre 1997: 269).

Observing in Schools

In schools I was an observer jotting down notes throughout the day. As the research commenced I noticed that several teachers were a little apprehensive about what I was doing. I had to make them understand that I was documenting incidents that were specific to the study. Initially I showed teachers what I was writing down and eventually many teachers became less concerned about the note taking. However, curiosity about note taking was a greater challenge with young children. I would move from group to group in the classrooms and during the initial stages of the research, young children were always curious about what I wrote, why I wrote and the pace at which I wrote. Occasionally, I would allow children to look through what I had written and then they became curious about cursive writing, as well as the difficulty in comprehending cursive writing. During the initial stages of the research I noted children's real names but as they peeped into my notebook they would express surprise to see their names. I always assured them that I would not reveal their names or tell their stories to the teacher. Of course, their concern was not about the broader debate around confidentiality and ethical considerations in research. It was not long before my note taking was taken for granted by both teachers and children. In fact as the research proceeded children were delighted to see their names in my notebook. As I questioned one child in a group others would try to interrupt and ask that their stories also be included in the notebook.

Interviews with Teachers

The main reason for using interviews was to provide a means through which the fluidity and contingency of discourses could be explored. Through using such an instrument it was possible that specific knowledge about teachers could be produced. In this way, a basis could be established for identifying teachers' gendered constructions. Thus, the data produced was used to explore how teachers know, live and teach gender in early schooling and enabled an examination of the manner in which they negotiated and produced particular relations of power (Foucault 1980). My relationship with teachers was based initially on establishing social relations with them. I found this strategy useful in developing relations with teachers rather than imposing upon them. Here the approach is premised on *how* gendered practices are manifested in teacher discourses. During the year that I produced the data I conducted interviews with teachers in their classrooms or made conversations with them during the short breaks between lessons and in the staff room. Most of the interviews with the teachers were audiotaped, although the tape recorder did prove to be a hindrance during specific moments when situations arose in the classroom. I took down notes and found this to be a very effective strategy. At times some teachers reminded me of their desire for anonymity. The informal issues that I raised with the teachers probed:

- gender-related issues pertaining to masculinity and femininity in early schooling;
- their understanding of the gender and their gendered practices/discourses; and
- their understanding of children's gendered lives.

The questions were unstructured and although I had a vague sense of the questions I was asking, this was dependent on the flow of conversation, and the power relations through which these relationships were invested. Many teachers were quite happy to allow the use of real names instead of pseudonyms. I have chosen rather to maintain the anonymity of the teachers and all children in this study.

Conversations with Children

My conversations with children were designed to prompt girls and boys to discuss aspects of their lives. My intent was to explore the enactment of gender/sexuality as they occurred in the everyday world of early schooling in four contextually specific schools. In my interactions with children I wanted to document the way in which power positions are lived in early schooling. I went into the classrooms of the 12 teachers in four race, class and geographically specific schools. I sat with children inside and outside the classroom observed and listened to what they said. I wrote down what they said. I also wrote how I felt about children either in the classroom

or when I went back to my desk. Like Thorne (1993), I too roamed around the four schools and the playgrounds during breaks. I used a video-recorder to help me make inventories of each school. This helped me to gain a broad perspective on all four schools. I did not have a regular place, but sat wherever a seat was available especially if someone was absent. Sometimes I moved available seats around to sit with children in their groups. This meant that when I sat with children in all the schools I sat with groups of children, catching snatches of their conversations and trying not to disturb them too much, asking questions based on my gender inquiry and listening and writing as fast as I could. I made conversations with girls and boys, boys and boys and girls and girls in the group. The number of girls and boys in each group differed in each class and varied according to the number of boys and girls in the class. In some classes there were more boys and this explained the existence of an all-boys group. This was the most appropriate way to observe and analyse the power constructions in children's interactions and their group constructions of gender. When I went inside the classrooms, as an ethnographer I had a vague sense of the questions I would ask. The questions were largely spontaneous and dependent on the context. For example I tried to make conversation based on questions like:

- What are you doing in the playground today?
- What do you like doing best?
- Do you like girls/boys?
- Do you like pink?
- Do you think girls and boys are different?
- Who do you play with? Why?
- Do you play with girls/boys Why?
- Are you working with the boys/girls?
- Who is your friend?
- Sometimes I fitted the gender conversation into the lesson. For example if the children had talked about breakfast, I would ask: "Who makes your breakfast?"
- Why do you hit each other?

This method of chatting and making conversations provided a means of recording children's everyday interactions and conversations. The questions were intended to provoke discussion among the children. I was interested in the dynamics and power positionings constructed by the children with girls and girls, girls and boys and boys and boys. The chatting and conversations happened as children in the groups were getting on with their everyday school lives. I captured the fleeting moments in the groups, and the questions enabled and encouraged a chatty atmosphere. Thorne (1993: 15) refers to the ephemeral and fleeting nature of children's interactions as those of "bumblebees". It is for this reason that I name children's discourses as momentary, and not interviews but chats and conversations. The fleeting conversations related to the children's constructions of gender (and sexuality) but occurred within the overall asymmetrical relations of power. In my conversations with them I probed children's answers and often asked them to

explain the reasoning behind their responses. There are many benefits to having chatty conversational like talks with children rather than proceeding in a detached manner through a list of questions. The flow of the conversations was interrupted not by detached questioning but as children got on with the business of schooling and as teachers asked for their attention and getting on with Zulu, English, numeracy, literacy, drawing, colouring, counting with the abacus or tin caps, reading, writing, teasing, pulling, fighting, laughing, punching and mocking each other or walking about in the classroom. In the playground I sat and observed children. Sometimes I would engage in conversations with children learning about gender in the context of their interactions. In the playground the ephemeral [nature?] and quickness of children's movement was evident in their games, clapping and the girls' singing rhythmic tunes.

Structure of the Book

In this book I want to show how teachers understand children, gender and sexuality; how boys and girls take up their gendered/sexual positions and the effects of this; and to pose ways in which we can try to challenge the dominant way of understanding by elevating alternative, less discriminatory ways of being. To construct such challenges, there is a need to understand what teachers' and children's ways of being, seeing and doing are, the norms and the ideas and patterns of conduct which are set out in getting identity right. Chapters 2 and 3 provide dominant understanding teaching discourses that seek to make gender and sexuality an invisible category in children's lives. Chapters 4 and 5 provide contextually specific understandings of teaching discourses as it is played out at *Westridge* and *Umbumbulu*. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 provide a specific focus on *KwaDabeka* and the entwining of gender, sexuality and structural violence. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are devoted to children's construction[s?] of gender and sexuality. I use the approach of power described in this chapter to generate questions about what happens, how it happens, and to provide an understanding of it whilst revealing the contradictions and the paradox of childhood as a state of innocence.

In returning to the data from which this book arises, I draw from Burawoy (1998) in the reflexive approach to science. Instead of constructing knowledge as static and produced at a particular time and space, Burawoy (1998: 7) argues that there are a variety of ways to reach explanations of empirical data that connects the "present to the past in anticipation of the future". In justifying the reflexive understanding of knowledge Burawoy leaps over space and time, arguing that mundane issues have effects for grand historical themes not fixed in time. Similarly, by revisiting the data, this book 'extends out' showing how dominant narratives of childhood are rendered untenable from the point of view of children leaping into the past and illustrating the significance of the present in the grand narrative of childhood sexual/gender innocence and the wider social context in South Africa.

Chapter 2 focuses on hegemonic teaching discourses as it identifies strategies that seek to maintain childhood as a sexual/gender free political arena whilst naturalising differences between boys and girls and their teachers. These shared teaching patterns coalesce to enforce the normalisation of childhood innocence and children's fixed categorisation along gender lines. Chapter 3 continues with this dominant discourse focusing on teachers as mothers but shows how gender is negotiated and challenged by boys and girls. Combined, the discourses identified in Chaps. 2 and 3, are conservative and hegemonic and work against the articulation and practice of gender equality.

Chapter 4 gives attention to Mrs C at *Westridge Primary* and focuses on the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity through discussion and analysis of discourses underpinned by "boys will be boys". Key to this process is the distance created between masculinity and femininity, which is reflective of the deeply entrenched discursive construction of femininity as subordinate. I provide examples of how boys and girls negotiate masculinity and accommodate versions of competitiveness and academic prowess as imperative to masculine strength and power. Chapter 5 shows how culture, materiality and unequal gender relations produce inequalities at *Umbumbulu School*. Teaching discourses lock into these processes, in order to explain women and girls' relative subordination within the broader social and cultural context. Amidst the social and cultural dynamics in rural *Umbumbulu*, the teachers, also point to prospects for change. In doing so, teachers highlight their agency in intervention strategies in the early years of rural schooling.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 focus on *KwaDabeka School*. It begins with teachers' understandings of suffering and structural inequalities in Chap. 6 pointing to the hard material realities and endemic levels of violence which limit children's agency. Chapters 7 and 8 show that boys and girls at *KwaDabeka* do not simply survive violence and inequalities, they act on it, resist it and accommodate it and in so doing, demonstrate the operation of power relations, their agency and the brutality of their everyday existence.

Chapter 9 explores the ways in which boys and girls contest and negotiate masculinities and femininities [that?] are enacted. These contestations provide a framework for understanding how children become active agents in shaping their worlds. As this chapter suggests gender struggles are strongly connected to and influenced by the broader social world. Boys and girls come to school and operate alongside identities already arranged by gender binaries and divisions where masculinity and femininity are oppositional and hierarchically ordered categories. Chapter 10 focuses on friendships, kissing, discussion of marriage, and love letters as boys and girls actively negotiate sexuality through the heterosexual matrix. Children's active participation in these sexual cultures and practices is simultaneously embedded within normative constructions of gender involving relations of power. Both boys and girls express sexuality, have fun and pleasure; and in doing so they counter the myth of childhood sexual innocence. Their expression of sexuality however, involves tension and contradictions and is marked by gender power imbalances. Chapter 11 makes visible the obligatory construction of gender and heterosexuality in relation to play. It continues the leitmotif from Chaps. 9 and 10

that portrays children as actively engaged in the dynamic process of producing gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling. Providing a counter-narrative to childhood innocence, this chapter reveals the paradox between teaching discourses that attempt to secure the myth of the non-gendered, non-sexual developing child and boys' and girls' active investment in and production of gender and sexuality.

The concluding chapter traces the implications of the challenges in working within the field gender, sexuality and young children and offers some alternative ways of refocusing on childhood beyond ignorance and innocence, taking heed of the diversity of experiences and the significance of local contexts in the shaping of gender and childhood sexualities. In the context of boys' and girls' active agency, the shaping of gender and sexuality as well as the effects of gender inequalities, gendered violence and sexual harassment, the chapter argues for greater focus and interventions that deal with the early years of primary schooling. In doing so it also argues for context specific interventions that work with children in local settings. It raises the question of gender, sexuality and childhood at a global level arguing strongly for serious attention to the cultural and social worlds of boys and girls which continues on the peripheries of work in gender, sexuality and schooling. Understanding of, and serious attention to, the broader social context and questions around economic inequalities and structural violence is fundamental and required alongside efforts to address successful interventions.

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Chapter 2
Children Are Children: Gender Doesn't Matter?

> I tend to treat *children as children* and not consciously think that that's a boy. I do think that they need their own roles. A girl is definitely different from a boy and a boy is different from a girl, and they need to be aware of it. But I don't think I've thought very deeply about it (laughing) as affecting anything. [Conversation with Mrs D, *Westridge School*, emphasis added]

Hegemonic teaching discourses, in this chapter, resonate with many other accounts of teachers, gender and primary schooling with childhood innocence a recurring theme in adult teaching discourses (Osgood 2014; Davies 2014; Epstein et al. 2003; Skelton et al. 2009; Browne 2004; Connolly 2004; Renold 2005; Skelton 2001). Beginning with Mrs D in the above quote, the articulation of a hegemonic teaching discourse produces an unknowing, carefree, naïve and vulnerable child requiring adult protection (Jackson and Scott 2010; Wyn and Cahill 2015; Renold 2005; Robinson 2013). In enforcing childhood innocence teachers fail to recognise the significance of gender and sexuality in the everyday routines of children's lives whilst reproducing patriarchal relations of power (MacNaughton 2000; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Paechter 2007; Blaise 2005). As MacNaughton (2000) and Thorne (1993) suggest, naturalising the difference between boys and girls, are fundamental to the maintenance of gender power relations between boys and girls and between children and their teachers. In particular, hegemonic teaching discourses are scrutinised in this chapter, not for the 'truth' about common sense knowledge (MacNaughton 1997) but for the power relations it produces which serves to normalise children as innocent of gender and childhood (sexual) innocence.

In the first part of this chapter I identify interlocking discursively produced teaching strategies that seek to maintain childhood as a sexual/gender free political arena whilst naturalising differences between boys and girls and their teachers. These shared teaching patterns coalesce to enforce the normalisation of childhood innocence and children's fixed categorisation along gender lines. These different discourses are not separate and are configured in ways that constantly interact dynamically, are interdependent and mutually constructing, forming an overall strategy that regulates children and childhood. Chapter 3 continues with this

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dominant discourse focusing on teachers as mothers but shows how gender is negotiated and challenged by boys and girls. Combined, the discourses identified in Chaps. 2 and 3, are conservative and hegemonic and work against the articulation and practice of gender equality.

Chapters 4 and 5 and the first section of Chap. 6 will examine discourses that are specific to schools. The conservative teaching discourses set the parameters for what is possible in schools but they also open up the contradictions. The shared patterns of discourse across school sites misses the important fact that experiences of early primary schooling in South Africa are also different, contradictory and complex. A complex set of interrelationships exists between race, class and gender in specific socio-economic contexts. Such specificities are important to consider. It is impossible to understand the construction of gender in the early years of primary schooling without giving due consideration to class and race politics that are constitutive of gender and sexuality. The argument made here is that teaching discourses produce, regulate and reinforce childhood (sexual) innocence but always within "concrete social circumstances" (Connell 1995: 86). These circumstances reveal the structural fractures and the steep grades of inequalities that mark South African life. The last section of this chapter shows how teaching discourses are produced in and through social and economic contexts. That specificity makes certain subject positions available and not others. The specific constructed contextualisation of power and meanings impacts on the performances of gender and sexuality in different sites. Race, class and social specifics of teaching discourses influence the range of subject positions inhabited. The specific teaching discourses embody multiple dimensions. In other words, social locations create conditions for relations of power. In identifying specific teaching discourses I show differential access to power, practice of power and effects of power. I argue, that to understand how teaching discourses operate we need to attend to both the shared discourses that construct the asexual/de-gendered child and the social, political and economic structures within which teachers, boys and girls negotiate gender and sexuality. This chapter must thus be read with a dual focus in mind: shared patterns create and reinforce a regime of truth about childhood innocence whilst the wider social ordering of gender and sexuality—especially how race, culture and class coalesce—provide major contradictions to the construction of childhood innocence.

Fixing Boys and Girls as Opposites and Unequal: Categorical Thinking as a Regime of Truth

Children Are Children—Children Are Innocent

As noted in Chap. 1, a regime of truth, following Foucauldian (1982) insights, allows us to understand the disciplinary and regulatory function of knowledge/power and works to produce dominant conceptualisations that make

gender an irrelevant category for young children. Foucault (1982) believed that all social institutions survive and thrive through creating truths about how we should think, act and feel towards ourselves and others. The teaching discourses hang together through the creation and maintenance of certain truths about how we should think about gender and children in primary schooling. Rendering gender invisible in the lives of young children, weaves together to form a regime of truth and governs what are seen to be normal and right ways of being a teacher of primary school children. The discourses discussed in this section are not independent of each other but are circuits connecting with each other, as they create particular configurations in the early years of primary schooling.

One way in which this was achieved was through the failure to 'see' gender whilst simultaneously normalising biological 'bodily' difference, unequal age relations and expecting particular roles for boys and girls. Making gender escape in the lives of young children is related to dominant discourses that tend to construct children as biological, passive and unprotesting, without agency and without sexuality and gender. Connell (2012) illustrates that categorical gender differences not only involve biology but are connected to sex-role socialisation. Like biologically determined bodies that are created in relation to masculinity and femininity as oppositional, in sex role socialisation the fixed dichotomy between boys and girls is based on different social roles, norms, and expectations demanded of boys and girls. For example, boys' roles are differentiated from girls' roles, with the expectation that boys' and girls' behaviour should follow from conforming to these expected roles.

The scepticism in linking gender and young children developed during the initial stages of the research while I was establishing access and building social relations with teachers and when I discussed my research I was told, 'gender, doesn't matter to young children', 'children are children' and 'just kids, still young'.

In the initial stages of the research teachers suggested that I should research the "higher standards" where the yields around gender would be high. I kept wondering about yielding any dividends since I was talking to teachers who had between nine to twenty-nine years of experience in early childhood teaching.

When children are constructed as children, they are not only regarded as gender innocent but sexual innocence is a key marker of childhood (Jackson and Scott 2010; Robinson 2013; Kane 2013; Egan 2013; Renold et al. 2015; Bhana 2016). Teachers often fail to see the significance of gender because of the dominant discourses that make gender irrelevant. The privileging of children as non-gendered and asexual operates to mask gender power relations. Gender-neutrality means that teachers cannot see the child as sexual/gendered and constructing sexuality and gendering with others, nor can they challenge the continual naturalisation of gender differences and unequal relations of power. These common sense positions are deeply intertwined with the understandings of how to be a teacher of young children.

Connected to childhood innocence and the construction of children are age inequalities:

Mrs A: In grade one the children are too young.

Children are often constructed as adults in the making (Thorne 1993) and the recourse to ages and stages of development positions childhood as a sequence of developmental stages. In other words being too young, illustrates the incomplete gendered version of adults (Danby 1998). A gender development according to Thorne (1993) approach is based on an incremental and linear unfolding and developing of identity within social contexts. Age is thus a significant marker and the young are biologically destined to get older and thus gendered and sexualised. The younger child is considered unprotesting and without agency. This conceptualisation about young children is deeply problematic. It mis-recognises the position of children. Absent in the 'just kids' discourse are the gender and sexual dynamics of children and the play of power in children's cultures which I explore in Chap. 7 to Chap. 10. It is also assumed that children are passive recipients of gender/sexual messages. This discourse is a means through which an attempt is made to "anchor children's lives, confirm teachers' power and generate multiple sites of power for adults" (Canella 1997: 44; Chapman 2015).

Hinging on the age relations is the presumption of childhood innocence. Presuming innocence means immunity from sexual (and gendered) knowledge (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Tobin 1997; Yelland 1998). The presumption of innocence imbues the adult teacher with knowledge and power and the need for children to be protected from (sexual) corruption. Teachers tend to avoid sexuality in general and this increases its value on the black market of forbidden discourses (Letts and Sears 1999). As Tobin (1997: 1) suggests putting sexuality and young children is malignant, corrupting, "problematic and even potentially dangerous". Butler's performance theory is useful in explicating this issue. Butler (1990: 33) understands gender as "the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts… that congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural sort of being". The association of sexuality and young children could threaten or disrupt the illusion that makes gender and childhood innocence a powerful discourse, or as Butler observes, a "natural sort of being". Conversely, yoking children with sexual knowledge operates as a theft of innocence and unnatural. Chapters 7–10 will shows that early primary school contexts are not barren, as teachers wish them, but are actively producing gendered (and sexual) cultures. Primary schooling thus produces sexuality by forbidding it. Closeting children by presuming innocence is a "state which some *adults* mistakenly *wish* upon children and which confirms their power" (Epstein and Johnson 1998: 97 [emphasis in original]) while denying children's lived experiences. The discourse of presuming innocence consolidates the idea of teachers as mothers, women as caring and nurturing, and as moral heroines of innocent and ignorant children, which I discuss in Chap. 5. It also helps to understand why the early years of schooling are seen as a woman's domain and explains the broader implications of men's absence in this field.

Gender, Boys, Girls and Nature

Connell (2012) refers to the commonest form of gender categories based on the classification of gender as opposites where masculinity and femininity are normalised for inscribing gender differences based on bodies and biology. This regulation occurs through a shared discourse that positions boys and girls as biologically different, articulated here by Mrs G:

Mrs G: By nature most boys are aggressive. The girls are talkative by nature
Mrs I: In my class they are all the same whether they are boys or girls
Mrs G: I treat them all the same. They are all equal for me. In God's eyes everyone is equal. Do you know what makes them not equal? It's their behaviour. Look at Siyanda. He's so aggressive. By nature most boys are aggressive. The girls are talkative by nature
Mrs L: They are the same. These are just kids. The boys dominate the class. It's the same. The girls are the shy ones …
Mrs F: Boys still follow fathers and girls follow mothers, like boys are interested in cars. Girls will be different with different interests. It's how children are in general
Mrs H: I see all pupils as the same. They are all the same to me.

Mrs F adopts a gender-neutral position by suggesting that boys and girls have different interests but that's "how children are in general" imputing biology, sex role socialisation and gender inequalities. The children are constructed as non-gendered precisely because their differences are assumed to be fixed and biological. Gender-fixing also happens through recourse to God and religion: everyone is equal in God's eyes so why should gender matter? The gravity of biology and religion are based on naturalising human beings as fixed and immutable. Getting gender right involves the coherence of the self. The dominance of this discourse means that particular practices "escape" early schooling contexts. This was articulated by Mrs B: "I don't think I've thought very deeply about it [gender] (laughing) as affecting anything".

The "children are children" discourse naturalises human behaviour. For example, Mrs G claims that "most boys are aggressive", while Mrs L notes that the boys dominate the classroom. Aggression and domination in the classroom is the naturalisation of masculine power. Naturalisation works to create and sustain masculine power that benefits males and this has specific consequences for girls. Girls are constructed as the "shy ones". Power is a central dynamic in children's relations, boys are constructed as aggressive and dominating, but power is naturalised within a dominating discourse that frames children as children and assumes the naturalness of girls and boys' behaviour.

Making difference biological is a primary means through which teaching discourses execute and regulate gender identities. The overarching view that boys, for

example, are naturally prone to aggressiveness is traditional and limiting. If it is true that boys are naturally violent and girls are genetically coded to do the "talking", then little can be done to change this. Making difference biological helps to reproduce a natural masculinity and a natural femininity. Following Foucault (1980: 131) the early years of primary schooling has its own general politics of what constitutes truth and in making difference biological has become a discursive strategy to function as true and valued which has implications for teaching pedagogies:

Mrs E: You saw the maths lesson. It's the boys who are better both orally and in written work. The boys gave the answers and they are quicker. On the whole the girls are better in reading. I don't have any clue why that's so. Maybe it's the way we use our brain. Do you know that there are different ways we use the left and right hand side of the brain?

Making difference biological obliges one to "achieve the ways of being that appear to be implicated in a particular set of genitals they happen to have" (Davies 1989: 237) as Mrs E illustrates. Achieving mathematical prowess, for example, is associated with the kind of brains that boys have. The outcome is the same by making biological difference reside in the structure and function of the brain (Jordan-Young 2011; Schmitz 2010). Mrs E suggests that male and female brains are structured differently and so the tasks that are executed are different. Since the processing of tasks is different, different outcomes are achieved. Mathematics becomes suited to boys' brain structure and reading to girls. This dichotomous position can be explained in terms of man/woman; reason/emotion; math/reading; left/right use of the brain (Walkerdine 1989). Mrs E felt that young children might be born with a set of essentially female or male behaviours associated with the left and right hemispheres of the brain. She claims that the left and right brain dichotomy provides a basis through which she can differentiate between the strengths and capacities of boys and girls, therefore it describes what boys, and girls can do. This is not an unfamiliar discourse parading as legitimate, as Alloway (1995: 14) suggests with the "left-right brain hemispheres." The left-right structuring of the brain is used as biologically different processing structures with different outcomes for males and females (Jordan-Young 2011). The adoption of this discourse makes pedagogical sense to Mrs E when she explains that boys "are better and quicker in maths" orally and in written work. Girls, she says, are good at reading. A particular set of genitals obliged a particular kind of brain structuring to achieve a particular way of being. The idea of the left and right hand brain differentiation contributes to the binary biological ordering of the sexes connecting itself to the construction of gendered identities. In other words, her truth about left and right brain structuring translated into explanations for girls' ability in reading and boys' advantage in mathematics. Boys and girls become genetically and dualistically predisposed to perform or not in mathematics and reading.

Sex-Role Socialisation

Fixing boys and girls as biologically opposite overlapped with sex-role socialisation theory:

> I ask Mrs B how she perceives difference in boys and girls. Mrs B says, "Boys and girls are different, physically they know that they are different". Mrs B asks me: "Have you ever seen how boys and girls play with a ball?" I had never really thought about it, even though I had spent several years observing my older son play cricket and rugby. Mrs B says "boys dribble and kick the balls whilst girls roll the balls"… Mrs B talks about a recent outing with the children to a park. She says, "I wish you were there to see what I'm talking about. The girls went out to collect pretty little things whilst the boys jumped and crossed over the river".

According to Mrs B, a simple cause and effect relationship exists between girls rolling the ball and "pretty little things" and boys who "jumped and crossed the river," and kick and dribble balls. A long-standing argument has been made against biologically based sex-role theories (Connell 1987, 1995; Davies 1989; Ghaill 1994; Weedon 1997; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Gilbert and Gilbert 1998; Yelland 1998; Cannella 1997; Grieshaber and Cannella 2001). Schmitz (2010) suggests that biological determinism in understanding gender differences is not conclusive and points to the challenges that the social construction of gender offers to the debate. Yet a regime of truth operates in the schools through which the sexes are ordered in the schools and through which unequal power relations are perpetuated.

The perception of children as non-gendered, and therefore as unprotesting young minds without the ability to make choices about how to be, is a dominant teaching discourse. The dominant teaching discourses are different but they overlap as mutually supportive and interconnected grids as the example of children's gendered socialisation is explained below:

Mrs B: So the problem with gender is that there are different home values brought to school. If there is a certain idea at home, you can sow seeds in the classroom, but you can't change. Besides, if certain people think that way about gender, it is not our right to change it.

Mrs B's perspective is inextricably linked to the conceptualisation of power as finite. Mrs B articulates a position through which power is constructed as a linear model. Power is constructed as one-sided and oppressive—power is possessed by adults. Mrs B constructs power negatively. She does not have the power to interfere. Power is seen as the imposition of one's values on another. This meant that she believed that she could not change the conditions in her classroom. She could not control the conditions in her classroom because power resided somewhere else: with parents as more influential adults. The idea that there is a simple relationship in how children become gendered is based on socialisation and power as oppressive. Exercising power may be at odds with her idea that it is not right to interfere with what children learn at home, so that schooling as an arena of social change is made less promising. This is not convincing because teachers are very powerful agents in

school and the children often idolise and adore them. The dominant teaching discourse, however, is a strategic tactic to produce the logic of passivity in children.

Mrs F expressed "how children learn to be gendered":

Mrs F: You know how important the parents are in bringing up their children. The children will naturally carry what their parents have expected. I think we need to be equal, but you automatically fall back on what your parents have taught you. What I follow is what my mother taught me and so that's how I carry on …

Mrs F, similar to Mrs B's common sense approach, constructs the home and the parents as one of the central foundations of learning. The family is a key to understanding how gender is mediated and negotiated but gendering occurs in many sites, and the school is one of them. This is a powerful discourse and children are assumed to get their gender right in terms of socialisation. Sex-role stereotyping tends to reinforce biological understandings of being female and being male. In Mrs F's terms "parents are the models"—children are born as boys or girls and are socialised by their parents to be that way. It assumes that parents model and reinforce in the child those behaviours that are considered to be sex-role appropriate. Sex role socialisation is based on an ordered and consistent relation between the social institutions and some causal mechanism.

In another interview, Mrs F illustrates the point further:

> "Parents are the models". Boys will imitate their fathers and girls imitate their mothers. It's already set there. Boys are good with their hands. Girls are sharper with reading and they are more obedient.

Boys become boys in the ways that they do because of a simple cause and effect relationship. Here it is assumed that sexist gender differences are created and maintained through socialisation. In this process, it is assumed that children as unthinking beings automatically absorb how to develop. Hence, boys and girls for Mrs F become gendered through imitation and modelling (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012). For Mrs F, boys and girls become traditionally gendered because they have absorbed the sexist gender messages from their parents.

The logic of this conservative discourse is the passivity of children. The child is produced in this discourse without legitimate agency. In a world of two sexes, distinct and complementary ways of being are translated into explanations that girls might be dainty, and boys rough. The effect of these discourses is to determine in advance what constitutes normal femininity and masculinity. Normalising identity means rewarding some, attacking others and creating judgments about what constitutes a "normal" identity. This sets the limits of what is possible and permissible in schools and hides the unequal power relations that exist across either ends of the dichotomy. Moreover, the power plays that exist in everyday life lose their significance through the finite construction of the self as static and fixed (Francis 1998).

Boys Will Be Boys

An overarching effect of making difference biological is the "boys will be boys" as discussed and assumes biological determination. My observations and interviews were suggestive of this:

Mrs D: The boys like to get up to some mischief at the back of the classroom Mrs D asks the class to be quiet. Most of the children put their pointer fingers to their lips

Mrs D: Thank you children for sitting so politely. Just those boys playing swords spoilt it

Mrs A: They're [Boys] real causers, hey! In my class, they just want to have their way. It's in their personality

Mrs F: Look at the class now, the girls are carrying on, on their own and the boys … look. They are the main culprits. They have to be given more attention. But some boys are sweet and obedient. With the girls, you tell them one thing and they listen. See how the girls work. You can see for yourself … like the naughty boys you have to keep talking to them

Mrs L: The boys are the naughty ones

Mrs G: By nature most boys are aggressive … They [Boys] are always naughty, just like boys' behaviour … Boys will remain boys. They are just like that … Boys are always rough. They do kick and throw things down … If work is demanded the girls give it on time because they know they will be punished. The boys are not afraid because they repeat the mistake and they don't do the work

Mrs G: Everybody is free now with the ANC [African National Congress]. But the boys are more free. They are always naughty, just like boys' behaviour because boys speak out. The girls are shy.

The 'boys will be boys' cliché is based on biological assumptions and homogenises the boys in ways that suggest their less-than-satisfactory behaviour: culprits, causers, mischievous, want their way, naughty, aggressive, fearless and rough. The impact of their visibility in the above observation does not work in their favour. This tendency to homogenise boys is to locate the problem with boys, blaming the boys for discipline problems. Girls are the models through which boys' behaviour is constructed. It also encourages and rewards a passive and gentle femininity. The boy's behaviour demands more teacher attention. Mrs F says that she needs to "keep talking" to the naughty boys resonating with dominant conceptualisation of the boys' problem (Martino and Meyenn 2001; Ghaill and Haywood 2011). However, boys' visibility does not always work to their advantage, as the observation above shows (Epstein and Johnson 1998).

The visibility of boys as problems is tied intimately to teacher constructions of masculinity that is biological. It is assumed that there is a core personality and character defining masculinity that all boys actually or potentially share (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998). Boys are constructed as naturally equipped to be, for instance,

"causers" as Mrs A suggests. These essentialist arguments work to constrain teachers in exercising power and ensuring a more harmonious classroom that benefits all. If boys and roughness are naturalised as unchangeable, hard-wired and violent, then the possibility for change in boys (and men) is erased. The 'boys will be boys' pathology is intimately connected to and shaped by the discourse that makes difference biological and is intrinsic to the formation of gendered identities. As Connell (2009: 11) notes, gender is, "the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinction between bodies into social processes". Following this logic, Mrs G says that boys do not give work in on time. They are "not afraid because they repeat the mistake and they don't do the work". This is a clear example of the ways in which boys (re)create systems of masculine power. In this way, the production of identity is linked with the production of particular discourses, such as biological determinism that serve to legitimate masculine power. The 'boys will be boys' discourse thus makes "boyhood … the entitlement to and the anticipation of power" (Foster et al. 2001: 16).

Boys are not all the same, opening up contradictions in the naturalisation of masculinity. For example, some boys according to Mrs F are "sweet and obedient". Mrs G explains that some boys kick and throw things down—a violent masculinity. This suggests the existence of masculinities and points to the complex ways through which boys try to get their gender right. Clearly, biological definitions of the self, limit the work towards gender equality, and when discourses lump boys as 'boys will be boys', they serve to work against the varied forms of masculinity. They also work against the idea that masculinities are in fact forged in and through social circumstances. In particular, they work to (re)produce unequal power relations, which privilege boys. In Chap. 3, the 'boys will be boys' discourse as it plays out at *Westridge* is examined whilst Chap. 4 provides cultural markers through which gender is understood at *Umbumbulu.*

So far, this chapter has identified the interlocking discourses through which gender is erased and childhood innocence is enforced. The next chapter will focus on another major discursive construction, teachers as mothers, which sits uncomfortably with boys' and girls' own construction of gender. Indeed, as will be shown, gendering is an integral part of the routines of everyday life, "not an escape from it" (Connell 1995: 3). By focusing on teachers, boys and girls, the book exposes the major paradoxical space between teaching discourses that operate to maintain childhood innocence and the vital importance of addressing boys and girls as active gendered and sexual agents. As stated earlier in this chapter my intent is not simply to show how teaching discourses do the work of making gender invisible whilst naturalising gender differences in the early years of primary schooling as global patterns suggests (Skelton 2001; MacNaughton 2000; Paechter 2007), but to show how gender is discursively produced in relation to the surrounding social, cultural and economic contexts where race, class, gender and sexuality are intimately intertwined.

Teaching discourses are not only shaped by dominant ideologies of gender and childhood innocence but also by material structures of power. Whilst the teaching discourses described so far resonate with and appear similar to global constructs of

teachers, teaching and gender in the early years of primary schooling, these discourses are produced by specific economic, social and cultural changes which could promote childhood innocence or break down the mythical assumptions based on the highly variable experiences around race, age, class and culture. Thus, in addition to illustrating the shared patterns of teaching discourses across the school contexts in producing a regime of truth around the innocent and asexual child, I locate these ideologies within varied race and class permutations in schools, looking at the ways in which teaching discourses are held up and broken down as well as the strategic ways in which gender relations of power operates within local contexts. Keeping this dual focus in mind, the next section of this chapter addresses local variables. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will also illustrate the significance of gender, race, class, sexuality and age in the development of the major argument in this book.

Changing Gender: Race, Class and Culture

In this section, I argue that beyond fixing children to essentialist ideologies, sex-role socialisation, and developmental outcomes, teachers express knowledge of children through a complex well of inequalities that reflects South Africa's larger scale social forces. These forces include poverty, gender inequalities, gender-related violence, and the legacies of apartheid as well as cultural norms that provide variations to teachers' understanding of boys and girls. Through these social forces the section draws attention to the dynamic and contradictory discourses that are shaped as teachers shape boys and girls in their social context. The section illustrates this complexity by drawing attention to examples of teachers' and, in particular, how such positionings contest the fixing of boys and girls. Against the homogenising tendencies reported in the previous section, the rest of the chapter shows how teaching discourses are generated in ways that raise significant issues of race, class, culture in the formation of gendered identities disrupting the privileged position that informs the degendering/desexualisation of the early years of primary schooling.

Westridge School

Looking Indian, Seeing Muslim

Various assumptions exist about the existence of separate racial and ethnic groups in KwaZulu-Natal. Apartheid has historically allowed the unproblematic use of racial categories suggesting racial and cultural similarity and thus a coherent identity. Chapter 1 provided an understanding of racialised identities in South Africa. Many Indians arrived in this province to work in the sugar plantations in

1860 while many others arrived here as merchants. They included Muslims and Christians, but predominantly Hindus. As an ethnographer, I was aware of many Muslim parents—and women in particular—who came to school to pick up their children clad in traditional dress or "burkah". The dress usually entails the wearing of a head-covering scarf and a long dress and pants. In contrast Hindu Indian woman sometimes wear "punjabis"—a long dress, pants and scarves. At *Westridge*, the broader discourses on religion and race have been re-worked and impact upon the nature of social relations in the school (Skelton 2001). These discourses include assumptions of a coherent and fixed racial identity and are further intersected by gender.

In the following example, in order to explore the regulation of gender identity, I sketch the construction of masculinity with reference to Mrs D's notion of Samit:

DB: Samit says "girls don't exist"

Mrs D: Oh yes. Samit is very anti-girl. He does sometimes come in with culture because he is Muslim. So, it is possible that the culture comes in clearly here and because there's definitely those differences in culture where the girls are valued lesser. I don't know whether that is the reason but that's possible.

Samit is a nine-year-old Indian boy from a wealthy family. I draw from my data to introduce Samit.

I chat to Samit who in a previous visit had proudly showed me a framed photograph of his home that won the best architectural design in Durban the previous year.

Mrs D constructs Samit as anti-girl and Muslim. Through my own material positioning, I knew that Samit is not Muslim but Hindu. Mrs D attempted to explain Samit's alleged misogyny in terms of his culture and religion. Samit's comments that "girls don't exist" are described as specific to him as Muslim is specific to a particular culture. In the same way, Samit is distanced from her, as a white English Christian teacher, other children and the hegemonic Christian culture of the school. Samit's culture and his religion are constructed as 'other', valued differently and constructed as anti-feminist. Misogyny and anti-girl comments are then given to reside in Muslim boys and men. In other words, Mrs D assumes that all Muslims share a common devaluation of gender. In this way, culture becomes static and unchanging homogenising Muslim boys' experiences. Misogyny becomes a problem residing elsewhere such as in Samit who is assumed to be a Muslim who is anti-girl (Archer 2001). Chapter 4 focuses on *Westridge* and the ways in which rugger bugger masculinity is endorsed and supported by teachers at the school, which is deeply connected to an anti-girl culture. Therefore, teaching discourses inscribed in specific schools must be recognised so as to develop strategies relevant to their particular situation. Mrs D homogenises Indian people and assumes Samit's culture and religion based on his race. That Samit is not Muslim reveals the fragility of reductionist arguments based on culture and religion. It also suggests the othering of Muslims as 'folk devils' with accompanying negative categorisation

(Ghaill 1994). In this example gender is not only intimately linked to race and religion, but also to wider demonisation of Muslims as regressive in terms of gender equality. Samit who is not even a Muslim is positioned as more sexist and as Phoenix (1998) argues the 'ultimate others'. Specific teaching discourses work to create the conditions for relations of power. "Looking Indian and seeing Muslim" can be read as a cultural index through which certain positions are made inaccessible and others rejected. The cultural index is used to police the boundaries of acceptable masculinity.

Umhlatuzana School

African Boys Don't Perform

This section explores teaching discourses where African boys are positioned as academically poor achievers. The focus of this section is to highlight the racialising discourses that regulate the gender identity of black boys. Racialised discourses did not uniformly take place in all situations as the previous example has illustrated. At times when children performed poorly, teachers drew upon deficit theories that had become part of their teaching discourse including those about African boys. Thus, at a very general level I draw on observations and interviews from Mrs E's classroom to demonstrate the interconnections between race, class and gender. There were four African boys in her class who lived in the nearby working class township of KwaMashu although some lived with their mothers who work as domestic workers in their place of employment:

Mrs E: The African boys don't respond in class. They're not yet confident. Abongile lives here and the others come from KwaMashu …You know how it is there, poverty and so neglected. When you ask for something to be done, they don't do it. When I talk in class there's no confidence and it's very hard to get it. So they're very withdrawn and shy and it takes a long time to improve confidence … With such a big class I have no time to worry about individuals … The environment that they come from makes a big difference. If you put them in a different environment, then you would get a different reaction … They're very embarrassed about their home language. Samke speaks well and is confident and she helps …

Despite the earlier position to fix and homogenise children, African boys' visibility was achieved through complex race, class, gender, and language connections. By reference to poverty, lack of parental care and general neglect in KwaMashu, Mrs E constructs a masculinity based on deficit and therefore shy, lacking in confidence and withdrawn. African boys who don't speak English are constructed as withdrawn and interwoven with economic disadvantage and poor academic performance to (re)produce stereotypes. Once African boys have been

aligned with poor language skills, poor achievement and withdrawal, a context allows reproduction and regulation of a racialised and marginalised masculinity. African boys' visibility is not premised upon overtly disruptive behaviour (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012) but rather their academic lack complexly intertwined with class disparities and distance from English hegemony, which works to engender inequalities. However, when it came to the discussion on David, Mrs F reproduced the disruption or the potential disruptive factor in African boys:

Mrs F: David can be very good but sometimes he gets so wild that I have to remind him where he is …

David is contradictorily constructed as good and as wild. Mrs F's comments of "where he is", provides the context which serves to foreground difference based on the logic of the other—race and class are imputed in the social construction of masculinity. Mrs F's reminder to David about where he is (a predominantly Indian school) highlights where he is not, that is the context of the township. Overall, the example shows how the complex processes of academic lack, actual and potential disruptive behaviour of African boys reinforce marginalised masculinity. At the same time the difference is constructed against the broader context at Umhlatuzana where Mrs F reinforces dominant images of working class African boys as more aggressive, lacking the academic prowess of the Indian middle-class boys. Disruptive behaviour is associated with class, race and violence, which serves to maintain relations of power.

KwaDabeka School

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 provide detail analysis of the ways in which the social context shapes as children shape gender, violence and sexuality. In this section I provide a different format from the preceding schools. While the focus here is on specific teacher-generated discourse I give this school a special status as it was one most punctuated by violence and the least friendly in gender terms.

Black Girls and Culture: We Must not Look into the Eyes of a Male

At *KwaDabeka Primary School* gender power relations are culturally manifested.

Mrs G: No, there is no difference to gender because boys still dominate. Look at the boys they just go there and sit on the floor and write. Girls won't do that. Boys are not afraid of the teacher but girls will never do this … in our school there a very few male teachers. The male teachers lack power

because the female teachers dominate but they try all the time to undermine the principal

DB: Why?

Mrs G: Because she is a female. They do not want to take instructions from a female. At home the father is the head of the family, it's not the same in this school. In our culture we must respect them [males] but because we are educated we challenge them

DB: What kind of culture is this?

Mrs G: *In our culture we must not look into the eyes of a male.* You must look down at the floor especially if you are an older man. In my grade the kids are influenced by all of this and so the girls don't speak to the boys (emphasis added).

Culture and gendered norms interact in ways that hold culture and the school in tension with each other. Mrs G has a high level of alertness to notions of power although these are reduced to static cultural constructions. For example she understands the domination of the classroom space by boys (Paechter 2007) and the differential gendered processes where girls are regarded as more sensible and obedient (Renold et al. 2015) whilst boys are seen as contesting the teacher's power and authority (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012). Mrs G recognises the patriarchal and cultural norms through which gender relations are negotiated in her classroom. Discourses on "culture" and particular practices are appropriated and re-worked to impact on the nature of social relations in the classroom. The central issue here is how boys, girls and teachers engage with specific cultural forms that contribute to the asymmetrical power relations. Mrs G points to connections between cultural definitions, male power and girls' disadvantage. Mrs G constructs the culture as unchanging and static. Here it is assumed that boys or girls do not have the power to change their positions in society because of cultural discourses and practices. Thus, Mrs G understands power dynamics in favour of boys and men. She notes the invasion of space, "boys just go there and sit on the floor and write". As a teacher she lives through the battle of the sexes as the few male teachers in the school try to undermine the female principal. Mrs G accounts for this through culture, "in our culture we must respect them". However, Mrs G invests in her ability to resist cultural definitions that are placed on her as adult woman but her resistance is enabled because she is "educated". She is able to challenge the men in her school. In this way she claims and confirms power for herself with the ability to challenge and contest. The cultural patterns that work against girls are not static but dynamic and open to change. However, the girls (as children) who "don't speak to the boys" are rendered as passive, unprotesting victims of culture and thus powerless. The interconnectedness of power with cultural constructions of maleness is important in the construction of hegemonic masculinities. Mrs G points to the particular practices that inscribe unequal power relations "in our culture we must not look into the eyes of a male … In my grade the kids are influenced by all of this". Thus particular positions are inhabited based on the cultural practice that marginalises others and is damaging to girls. Boys are able to occupy positions that reinforce maleness and

contribute to unequal power relations. Mrs G is also aware of boys' ability to blur the boundaries and exercise power. The cultural practices that silence girls' voices also objectify the teacher as woman. The cultural privilege and her objectification is manifest in her claim that boys are not afraid of the teacher and her recognition that boys invade the spaces in the classroom which serve to (re)produce gender identity. Adult teacher-boy and girl relations are thus differentially valued and inscribed with cultural (and racial) definition. Specific cultural practices create the conditions for power and access to power is differential and impacts severely on the positions that are made available to girls and objectify women.

As in earlier sections, I make no claims of representativity, but instead I draw attention to teaching discourses which are culturally specific which position boys' patterns of conduct in ways that engender unequal power relations.

Umbumbulu School

The everyday life of boys and girls at *Umbumbulu Primary School* is defined and differentiated through gender. In this regard, teaching discourses work to produce and reproduce specific inscriptions of gender:

Mrs L: It's hard. The girls see what their mothers do. They are all very poor. Their grannies support them. You see they have no shoes. If the mothers are at home, they plough at home. They work in the sugar cane plantation. Some of them grow *madumbies* [yams] but you see these *madumbies* take six months to grow so they sell them only once a year. These girls they must help at home.

The broader structures of inequality in *Umbumbulu School* are recognised by Mrs L where women and girls' vulnerability in rural KwaZulu-Natal and poverty are clear. Poverty is linked to apartheid legacies where rural areas became a chief source of labour for the mining industry and drew large numbers of African men to wage labour in the cities. Women who were left in rural areas, if they too had not migrated to urban areas to seek low paid work especially as domestic workers, often had to toil the land and eke out a living through agriculture. As Mrs L indicates the particular agricultural context produces particular sets of positions for women and girls. Chapter 5 will continue this specific focus on this rural context. Significantly, social and cultural context is integral to gender relations. Production of gender discourses occurs in/through a material reality that limits the articulation of positions.

Teaching discourses position boys and girls within specific schooling sites and make and regulate gender identity in the early years of primary schooling. These discourses inform, and are informed by, differentiated masculinities and femininities and the power relations that are contained within them. Teaching discourses are

informed by class, race, sexuality, religion, language and culture, all of which contribute to and help shape gendered experiences in schools. This section of the chapter has highlighted the significance of the local in the construction of gender identities. In each school broader cultural discourses have been appropriated and in turn impact upon the nature of social relations in the school. Specific teaching discourses are located within a whole range of complex and interlocking practices that systematically work to reproduce asymmetrical relations of power.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have illustrated how dominant teaching discourses create a regime of truth in the adult desire to maintain childhood innocence. Children are not only regarded as gender innocent but sexual innocence is a key marker of childhood (Jackson and Scott 2010; Robinson 2013; Kane 2013; Egan 2013; Renold et al. 2015; Bhana 2016). I tried to show how teaching discourses privilege particular ways of knowing, thinking and living gender; the power relations that are produced and reproduced and the implications of this for unequal gender power relations which become significant in the production, policing and regulation of childhood innocence. These discourses are hegemonic and constraining. The teaching discourses make children innocent; construct them as unsexed, unprotesting, passive and without agency. It is not surprising that my initial request to do this study at schools was met with "Why children—just kids?" The teaching discourses serve to perpetuate the minor status of the early years in the bigger picture of schooling and leads to a systematic inattention to the dynamic lives of all those who inhabit it. We are expected to think about young children without any persistence and seriousness because of the assumed vulnerability of children who are made to be defenceless and powerless. As the book will go on to show, these discourses open up the paradoxical space in the desire to maintain childhood innocence, boys and girls active agency and the vital importance of addressing gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling.

There has been an expansive critique against essentialist ideas that delineate some distinct biological characteristic that accounts for behavioural differences (Connell 2012; Holmes 2007). The social construction of gender or the ways in which bodies are marked by social/cultural processes contradicts the simplistic assumptions that put bodies with biology to assume a particular behaviour pattern (Butler 1990; Connell 2009). Connell (2012) suggests that gender is under constant construction, always in process and shapes as it is shaped by social arrangements and the everyday routine way in which gender is practiced and regulated (Connell 2009). In the second part of this chapter I provided examples of the specific ways in which gender interacts with race, class and culture to show how such social arrangements modulate teaching discourses steeped in relations of power. This section has contested the naturalisation of teaching discourses and drawn attention to how power is deeply connected to race, class, culture and other social differences

and these have effects for the ways in which gender is constructed in the early years of primary schooling. Chapter 3 continues the focus on a dominant teacher-mother discourse whilst showing how children contest and negotiate the question of teachers as mothers.

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Chapter 3
Teachers Are Mothers: Can Men Teach Young Children?

Mrs G: We are like mothers to them… mother's role is to love her children and I try to love these kids (…)

Mrs B: I think that we give the kids lots of love and I'm afraid that men can't really do that …

Robert: I don't like a lady teacher. They scream a lot. They don't let you do things.

The global pattern of gender and teaching in the early years of primary schooling shows that men are in the minority (Brownhill et al. 2015). The on-going political project to involve men in these traditionally feminine professions is motivated by concerns to end the gender divisions of labour and gender inequalities (Brownhill 2011). Increasing men's involvement in teaching young children as many researchers argue (Warin and Gannerud 2014; Koch and Farquhar 2015; Warin and Adriany 2015), has the potential to alter gender relations. Despite changes to gendered organisations and systems on a global scale, gender continues to shape the division of labour with some occupations considered as 'women's work' and therefore devalued (England 2010; Connell 2012). Whilst women's pursuit of and investment in traditionally male professions is based on factors such as gender-sensitive policies, better incentives, higher remuneration and greater prospects, men, conversely have more to lose in traditionally female occupations where care work is a defining factor (Peeters 2007; Drudy 2008). Historically women's work has been linked with care and because care is not often counted as real work, it is frequently downgraded and informs the gendering of professions (Acker 1995; Warin and Gannerud 2014; Martino 2008; Mills 2004).

Being a teacher of young children is often conflated with women's work and a recurrent theme in primary school teachers' narratives is one of care (Bhana 2014; Epstein et al. 2001; Peeters 2007). If women are expected to care for children, then men, as Warin and Gannerud (2014) indicate, can take on a 'privileged irresponsibility' towards work that involves care. Such differences are based on categorical and rigid positions about men and women's roles and identities (Connell 2012; Zembylas et al. 2014). The dichotomy between men and women derives from an understanding

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of gender where masculinity and femininity are founded on biological-based bodily notions of opposites. Chapter 1 referred to these simplistic and essentialist understandings of gender including sex role socialisation models that try to explain gender by contrasting roles and identities based on biological difference, theories of socialisation and development. In regulating gender roles and identity theories of development, socialisation and essentialism fail to adequately explain the vital element of power in the structuring of gender relations (Connell 2002: 59).

In this chapter, I begin with the words of Mrs G and Mrs B as they reiterate the teacher-mother discourse which resonates with many accounts of teaching, gender, care and women's work (MacNaughton 2000; Reid and Miller 2014; Forrester 2005; Ailwood 2007; Warin and Gannerud 2014; Brownhill et al. 2015; Green 2005; Goldstein and Lake 2000). Mrs G's and Mrs B's understandings of their role in relation to teaching young children reflects and results from symbolic and discursive forces which effectively territorialises teaching young children as women's work. Normative understandings of gender "not only produce but also regulate various bodily beings", Butler (1990: x). By relying on normative and essentialist accounts of gender and an understanding of children as needing love and protection (and therefore vulnerable), teaching discourses work to reproduce children's powerlessness, exclude men, whilst inscribing women's authority, reserving teaching as a feminine profession through the symbolic construction of the teacher as a loving mother (Peeters 2007). Teaching with love, as Goldstein and Lake (2000) and others suggest (Brownhill et al. 2015; Drudy 2008; Warin and Gannerud 2014) functions as an important discursive strategy that strengthens the ties of care to women's work. Within this approach, women are assumed to be best suited to teach young children operating on a rigid categorisation of gender. These conceptualisations as argued in this chapter are part of a hegemonic system of thinking and practices where teachers such as Mrs G and Mrs B conform to and accommodate prevailing understandings of gender, children and work.

In contrast to the previous chapter, this chapter sets in motion the ambiguous ways in which children, like Robert, in the transcript above, negotiate, accommodate and contest the assumed relationship between women and care, breaking down the fixity of gender, bodies and care. Chapter 2 has shown that teaching discourses position and legitimate the early years of schooling as a sexual/gender-free political arena with little recognition of children's active agency. This chapter will continue this argument and demonstrate that teachers at a very general level come to share and position themselves as teacher-mothers that is expressive of the "innocence/protection couplet" (Epstein and Johnson 1998: 97). I argue that 'teachers as mothers' discourse is a powerful mechanism to justify and restrict the early years of primary schooling as a female domain, reproducing essentialist understanding of gender whilst reinforcing boys and girls as gender innocent and naturalising their powerlessness and vulnerability. These dominant teaching discourses form a network of interlocking strategies and which are mutually constitutive of each other in multiple, complex and diverse ways. Whilst this chapter examines the tensions between dominant teaching discourses rooted in the idealisation of the teacher-mother surrogate position and children's own standpoint, I also

show the contradictions in the operation of power, by drawing attention to the specificity of location, race and class which breaks down the monolithic depiction of teacher as mother. As with Chap. 2, the identification of this discourse should be read as my attempt to invoke a common grammar, at the very general level, in the regulation of gender identity across the primary school contexts. It should not be read as a representative or comprehensive account of the experiences of boys, girls and their teachers in grades one and two. Of importance is the paradoxical space between teaching discourses which seek to maintain versions of children as gender/sexually innocent and the importance of addressing children as active agents in the social construction of gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling.

Men in the Early Years of South African Primary Schooling: Why It Is Important?

Chapter 1 provided the background against which this book is situated. It has been noted here that in South Africa gender inequalities are acute and cluster around male violence and hegemonic toxic patterns of masculinities (Bhana et al. 2009). Scholars have argued that economic conditions, migration, history of colonialism and legacies of apartheid have created masculinities that are aggressive and prone to violence (Shefer 2014; Bhana 2012, 2015). Dominant masculinities are entangled with the risk of contracting HIV, which creates particular vulnerabilities for girls and young women and in turn reinforces gender inequalities (Kaufman et al. 2008). Various studies have pointed to poverty, gender and cultural norms, age inequalities, coerced sex and women's inability to negotiate safe sex within the context of male sexual privilege and entitlements (Bhana 2015; Gibbs et al. 2014). The scourge of rape and sexual violence exacerbates women's vulnerability with 62,649 cases reported between 2013 and 2014 (South African Police Services 2014) prompting Posel (2005) to raise questions about the moral fabric of South African society and the 'scandal of manhood'.

Schools have not been spared the scourge of gender and sexual violence and everyday forms of gender inequalities (Human Rights Watch 2001) leading Bhana (2012) to argue that girls are not free in and out of the South African school. In working with teachers to end gender violence at schools and address gender in HIV prevention, Bhana et al. (2009) reveal how difficult it is in promoting more positive male responses towards altering gender relations where violence against women and girls is often a declaration of male power and authority. Male teachers are complicit in the expression of corporal punishment and violence (HRW 2001). Against this context, a dominant trope developed in the country is one that associates men as dangerous and uncaring, reckless and irresponsible. The crisis for boys and men is the crisis of violence and toxic patterns of conduct, which increase

women and girls' vulnerability in everyday life, compromising their health and well being and making schools dangerous places.

In this context, the last decade has seen increased emphasis on men and boys in working to end gender inequalities and violence (Ratele 2015; Shefer 2014). In light of gender inequalities and violence, compelling arguments have been made about the need to focus on boys and men to transform unequal gender relations and the social arrangements that sustain unequal relations of power (Gibbs et al. 2014). The ways in which masculinities are produced and reproduced are fundamental to shaping the way in which women are perceived and thus crucial for reducing and ultimately halting violence (Moolman 2013). Away from much of the violent masculinities that characterise the South African social order, there are a number of alternative pathways to be explored (Gunner 2014).

Thus, it is vital to construct egalitarian gender relations and masculinities rooted in care. South African scholars have highlighted the need for care explaining why men often distance themselves from caring for young children (Hosking 2006; Hunter 2006). Hunter (2006) adds that the traditional role of African fathers interlocks with customary law and is supportive of African men's power as head of the household. With the father being physically away from the household as a result of migrancy, fertile conditions were created to reduce fathers' involvement in and support for intimacy and emotional care for their children. As a result, an understanding of fatherhood stresses paternal responsibility and provider status rather than emotional engagement (Hunter 2006). The traditional understanding of men as providers and women as nurturers, despite changes to workplace organisation, remains stubbornly intransigent to change. Hosking (2006) notes that in industrial and agricultural work, because of the heavy physical demands tied to labour, men lived as physical labourers during the day and went home to rest. Consequently, within the traditional understanding of gender relations mothers were regarded as the primary care givers of their children reinforcing the provider and protector role of fathers (Hosking 2006). Whilst workplace demographics have rapidly altered, the idea of nurturing as women's work has remained one-sided.

Men must be encouraged to develop alternate options in the construction of masculinities and there is need for initiatives at every level to encourage men's participation in the care economy. Alternative paths are important where men's ability to care for young children stands in contrast to dominant depictions of South African men as violent, aggressive and unwilling to participate in care-giving roles (Ratele 2014; Shefer 2014). New research is thus advancing the need for alternate patterns of masculinity based on care (Morrell and Jewkes 2011). Such work in South Africa has begun although gender inequalities remain obstinately resistant to change, with researchers arguing that women's work such as caring for children is undermined by dominant masculinities (Montgomery et al. 2006; Ratele et al. 2012).

One sector that has not caused much alarm or interventions around gender care work is the teaching of young children (see Bhana and Moosa 2016; Petersen 2014 as exceptions). Like global patterns, SNAP (2015) indicates that only 22.7 % of teachers in the early years of schooling are men (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Foundation phase teachers by gender, in 2015

Province	Female	Male	Grand total
Eastern Cape	36,898	10,256	47,154
Free State	11,733	3476	15,209
Gauteng	39,520	10,940	50,460
KZN	41,687	10,380	52,067
Limpopo	22,086	9017	31,103
Mpumulanga	16,440	5142	21,582
Northern Cape	4313	1608	5921
North West	12,826	3573	16,399
Western Cape	1107	5731	24,838
South Africa	204,610	60,123	264,733

Source SNAP (2015)

Recent research in South Africa has focused on pre-service male teachers by highlighting the reasons why male undergraduate students fail to select the early years of primary teaching (Bhana and Moosa 2016). The construction of masculinities is vital in understanding the reluctance of these male students to pursue primary teaching. Many of the male students portrayed early primary teaching as a feminine activity and marginalised men in such teaching by characterising them as weak. Male students demonstrated a belief that positioned women as solely responsible for teaching younger children because of their 'inherent' feminine qualities which made them better suited to care for and work with young children. Bhana and Moosa (2016) argue further that making men visible in this sector of schooling could do much to address men as carers, as capable of nurturing and forming caring relationships with children and this agenda is especially important when the dominant notion of masculinity remains a depiction of violent, uncaring men on a ruthless path of power.

Research in the west has seen a burgeoning body of work outlining the lack of male teachers of young children. Men who enter a feminised environment are both 'idealised and demonised' because men have resisted familiar patterns around gender norms and roles whilst being disparaged for doing so (Skelton 2009). Work and gender identity are connected with Smith (2004) suggesting that being a 'real man' doing 'women's work' produces contradictions and tensions. An important argument made regarding male teachers is premised on an understanding that such male role modelling, based on sex role socialisation is valuable for counteracting the feminisation of the primary school (Skelton 2009, 2012). Unlike this argument, in South Africa the case for men in primary schools has much to do with the development of appropriate gender just formations of masculinity to begin counteracting and addressing the scourge of violence, HIV and gender inequalities in the country.

Whilst emphasis has been placed on men's relationship with teaching in the primary school, in this chapter I ask: how do female teachers and young children respond to the question of male and female teachers in the early years of primary

schooling? The rest of the chapter focuses on the contribution that women teachers and children make in the constructing, rejecting and maintaining the early years of primary schooling as a gendered domain of teaching.

Teachers Are Mothers

The teacher-mother position is a familiar discourse for teachers in the primary school and especially in the early years of schooling ((Brownhill et al. 2015; Carrington and McPhee 2008; James 2010, 2012; Green 2005; Koch and Farquhar 2015; Reid and Miller 2014). Noting this many years ago, Mac an Ghaill (1994: 37), for example, suggested that teaching has been viewed as a soft job involved with caring and nurturing, constructed as "women's work" and extended day care centres, with women teachers considered as "mother substitutes" (Rhedding-Jones 2001: 1). The conflation of women's work with care within the teacher as mother substitute position was prominent in the discussions with teachers. In the discussions that follow it must be noted that an overall discursive web binds the teacher-as mother position with gender as biological, sex role socialisation, psychological science (including children as developing in ages and stages of growth) and childhood innocence. Childhood innocence is a powerful means to regulate adult teachers and children and as Robinson (2013) argues it continues to a powerful force in the subjugation of children's lives and which operates on power. In this regard the teacher as mother position is complexly intertwined with technologies of thinking that promote women as nurturers of young children at school.

Linking teachers as mothers and binding them together in a care and protection relation is highlighted in the following two quotes:

Mrs F: Our duty is to be mothers. I pamper all the kids…give them love and attention. I believe in positive reinforcement. If you give positive comments … the children react in a positive way. The parents and teachers are responsible for moulding the kids and we can make them into what they would become …

DB: How do you see your role as a teacher?

Mrs G: We are like mothers to them … mother's role is to love her children and I try to love these kids (…)

Teachers' roles and duties regarding their relationship with children is grounded in and supported by disciplinary knowledge about childhood (gender) development (Thorne 1993) grounded in what Connell (1995) calls psychological science and invoked by the innocence-protection couplet. Mrs F invokes the teacher as mother position, relating it to practices of pampering, care, love and attention whilst situating it within psychological defines understandings of childhood development premised on positive reinforcement (Robinson 2013; MacNaughton 2000; Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012; Kane 2013). A simple cause and effect relationship is thus

presented in the teacher-mother couplet with love and care underpinning this logic. Positive reinforcement grounded in psychological science contributes to this logic and is based on what adults do, children will become.

The teachers position their roles as care-givers, nurturers who love and give attention to the emerging, innocent and developing child who is also in need of protection. Child development pedagogy is influential in the construction of the mother surrogate and forms the basis through which teachers understand their roles as caregivers and nurturers of young children. The understanding of gendering and young children is influenced by psychologically based development theories of how to be a teacher of young children. Caring, loving, protecting and encouraging the development of the child is constructed as paramount. This is what has been recognised as developmentally appropriate practice—DAP (Robinson 2013; MacNaughton 2000; Grieshaber and Canella 2001). Derived from psychological developmental theorists including Piaget (Robinson 2013), DAP defines a child and provides measures in relation to appropriate childhood development including the age and stage at which development should take place. DAP as MacNaughton (2000) and others argue (Robinson 2013) is a powerful discourse. Indeed, DAP is a means of childhood surveillance and reinforces children's state of innocence. Moreover, it underpins pedagogical practice, as teachers are self-regulated to determine and acknowledge the developmental levels of each child and is a dominant force in making sense of how children learn through the stages and ages of development. Mrs F says, "we can make them into what they become". Mrs F invests in development ages of the child and confirms power for herself in shaping and moulding a cohesive and coherent eventual self, an adult. This development-driven approach leads her to value her teacher-mother role, which accordingly will have a long-term positive effect on the coherence of the child's identity. Giving love and attention to innocent young children is isomorphic with development and with her as woman. This perpetuates the logic that makes children incapable of grasping complex sexual and gendered issues. Walkerdine's (1993: 209) study shows, for example, how a four-year-old told his infant teacher "show your knickers". The point I raise here is that the teacher-mother discourse is developmentalist and circumscribes the teacher's role to one of caring without recognition of power relations. In particular, the effect of this is to regulate the gendered identities of young children, thereby reproducing unequal relations. This is illustrated in the following quote:

Mrs B: I think men and women are different but differences mean respect.
DB: And the kids, how do they think about the differences?
Mrs B: I think that it's in their personalities. When we have little plays in the class, the boys always choose to be soldiers, policeman and firemen.
DB: And the girls?
Mrs B: Most often they choose to be teachers. More girls choose teachers because they see female teachers like their mummies.
DB: Do you think a male teacher could teach at this level?

Mrs B: This is a difficult question. I don't know of any of them teaching the little ones. Parents might at this stage feel some reservations about male teachers. I think this is across all the cultures.
DB: Why?
Mrs B: I think that we give the kids lots of love and I'm afraid that men can't really do that…

Seeing "teachers as mummies" confirms for Mrs B her mother surrogate position and her power. Mrs B says, "most often they [girls] choose to be teachers…because they see female teachers like their mummies". Moreover, this position serves to regulate gender identity and is intrinsic to its regulation. Is this why teaching is appealing to women and girls? My concern here is not to present whole pictures on this issue, but rather to provoke related research and to invoke discussion on how discourses construct and reconstruct gender identity and the gender positioning of particular people which may also explain the predominance of women teachers. Mrs B projects future teaching careers for the girls in her classroom. Female teachers "capacities for nurturance are amplified" (Walkerdine 1989: 74). The teacher-mother discourse illustrates the multiple ways through which gender and young children are connected and shape each other and how it works to regulate the identity of girls and women but also of men and boys.

If woman can nurture and care for young children and caring is only a "woman's way of knowing" (King 1997: 242; Sargent 2013), what about the actively absent men? Mrs B expresses reservations about men teaching young children. A moral panic is [re]created around absent men. Mrs B suggests that parents across the cultures have negative perceptions of men teaching young children. Men, she argues, cannot give love. How is love gendered? What type of love do men give? Why do men ignore teaching young children? Whose agenda is served when Mrs B suggests that girls and teaching are associated? Do women get their gender right by teaching and do men get their gender right by avoiding teaching young children? Invoking teacher as mother is problematic because it is based on common sense understandings of masculinity and femininity and psychological notions of developmentalism which are mutually constitutive and function in ways that reproduce differences based on biologically defined bodies whilst providing ample power for women to authorise the teaching of young children as women's work, limiting men's involvement and based upon an approach which reproduces children's lack of agency.

Teachers as mothers has a homogenising tendency which assumes that all women are alike with female teachers appearing to be invested with a particular capacity to care and love without attention to the broader social and cultural contexts which produces and shapes teaching discourses. In this sense female teachers continue to be invoked in which they are cast as idealised role models for young children which also results and premised upon a the singularity of gender as central factor in determining and defining teachers work (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012; Carrington and McPhee 2008).

This is illustrated in the following extract where the biological difference between men and women becomes a dichotomy between teacher as mother and father as authority underpinned by unequal relations of power:

> Mrs F: No matter what kind of children they are they need their fathers … whether they are boys or girls. Just having a father there makes a difference. The kids have that respect with their fathers. The mother can talk and talk but when the father stands up, they respect. I think it's the same with me …

Mrs F constructs discipline as male, not motherly and not associated with women. Men and fathers, Mrs F assumes, are better able to provide discipline "no matter what kind of children they are" and men are invested with authority. An important point must be raised here. The data presented is used to suggest the meanings that are attached to the teacher-mother position through which men are constructed differently. As such it is not representative of the range of meanings that can be made from the teachers in this study and should not be read as representative. Mrs B assumes that men have an easier time controlling children on the assumption that males (as fathers) are more comfortable with wielding authority—a biological and patriarchal privilege. Power and control is reinforced as male power and nurturing becomes exclusively a female domain. By positioning herself within the teacher-mother discourse, Mrs F fails to see the connection in shaping and regulating identity. She cannot exercise power because she wants to make room for the emerging child, she wants to pamper children because her theory of how children develop suggests the need for pampering and loving. There are inconsistent positions here; she cannot discipline because children must be loved but men can punish and discipline children.

In this section of the chapter, I have suggested that the teacher-mother discourse is normalised and has implications for the regulation of gender identity. At the very general level the teacher-mother surrogate position engenders the "innocence/protection couplet" between adult-child and men and women with unequal power. "Whose agenda is served by what the teaching/caring is?" (Rhedding-Jones 2001: 12). I have shown how care and nurturing has become axiomatic of women teaching young children (King 1997: 244).

Corporal Punishment and the Contradiction of Care

The idealised teacher as mother position fails to recognise the shifting and changing ways in which gender is lived and the conditions under which is shaped. Corporal punishment has a historical rooting in South Africa and under apartheid flourished contributing particularly to a violent school regime whilst endorsing toxic forms of masculinity (Morrell 2001). Whilst corporal punishment is now prohibited (Department of Education 1996) various studies have pointed to its active use in

schools notwithstanding the law (Breen et al. 2015; Dawes et al. 2005). Based on observations I show how even in grade one corporal punishment was used contradicting teacher as mother position and showing variation in the construction of femininity. The use of the cane [pipe] was used for the most trivial reason (for not getting a sum correct, forgetting to bring a book) and as Humphreys (2008) suggests violence was trivialised, normalised and an aggressive masculinity was supported through it:

3 August 1999. Khayaleni Primary Grade One, Mrs H.

As I walk alongside the classroom, the kids peep through the class window without much noise … as usual … I greet Mrs H and the classroom. And they all say "*sawubona* teacher". I look around and try to find a place …
Two desks are attached. It's meant for two but there are three and sometimes four kids to a two-seater. Sometimes they write on the floor. There's no space. Most times I am given preferential treatment and Mrs H asks a child to move over. But I decline.
I put my tape recorder on. Shuffle around. The class is so silent. All eyes are on my tape recorder. I taped part of the lesson this morning and the battery gave up on me. Mrs H has divided the class into three groups. The Zulu lesson is in progress. Wished again that I knew more of Zulu. My rudimentary *fanagalo* Zulu helps a little. In one group Mrs H separated the boys from the girls. They are learning vowels. I hear: " *ma me mi mo mu; ba be bi bo bu*". Hits the children with a stick … on their heads. This is repeated several times. I should have counted. The four girls are closest to the teacher. The ten boys are huddled behind the girls.
Another group stands together. An older boy leads the group. He has a stick in his hand. They repeatedly say:

isikole sakithi sihle [Our school is beautiful]
senesinzidlu zokufundela [It has classrooms]
Kunezimbali ezibomvu [There are red flowers]
Kunothisha besifisa mabesifazane [We have male and female teachers]
Amantombazane agqoka eziluhlaza [The colours of the girl's dresses are green]

The last group sit at their desks … writing. Teacher hits all children on the head repeatedly as they recite *ma, me, mi, mo, mu*. I am scared. I notice the children with the teacher are instructed to leave the group from the board area. They do so quietly, they sit quietly. They are terrified. They do not smile. They are afraid. The teacher walks to the group that has just been seated and slaps a boy on his face. I wonder why. The teacher leaves the class. I enjoy this time. There is shuffling, talk and chat. I can't understand all of it. I talk to Sipho. He says, "I am afraid of the teacher".

Later.
Mrs H walks in the classroom. Quiet. She picks on two children. They have not done their work. Mrs H shouts. She gets the stick from the table. It's a branch from a tree, I notice. She hits them on their back and legs. Stick breaks. Teacher gets

another stick. This time is not a branch. They call it a pipe. Mrs H continues where she had stopped. They are crying, sobbing quietly.
At this time I wrote nothing.

Later.
Mrs H provides the children with instructions. It's time for numeracy.
Mrs H says and writes on the board: 3-1= … Teacher asks for an answer.
Those who do not raise their hands are hit with this orange pipe. I notice some smart ones—they raise their hands but they do not know the answer as Mrs H questions them. Caught. They are hit. Mrs H distributes tin caps to the classroom. The children use those to count. Mrs H walks out of the classroom. She tells me that she will be back shortly. I try to question children as I sit and move from group to group. I ask Sipho whether he likes school he says he prefers school to home.

DB:	Why?
Sipho:	We play, we learn.
Nomvula:	(interrupting) We play netball. We have cultural activities. We learn to respect
Sipho:	(adds) We eat.
DB:	Do you eat at home?
Sipho:	No not all the time. There is no food in the morning, sometimes there is no food after school.

The children in this group agree with this answer.
I ask the children what they like to eat. "Beans, brown bread, rice, *uphutu* [a grainy meal made from maize meal], samp, *dombolo* [dumplings], cabbage, spinach and meat", I write as they shout out.

Later.
It is 3 min before 11.
The food that was cooking has arrived. Mrs H and the children stand up and pray before eating. They say "God bless our food".

Disrupting the teacher-mother couplet, the use of corporal punishment alerts us to the variations in the construction of the gender binary whilst drawing attention to the highly charged and unequal relations of power through which Mrs H dominated her classroom. Gender, as Chap. 1 indicates, fluctuates and is often contradictory (Butler 1990). Both men and women can enact both masculine and feminine identities and in the observations above Mrs H takes on female masculinity that is excessively violent and rooted in authoritarianism. Whilst there is much disagreement about what constitutes corporal punishment (Humphreys 2008; Dunne et al. 2006), the use of the 'pipe' in caning and hitting children was one such example of corporal punishment. In South Africa Morrell (2001) argues that violent forms of masculinity play an important role in perpetuating corporal punishment, which also promotes the qualities of masculinities that legitimise violence within the school context. Chaps. 7 and 8 of the book will demonstrate how such violence is used as a means to an end even amongst young boys and girls at this school. Mrs H endorses

a form of masculinity that is toxic, in contrast to earlier discourses valorising care and childhood innocence and heavily laden in unequal relations of power.

The deadly silence in the classroom and children's fear as illustrated in transcripts above has a major effect on the way in which learning takes place with both boys and girls expressing fear of the teacher. The next section will show how young children made sense of the gender of the teacher in lights of this context of corporal punishment and violence. Whilst going against common sense assumptions that put teachers as mothers together, corporal punishment works to reproduce a masculine disciplinary regime, which as Humphreys (2008) notes also shapes gender and relations of power amongst boys and girls in the classroom and in the school (Department of Social Development//UNICEF 2012).

Who Should Teach You? "… Which Ever One Isn't the Strictest, like a Girl"

"Who should teach you?" When children talked about who should teach them, they negotiated their responses, contesting the teacher-mother assumptions, whilst reproducing gender roles and identities based on essentialist understandings of gender. I begin the section with children from *KwaDabeka* to illustrate the deep-seated connection between children's meaning about the gender of the teacher and the broader context where male violence is experienced and normative:

DB: Why don't you like him [male teacher]?
Lungelo: Because he is a boy and I am a boy and because a boy is hitting me … because he is a boy and I am a boy…because I don't like the man … his hands are hard. I'm scared for a male teacher … When he hits you he hits like … like this … 'boom' (everyone laughs) … The hands are strrrooonng … and his hands are fat.
Santa: And when he hits you, it pains and it gets red.
DB: So what if you got a man teacher next year … what would you do?
Brian: I will go to another teacher.
Lungelo: I will go to another school.
Luthando: Mam, he is going to hit me and the hands is gonna get broken.
Lungelo: He is going to hit us and his hands is like … ice.
DB: But who told you that the man teacher is going to hit you?
Ayanda: He will take the pipe [stick] and he is going boah!
Luthando: He will smack you and you will cry and cry and cry … he will smack … smack … smack.
Santa: Female … because she gives us work and she gives us time to relax … they don't hit you like this.
Mncedo: A man teacher, he will teach you to fight with other children.

The understanding of the male teacher, the association with violence and the male capacity to do violence and corporal punishment have contextual relevance and must be lodged in the broader social landscape at *KwaDabeka* as described in Chap. 1, where masculinity, violence and children's vulnerability to male violence loom large. This focus will continue in Chaps. 7 and 8. As Parkes (2015) indicates, the dynamics of school violence varies from one context to another and is shaped by distinct patterns that invoke the history, race, class and gender that underlies the broader context of violence and the enactment of violence at school. In such circumstances schools reinforce violence through everyday practices in and outside of the classroom. Whilst masculinity, male strength and power is a global pattern, the normalisation of male violence at *KwaDabeka* School and the boys negotiation and resistance against the presence of a male teacher in the early years of the primary school is the effect of real everyday vulnerability to violence. The vivid account of and opinions about men and male teachers points to unequal age and power relations where young boys between the ages of six and nine years old are in fear and live in fear of older men and boys within the wider context. Their powerlessness in the face of men—and the social construction of men as violent—produces their subordination and fear. Chap. 7 explores the ways in which some boys, despite rejecting adult (violent) men and corporal punishment are invested and complicit in using violence to express hegemonic masculinity. In so doing, violence is reproduced where aggressive masculine patterns are valued. The most important point here is that the effect of corporal punishment reinforces the violence in the community and validates violence to achieve an end whilst supporting toxic patterns of masculinity (even as women teachers like Mrs H above are bearers of masculinity) where gender relations of inequalities are pervasive and difficult to challenge when violence is the valued means to gain power.

Against the violence of men, is the construction and idealisation of female teachers and the complex operation of power.

DB: What about a female teacher?

Lungelo: A female teacher! … I like it! (Everybody laughs) … because the way she is speaking … so nice … speaking with me and my friends … Give you presents … all that … give you flowers …

Thabiso: I like a female teacher… because it (she) is too beautiful (laughter again) … I don't like a man teacher … 'cos he does not give us anything.

The idealisation of the female teacher occurs within a dichotomous understanding of men as violent and women associated with being nice. In understanding how power is manifest in this dual positioning, boys show fear and are subordinated by older men with the bodily capacity for violence. In contrast, boys regain power in relation to the construction of female teachers that is complexly underlined by heterosexuality. Boys' power is promoted as women (and girls) are produced as nice and beautiful within the heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990). In doing masculinity boys' collectively invest in their heterosexual power, even at seven and eight years old, to regain the power lost in relation to men and male teachers. With

female teachers, the heterosexual gaze is detected through the laughter and the construction of women and girls as available within the heteronormative order and subordinated. The laughter that underlies the conversation regarding female teachers is further evidence of the ways in which young heterosexual masculinities are produced through laughter and humour (Renold 2005). In constructing the female teacher as nice and beautiful (and thus part of the heterosexual matrix), they were able to assert their power as boys (and men) over women reinforcing assumptions that reproduce the patriarchal order.

At other schools however there were variations:

Conversation with Robert, Tyson, Ken and Siya at Westridge School

In this conversation below with four boys construct young masculinities in opposition to female teachers displacing adult female power:

Robert: I don't like a lady teacher. They scream a lot. They don't let you do things.
Tyson: They [female teachers] don't let you play soccer. A man teacher would let us play cricket. They even give us training.
Ken: We don't have to do spelling everyday. We won't have to colour flowers. Oh *ja*, and they [men] don't scream.
Siya: We can play computers. Men are soft so they listen to you.
Robert: My dad is a baseball coach. He plays everything with me not my mum.

Robert contests the teacher-mother discourse and instead points to his active agency in his dislike for 'lady teachers' who "scream a lot"—based on young masculine power and the stereotype which constructs women as emotional. The rejection of women teachers is premised upon masculine ideals and the signifiers of appropriate masculinity including sport and work type (Connell 1995; Mills 2004), which is in conflict with what primary school female teachers represent. The boys also 'do' masculinity as they as align with male teachers as they invest in soccer and cricket. Whilst Smith (2004) found that some male primary school teachers differentiated from female teachers by assuming responsibility for sports, in the above example boys differentiate from female teachers, subordinating them, contesting their role as adults and as they align with hegemonic forms of masculinity based on an alliance with men and sport. Sport is a key signifier of masculinity and the boys accommodate hegemonic masculinity by distancing from non-sporty female teachers. Chap. 4 will explore how sport is key to the definition of masculinity in South Africa but here I want to illustrate how masculinity is produced in opposition to teacher as mothers and disparaged. The boys support and endorse a hegemonic form of masculinity that is key to the expression of power.

Work given by female teachers including the colouring of flowers was used as another form of disparagement because of its presumed easiness in contrast to computers. The boys thus collectively defined and regulated understandings of masculinity and femininity whilst subordinating female teachers as the negative other. On the other hand, conversation with Stacy and Tarryn were critical of men:

Stacy: They [Male teachers] don't do fun things … they don't teach you art. They only teach science and writing.
Tarryn: They [Male] are too strict. They don't take us on trips to parks to have picnics. I went to the shark farm with Mrs B.
Stacy: My dad used to be a teacher and he shouts loud.
Tarryn: Whichever one isn't the strictest like a girl.

Men are rejected because they are assumed to be serious, too strict, and concerned with high-level work including science and writing. The rejection of male teachers is premised upon assumptions that link men with power, academic authority and assertiveness, which they reject as at odds with the primary school (Mills 2004). They reproduce the primary school as non-traditional male work and cast women as better suited to work with them. The focus on men as too strict and with loud voices must be situated within gender relations of power where girls already at the age of six, seven, eight and nine, are inscribing within normative understandings of male power and authority creating vulnerability for young girls as they position themselves within these gendered hierarchies. Tarryn breaks the gender dualism contradicting the teacher-mother position suggesting the flexibility of gender when she refers to teachers who are not strict. The ambivalent ways in which boys and girls responded to the question of the gender of teaching suggested a variation, accommodation and rejection of gender roles and the teacher as mother position:

Conversation with Faith, Tim, Nikhil and Cynthia at Umhlatuzana School

Faith: I don't like a man teacher. They talk ugly. Ladies are nice. Man teachers must teach boys.
Tim: For PE [physical education] I like a man teacher.
Nikhil: I like a man teacher because they will take my part. Mrs D takes the girls part. Also we will have harder sums. Mrs D gives us such easy sums.
Cynthia: I like half a man teacher and half a woman teacher 'cos if the man shouts then the lady will say no.

"Half a man teacher and half a woman teacher" captures the complex ways in which boys and girls negotiated gender excluding men based on masculine characteristics like loud talk and representing the sport and intellectual work ('harder sums') as key to the signification of masculinity. The half man/half woman position, whilst suggesting a great deal of flexibility and fairness does however, get produced along familiar gender roles where the female teacher is expected to control the shouting of the man. This cameo suggests how boys and girls perpetuate, normalise and contest restrictive understandings of gender (Davies 1993). Thus gender is actively constructed, challenged, produced and maintained within a dynamic of hierarchies, differentiated through gender binaries based on oppositional essentialised accounts of masculinity and femininity.

Conclusion

Prominent discourses surrounding the early years of primary schooling position teaching as a feminised territory with female teachers homogenously offering care and nurture. This chapter has shown how teachers as mothers forms a complex interconnected web enforcing categorisation and differentiation along gender lines, supporting sex role socialisation based on the fixing of bodies in terms of gender and intertwined with adult female power and children's conceptualisation as innocent and vulnerable. The teacher-mother couplet was interrogated for the ways in which gender inequalities become manifest. The discursive construction of teacher as mother produces and authorises women as teachers of young children and this territorialisation of teaching in the early years as a female-only domain has a significant effect on how teachers view the prospect of male teachers in this arena. Variations in the understanding of teacher provide important local insight into gendered patterns. Whilst the ethic of care is an important part of teacher pedagogies (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012), this chapter has shown why the teacher-mother nexus is embroiled within normative constructions of gender and women's work. Given the recent call for men's involvement in care work, these discourses have implications for gender equality. Teachers as mothers work to reify existing patterns of gender inequalities encouraging the early years of primary schooling as women's work, excluding men through the complicity in dominant constructions of gender and childhood whilst preventing a focus on boys and girls as active gendered and sexual agents.

Against the dominant teaching discourses, this chapter continues the main argument made in this book as it examines the paradox between teaching discourses premised upon love, care and childhood innocence and the evident contradictions whilst illustrating children's active agency in the social and cultural construction of gender and sexuality. Boys and girls actively produce gender as they challenge and conform to dominant teaching discourses. Boys were especially invested in maintaining their power by aligning with male teachers based on the exclusion or subordination of women teachers whilst endorsing key aspects of masculinity including sport and work. Girls too invoked the gender dualism suggesting their subordinate position with gender and generational relations with words such as 'strict, ugly, loud' used to indicate their subordination within gender relations and the rationale for their concern. Both boys and girls were able to pick up on readily available discourses of gender based on power, domination and exclusion. This was not left unchallenged showing variation and suggesting that gender is contradictory. Context specific analysis of both teachers as mothers and children's meanings of male teachers showed the significance of attention to local cultures. At *KwaDabeka,* children reproduced masculinity but did so through the rejection of male teachers and the association with violence.

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Chapter 4
"Boys Will Be Boys": What Do Teachers Have to Do with It?

> They have so much of energy. The girls are so lethargic. You know I was the PE [physical education] teacher in the other school I taught at and I tell you I couldn't take that kind of slow go. It's the girls. The *boys are sporty* and competitive and they make this class such a pleasure to teach.
> [Conversation with Mrs C, *Westridge School,* (emphasis added)]

DB: Do you work with Jody?
Jordan: No.
DB: Why?
Jordan: 'Cos boys rule and girls drool.

> [Conversation with 8-year-old Jordan, in the top Mathematics group called Diamonds in Mrs C's grade 2 classroom]

This chapter gives attention to Mrs C and boys' construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity at *Westridge School* through discussion and analysis of discourses underpinned by "boys will be boys". Key in this process is the distance created between masculinity and femininity, which is reflective of the deeply entrenched discursive construction of femininity as subordinate. Gender, as Cranny-Francis et al. (2003) note divides us into two groups, that is, male and female, and this gender divide also serves to privilege male over female. In Chap. 2, I argued that dominant teaching discourses normalise gender inequalities through the dictum, 'boys will be boys'. Teaching discourses draw from overlapping theoretical frameworks ranging from biological determinism, sex-role socialisation and theories of gender development (Thorne 1993). Through these restrictive frameworks, boys are positioned as naturally hard-wired, tough, troublesome, aggressive and powerful in producing unequal relations of power.

Connell (1995, 2012) has challenged common sense assumptions based on biological determinism and sex-role socialisation pointing to gender as dynamic, contradictory and complex. It is important to note here that whilst there has been a challenge to common-sense understandings of masculinity and femininity based on oppositional categories, such ideas continue to hold much sway in understanding gender in the early years of primary schooling (Paechter 2007; Skelton 2003). It is

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thus important to understand dominant teaching discourses around 'boys will be boys' in light of its powerful place in positioning children as biologically different and socialised within predictable gender roles and identities (MacNaughton 2000; Paechter 2007; Egan 2013; Jackson and Scott 2010; Martino and Ingrey 2016).

The dictum, "boys will be boys" has universal appeal and resonates with many other studies of primary boys, masculinities and schooling where male power is normalised (Renold 2005; Swain 2005, 2006; Paechter 2007; Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012; Martino et al. 2009; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2013). A central feature of these studies is the focus on power, the hierarchical forms of masculinity as elucidated by Connell (1995) and the subordination of girls and other boys. Connell's (1995) framework of masculinities has shown the complex ways in which gender identity is negotiated and the power relations that underpin such negotiations. In the process of becoming gendered, people are actively engaged in negotiating and mediating the process of gendering. Connell (1995) argues that this process of negotiating and mediating gender is a life-long project, is contradictory, it changes and is context bound.

Whilst "boys will be boys" has widespread appeal, the chapter will draw attention to its specificity at *Westridge School* that makes certain subject positions available and not others. I continue this focus at *Umbumbulu School* in Chap. 5. Chapters 7 and 8 will draw attention to *KwaDabeka School* to illustrate the differential patterns of young masculinity and femininity. The contextualisation of power impacts on the performances of gender and sexuality in different sites. Race, class and social specifics influence the range of subject positions inhabited. In other words, social locations create conditions for relations of power. In identifying specific teaching discourses I show differential access to power, practice of power and effects of power. I argue, that to understand how gender features in the early years of primary schooling, we need to attend to both the shared discourses which construct the asexual/de-gendered child as I have done in Chaps. 2 and 3 and the social, political and economic structures within which teachers, boys and girls negotiate gender and sexuality.

At *Westridge School*, beginning with Mrs C in the quote above, constructs dominant images of young, white middle-class boys with unequal effects for girls as well as boys. As many scholars note masculinities must be understood within the broader social and structural context (Swain 2005; Frosh et al. 2002; Mills 2001; Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2013; Martino and Ingrey 2016). As noted, gender is made more complex through its articulation with race and class. Masculinities are racialised and operate through social class positions (Frosh et al. 2002). Reflecting broader social patterns of male power, the teachers endorse hegemonic masculinity embodying physical domination, sport, strength, courage, competitiveness, intellectualness and aggression (Swain 2005). Whilst these exalted forms of male hegemony are inhabited and supported by boys and men, women often agree with these practices (Connell 1995), leading Skelton (2001) to argue that female teachers too are bearers of masculinity. As Connell (1995: 77) argues, the "most visible bearers of hegemonic masculinity are (not) always the most powerful people". As this chapter will show teaching

discourses are complicit in supporting the notion that teachers are bearers of hegemonic masculinity. I provide examples of how boys and girls negotiate masculinity and accommodate versions of competitiveness and academic prowess as key to masculine strength and power. It is argued in this chapter that investments in hegemonic masculinity are restrictive and work against gender equality in the early years of primary schooling. In the next section of the chapter I draw attention to the theoretical constructs around masculinities before addressing the specificities of teaching discourses and how boys' mediate young masculinities.

Understanding Masculinities

At *Westridge School*, teaching discourses create gender differences between boys and girls in relation to hierarchical forms of masculinity through which gender is policed and regulated and male power confirmed and normalised. Boys and girls negotiate the parameters of these constructs. These discourses take on a contextual basis. Connell (1987, 1995) draws on Gramsci's notion of hegemony in conceptualising the formation of hierarchical masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a form of masculinity that is most powerful in any contextual setting. Hegemonic masculinity, whilst powerful, is an elusive ideal and not everyone has access to it. It has to be constantly struggled over in order to produce the hegemonic or 'culturally exalted' form of masculinity. Simply, it involves the operation of power. Hegemonic masculinity cannot be understood without an understanding of relations of power and men's privileged position within patriarchal society. Indeed as Connell (2002: 59) states, "power operating through institutions, power in the form of oppression of one group by another, is an important part of the structure of gender".

Connell's theoretical framings have been widely explored to critique the simplistic understanding of gender and the latter's incapacity to handle issues of power (Martino and Ingrey 2016). The concept hegemonic masculinity has been criticised for its lack of attention to age relations, its heteronormative assumptions and for reifying essentialist categorisation of gender (Francis 2000). In the chapters that follow I expand these understandings as far as children's own agency is concerned in relation to gender and sexuality. However, like Renold (2005), the critique against the concept hegemonic masculinity has to do with the ways in which it has been loosely used rather than the concept of hegemonic masculinity. I draw on some aspects of masculinities that are helpful in understanding teachers and boys in this chapter:

Diversity of masculinities: As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 836) note, "Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting". Masculinities are thus multiple. There is not just one pattern of conduct in

all times and places. In different contexts masculinities vary according to different cultures and different periods of history (Connell 1995) and masculinity changes over time. There are different patterns of masculinity, different ways of being a boy. These differences relate to the interlocking dimensions of race, class and sexuality (Mac an Ghaill 1994). More than one kind of masculinity can be found in a given cultural institution. These differences mean differential access to power, practices of power and effects of power (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill 2001). Masculinities are thus fluid, constructed and cannot belong to one person or group. They are socially constructed and involve a constant battle between rival meanings of being a boy. Masculinity is contextually located and the particular social setting provides the resources for making and negotiating masculinity (Frosh et al. 2002; Swain 2005).

Hierarchies and Exclusions: There are definite relationships between the different kinds of masculinities. Differences depend on categories of hierarchies, inclusion and exclusion. Masculine and feminine identities exist in relation to each other. The gender processes propose masculine and feminine identities as distinct and then privileges a hegemonic form of masculinity in relation to femininities and other types of masculinities. In contemporary society, one pattern of hegemonic masculinity is most respected. The patterns of conduct that are associated with hegemonic masculinity are usually authoritative, aggressive, heterosexual, physically brave, sporty and competitive (Connell 1987, 1995; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Connolly 2004; Salisbury and Jackson 1996; Gilbert and Gilbert 1998). This hegemonic masculinity is more respected than other patterns. It is celebrated, presented as an ideal and invested with power. Hegemonic masculinity can be quiet and implicit but it can also be violent, as in the case of racist or homophobic violence. Connell (1995) identifies four types of masculinities including the hegemonic form. The other three are non-hegemonic forms of masculinity: which is a move away from power. They are subordinate, complicit and marginalised masculinity and a pecking order of masculinities is established. The non-hegemonic forms of masculinities are not revered and implicate race, class, sexuality and ethnicity. For example, being a boy in a black dislocated township school in Durban may be quite different from being a rich white boy in an elite school in Durban. However even within specific contexts there is a range of masculinities that exists. The important point is that different forms of masculinity exist together and the hegemonic form has to be constantly struggled for and is subject to challenge. Not all men embody the common form of masculinity and many find that are subordinated by and to it (Mac an Ghaill 1994). All men live in a state of tension with, or distance from, hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995), but the patterns of exclusion and hierarchies are an important source of conflict and violence. Those who do not conform to hegemonic forms of masculinity are often labelled as 'wimps' imputing the feminine whilst subordinating women and girls (Martino and Ingrey 2016; Kimmel and Messner 2006).

In advancing a structural social constructionist position, I understand masculinities in ways that attend to power within the micro contexts whilst recognising

the wider structures of inequalities and the broad patterns that serve to reproduce power between men and women in unequal ways. As Kenway (1996: 509) observes, masculinities provide a complex picture of male identities as well as the social, political and cultural forces that shape and reshape them. This brief sketch of masculinities provides a correction to oversimplified discourses that render identity as fixed and immutable.

In school-based research the focus on boys and masculinity has often taken place in relation to debates about failing boys (Epstein et al. 1998). In the West a moral panic has developed about boys as the new disadvantaged group and is an effect of backlash feminist politics (Skelton and Francis 2009). Here as Ringrose (2007) and Martino and Ingrey (2016) suggest, the backlash is motivated by concerns about the boys' struggles. Boys are regarded as the new victims of gender equality. Epstein et al. (1998: 6) suggest that these concerns are captured by the following three discourses: "poor boys, failing boys and boys will be boys". In reaction to these concerns, scholars have interrogated the 'failing boys' framing for its essentialist underpinnings which eschew structural dimensions of masculinities (Epstein et al. 1998; Renold et al. 2015). A major claim against the 'failing boys' perspective is the homogenising tendencies of grouping boys as a universal group whilst endorsing an essentialist notion of masculinity based on the discredited understanding of gender as biologically inscribed without due attention to race, class, sexuality and age relations (Ringrose 2007). The backlash politics against feminist victories in schools however, is not one that shapes the focus on boys and men in South Africa. Rather, there has been a strong emphasis on addressing violent masculinities and masculinities that put women and girls at risk (Ratele 2015). Overwhelmingly, South African research on masculinities has focused upon African masculinities. Jewkes and Morrell (2012) have argued that feelings of estrangement and uncertainty for many young African boys and men in South Africa in a context of social and economic stress—as well as the emphasis in the new Constitution on women's rights—has resulted in greater levels of violence, sexual risk-taking habits and also sexual violence. African men and boys in South Africa have thus been particularly problematised in the context of the HIV pandemic, with campaigns and literature addressing them, especially, as people with multiple partners and engaging in forms of sexual harassment and violence.

Masculinities are not fixed but are inextricably linked to social context. In South Africa gender violence, particularly in areas of poverty and social depression, has led to an examination of violent African masculinities (Morrell 2001). We know very little of the variations in masculinities and middle-class masculinities are less under scrutiny and considered less problematic as a result of low levels of gender and sexual violence amongst this population. Of significance, and in line with many other ethnographic school-based studies, masculinities are far more diverse, complex and constructed under a range of social, economic and cultural conditions producing and reproducing the gender order whilst being variable, multiple and changing (Swain 2005; Renold 2005).

"Boys Will Be Boys" Contextualising Masculinities at Westridge School

The teachers and children in this study emerge from and are situated within an elite context defined by an accumulation of social and economic capital. Their social location and their privilege in terms of race and class is the effect of apartheid. As many authors have argued the experience of being a boy is based on different cultural variables including race and class (Kimmel and Messner 2006). Apartheid created and reinforced a hierarchy of race and gender with the consequence that white men and boys in particular occupied the apex in the social hierarchy. Power was exerted politically and publicly by white men albeit with contestation and struggles. The end of apartheid however has precipitated changing forms of race and class relations as well as changing masculinities in South Africa (Morrell 2001; Ratele 2015). An ascendant African urbanised middle-class masculinity is emerging although hegemonic white masculinity continues to exert a powerful influence by the array of social, cultural, intellectual and economic resources which apartheid forged. The teachers' understandings of white boys are not removed from these social formations of male power and they actively invest in the resources defining white male hegemony.

One aspect of this formation of masculinity is interest in and participation in sport (Bhana 2008). In South African schools sport is a central experience for many white boys and stretches beyond the school experience. This is reflected in the current composition of South Africa's national rugby, swimming and cricket teams for example—albeit with change—which are dominated by white men. Under apartheid and a practice that continues, white boys tended to be initiated into sport at an early age as spectators of rugby and cricket and as participants at school where sport is and remains compulsory (Morrell 2001). Rugby, cricket and soccer have played an important part in white social identity and skewed apartheid investments in school sport permitted the development of such identities (Nauright and Chandler 1995). Rugby was significant in creating a white male identity that separated rugby-playing whites from non-rugby-playing blacks. Booth (1999) states that rugby was coupled with class and race and its gendered ramifications reproduced notions of white male middle-class masculinity where success on the field and the ability to instil fear elicited admiration and power. The racial face of rugby is changing driven by broader social goals and transformation, albeit at a slow pace. Nevertheless, rugby remains an important dimension in the making of white hegemonic masculinities.

Although there is a body of international work emerging beginning to explore primary schooling as masculinising institutions, the values and meanings that teachers in these sectors attach to young boys have been less examined (see MacNaughton 2000; Keddie 2003b, 2006; Blaise 2005; Connolly 2004). MacNaughton (2000), working in Australia, argues that childhood teachers are

constrained by traditional beliefs, expectations and norms governing boys' behaviour. Criticising biological and psychological assessments of gender, MacNaughton (2000) notes that such beliefs provide a simple deterministic explanation of how people make sense of the world, which leads to the reproduction of patriarchal gender relations (Keddie 2003a, b; Keddie and Mills 2007).

Showing how teachers and boys draw upon selected understandings to define and regulate masculinities this chapter shows how dominant masculine norms are enacted. In South Africa boys, and white boys in particular, still enjoy privileged positions in education even though progressive policy has made some inroads to inequalities of power and privilege. The early patterns of boys' privilege are particularly significant given the fact that such privileged positions yield dividends in terms of access to power, highly rewarded occupations and greater accumulation of social and economic capital.

The particular formation of white middle-class masculinities in South Africa includes sporting prowess, skills in the boardroom, competitiveness and power. The ideal hegemonic pattern is authoritative, tough, heterosexual, brave, adventurous, assertive, strong, and competitive and in possession of public knowledge (Connell 1987, 1995; Gilbert and Gilbert 1998). For the boys in this chapter, knowledge of mathematics for example, and being identified as 'best in maths'—as well as the gendering of mathematics as masculine and the power invested in mathematics—is really important in the structuring of hegemonic masculinities. On the other hand femininity is discursively produced as "antithetical to masculine rationality to such an extent that femininity is equated with poor performances even when the girl or women in question is performing well" (Walkerdine 1990). As a number of studies have shown, particular forms of middle-class masculinity tend to incorporate a sense of competitiveness partly around academic success (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Frosh et al. 2002). Academic success is very often effeminised and hegemonic status is often gained through disruptive behaviour (Francis 2000). In other words boys are under pressure not only to ensure academic success (as a route to the boardroom) but to inhabit positions that give meaning to hegemony which include disruptive behaviour and distancing from academic prowess. Such contradictions produce tensions for the ways in which teachers in this study interpret and give meaning to boys.

However, the boys in this study use the available middle-class resources in which status is attached to being the best in maths, and in the process equip themselves for social mobility and a middle class/affluent destination. This resonates with the broader constructions of white middle class South Africa and of white middle class men (Morrell 2001). In any given institutional setting, many different forms of masculinity co-exist. Embracing the ideas developed by Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity provides an important conceptual reference point in understanding the ways in which female teachers and boys in the early years of primary schooling incorporate these ideas into their everyday understandings of young children.

Boys Will Be Boys

In Chap. 2, I provided an analysis of the dominant teaching discourse through which 'boys will be boys' is articulated. At *Westridge School* this took on specific dynamics with inequitable effects:

Mrs C: You know it's very seldom that the boys and girls play with each other in my class. The boys are very competitive. You will notice the boys dominate most of the top groups in reading and maths. The girls are really overshadowed in the class. Even if you ask them to team up they choose friends of the same gender.

DB: Why is it that way?

Mrs C: It's typical. The boys are the lively ones. You must have heard the noise. It's them. They just love to scream and shout, quite typical you know.

DB: What do you mean?

Mrs C: Boys tend to have a strong character. The girls are quiet – more the dolly type. Not that they don't have those amongst them that scream and screech. There are ringleaders. Look at Linda she's one of them yet she is so quiet in the class because the boys just overpower her …

Mrs C names power as a central means to explore the nature of gender inequalities but boys' hegemonic pattern of conduct is celebrated. This positions boys collectively as privileged over girls (Connell 1995). Such patterns of privilege are evident in the notion that boys are strong, lively, shout, and scream which Mrs C constructs as "typical". Typical girls' behaviour is associated with being passive, weak and hushed. The "boys will be boys" discourse serves to overshadow girls, producing judgement about what constitutes an ideal boy. Mrs C is aware of boys overpowering girls, but she fails to see it as disadvantageous to any particular group because she relies on biologically based difference. Mrs C was able to position boys in terms of a common sense approach, but it involved the denigration of femininity. As Kimmel and Messner (2006) argue, being a real boy is an entitlement and expectation of power—a flight from and repudiation of femininity. These are damaging social relations and hinder the work towards equality. In fact they work to produce the privilege for the boardrooms in which men, and particularly white men in South Africa, have a history of success in the material world.

Further evidence in the regulation of behaviour driven by biologically based assessments of gender is indicated below:

Observation at Break

At the end of the play break all children in grades one, two and three have to line up before being dismissed by the teacher on duty. They do so in orderly gendered lines. The teacher on duty expects silence and order before she could allow them to move to their classrooms. This demand for order takes time, so that a lot of time passes from the ringing of the bell to the time that the children leave for their classrooms. In-between all of this there is chatting, nibbling, laughing, closing up lunch boxes, gobbling leftover snacks, hiding behind others as they did so. This was despite the teacher's insistence on straight lines, order and silence.

> I heard her say: "Boys be quiet otherwise, I will bring the black book". The black book is the ultimate punishment. As observer, this was the clearest example of how teachers secure boys' visibility through naturalising their behaviour.

The visibility of boys as problems is tied intimately to biological constructions of masculinity. It is assumed that there is a core personality and character-defining masculinity that all boys actually or potentially share. These essentialist arguments work to constrain teachers in exercising power and ensuring a more harmonious class-room that benefits all. The "boys will be boys" pathology is intimately connected to and shaped by the discourse that makes difference biological and is intrinsic to the formation of gendered identities. The production of identity is linked with the production of particular discourses, such as biological determinism, which serve to legitimate masculine power.

Rugger Buggers and Smoothies

The meanings that teachers give to hegemonic masculinities link to symbolic patterns but also are highly contextual. This helps understand not only the collective force of masculinity but also the different ways through which teachers ascribe meaning to hegemonic masculinity in particular school contexts. As bearers of masculinity, this section shows how female teachers invested in a particular formation of masculinities that encompassed sport, adventure and competition called "rugger buggers" in contrast to "smoothies" who did not live up to these ideals. In fact Connell (1995: 54) describes sport as a leading "definer of masculinity" and by constructing sporty boys, teaching discourses invest in this pattern of conduct. In South Africa, rugby has played an important part in the white social identity. It is a highly structured social institution and a symbol of "white male success, exuberance, athleticism, solidity" (Morrell 1995: 95). Rugby has become a means through which white boys and men assert their class and masculine values. The affirmation of male physical and intellectual power underscored "rugger bugger" masculinity.

A salient feature at *Westridge School* was general interest in sport particularly among white boys. Mrs C was a former physical education teacher. Mrs B was in charge of soccer and organised soccer matches in the school and against other schools in the area. Cricket and rugby featured in classroom talk. Boys proudly showed off their expensive V100 or V600 bats as they spoke with eagerness about cricket. This resonates with the consumerist middle-class, sometimes rich and generally white culture of the school. Identification with the V100 or the V600 cricket bat imbricates their particular race/class context. The ideal of sportiness was also closely connected to competition, intellectual rigour:

DB: Why are the boys in your class that way?

Mrs C: They have so much of energy. The girls are so lethargic. You know I was the PE [physical education] teacher in the other school I taught at and I tell you I couldn't take that kind of slow go. It's the girls. The *boys are sporty*

> and competitive and they make this class such a pleasure to teach. There is so much of competition maybe because I encourage competition. You should have been here the other day. You should have seen the boys. We had this competition … me and the Diamonds. We had one minute to finish 10 questions. I won. You should have seen how they squealed and fought and refused to accept that I won. But I actually like that kind of spirit they show. (Emphasis added)

In this vignette Mrs C talks of white boys in the top math group called the Diamond Group. Boys are constructed as energetic, sporty and competitive. They squeal and they fight. Squealing is positively associated with the fighting spirit and is linked to particular forms of sporty masculinity amongst eight-year-old boys. Mrs C celebrates the dominant pattern of conduct for boys. She teaches implicitly about who to be and what to value. Energy, competition, squealing and a fighting spirit are the patterns of conduct that are suggestive of a winning team so that people like Shaun Pollock are valued. Mrs C locks into a predominantly white, middle-class, South African sports-mad discourse. As an ex-physical education teacher, she encourages toughness and competitiveness and links sport with manliness. A particular kind of masculinity is being imbricated here not uncommon in the literature of gender and its relation to sport. Connell (1995), for example, claims that through sport boys learn to value the aggressive competition and toughness central to formation of a particular kind of masculinity.

Mrs C's construction of sporty boys affirms a normative masculinity that is differentiated from the lethargic "slow go" femininity. She extends the boy/girl typology. In this way she works in subtle ways to develop specific skills and capacities for specific types; she "encourages competition"; she likes the tough competitive spirit and in this way she validates and celebrates this particular form of masculinity. The validation of this type of masculinity is closely associated with her devaluation of girls as "slow go". Thus, boys are taught to value a particular form of masculinity tied to misogynist strategies of differentiation (Keddie 2003b).

Mrs C encourages competitiveness and validates the "rugger bugger" masculinity fashioned around sporty conduct including competitiveness and contestations: "We had one minute to finish 10 questions. I won. You should have seen how they squealed and fought and refused to accept that I won. But I actually like that kind of spirit they show". Mrs C validates the practice of hegemonic power which is dependent on performing particular styles which include squealing, fighting, refusing to accept the teacher's victory, thus easily blurring teacher/child power relations. The boys can and do contest and their contestation is facilitated as Mrs C exalts "rugger bugger" masculinity. The boys' power and their agency are validated and momentarily escape the power of the teacher's authority. Fighting and challenging emerges as an important practice in the lives of boys and one endorsed by the teacher. For Mrs C, the capacity to fight becomes a marker of competitiveness and a boy's spirit. She naturalises the aggressive spirit not only of boys but also between boys and teachers. Normative conceptions of "rugger bugger" white

middle-class South African masculinity are upheld from a very early stage. It is also the marker against which other forms of boys' behaviour are judged and assessed:

DB: And Stephen?

Mrs C: He is a real star. Brilliant. He's the one I competed with and he just wouldn't accept my win. He said that I cheated. Really, he accused me of cheating! He is good but sometimes he does become opinionated. He is *Bennie boekwurm* [one who is fond of books] type. He is more academically inclined and so uncoordinated. He hates sport. (Emphasis added)

DB: And Clayton?

Mrs C: Clayton is the *sporty type*. Always on the go. He must have his last say. But a real lovely boy. He does pottery though. His mother thinks that it's good to do. But I don't think it will last. He's just not that way inclined. I think the mum wants to get a balance with Clayton since his dad is involved DB: What about Rory?

Mrs C: Out of those four, he is the *smoothie*. He is always aware of the right things to do and say. He is good at art and music. But mind you in my class the boys won't easily advertise their interest in music. (Emphasis added)

DB: Why?

Mrs C: Real *rugger-buggers*, that's why. They don't want anyone to think that they do "girlish" things. (Emphasis added)

DB: So do you have other smoothies in your class?

Mrs C: (Laughing) *Ja*, some of them but generally nobody wants to be seen like that. I have a friend who married about a year ago and she's inherited a nine-year-old boy. She keeps complaining about him. He's so feminine and it's causing quite serious problems. Not that she needs that. The dad is such a good sportsman. He's done the Comrades and they're always at rugby training but that little boy is happy with his music, his drama and art. He just refuses to be a boy.

DB: What kind of problem is it causing?

Mrs C: For one she has to put up with him and that's driving her crazy. The father is always at him since he is such a *sissy*. (Emphasis added)

DB: What do you think of sissies?

Mrs C: Eh… I don't have a problem with gays but as long as they don't affect my sons …

This vignette illustrates the diversity of masculinities and the inequitable effects of such hierarchies: the "*Bennie boekwurm*", the "*sporty*", the "*smoothie*". Patterns of masculinities are never fixed even within the same all-white, all-affluent context. Stephen is constructed as a "*Bennie boekwurm*" (academically inclined). He is physically uncoordinated and not sporty. With Stephen there appear to be contradictions in that he is part of the hegemonic group but simultaneously uncoordinated and not sporty. Stephen did not fulfil Mrs C's requirements of an ideal "rugger bugger". Stephen could not do sport but he could compete and he is a "Diamond boy".

For Mrs C his competitive spirit, his mathematical prowess, his "opinionated self" ensures his visibility as "rugger bugger". He is able to contest and challenge the teacher's authority—a spirit that Mrs C encourages. His prowess in competing, challenging and mathematics serves as a representation of the mental strength of the male mind. He is not excluded as lethargic and "go slow" as the girls are, even though he is not sporty. Thus, for Mrs C, Stephen is able to fulfil the dominant hegemonic pattern involving academic achievement.

Clayton's particular status as sporty "rugger bugger" is not eroded because he does pottery. Mrs C has typed him as "rugger bugger" whose "interest in pottery won't last". While Clayton may not be able to enact a desirable masculinity through his involvement in pottery, he is able to do so because Mrs C rationalises his involvement in terms of his mother's intervention and not his interest. Rory's construction as "smoothie" is associated with music and art. There are definite social relations embedded in music and art that are traditionally feminine. Social relations of gender are symbolised in association with hierarchy amongst boys and exclusion of, and domination over, women and girls. Thus, Mrs C claims that boys like Rory do not "easily advertise their interest in music", suggesting that interest in it becomes a pressure zone which effeminises identity. It presents a moment of crisis disrupting the illusion of a hegemonic performance. Part of the hegemonic masculine performance in this regard would be the resistance to developing or advertising skills in art, music and pottery. Mrs C points to the pressure that boys face in "advertising" less than celebrated patterns of conduct. Actions and behaviours are coded in gendered terms. Rory, according to Mrs C, cannot meet the normative pattern of conduct, yet there are clear benefits yielded by complicity in the overall subordination of girls and women and within the pecking order of masculinities. Femininity is traduced, desired masculinity is fabricated and disassociation occurs from art, music and pottery, which represent a less than desirable masculinity. Thus, specific practices including participation in certain school subjects become an identifiable means through which boys can establish hegemonic patterns that confer a particular status.

The "sissy" draws attention to the role of homophobia to define dominant patterns of conduct through disassociation from femininity and homosexuality or in Connell's (1995) words a "subordinated masculinity". Mrs C ties gays and sissies together and reveals her own anxieties and horror at the thought of gays affecting her sons' presumptive heterosexuality and thus enticing them away from the "rugger bugger" masculinity that she exalts. In other words, there are choices about who to be. Mrs C says that the "sissy" has caused serious problems. For the sake of the future happiness of the family, he must be corrected. This suggests that those who don't get their gender right are subject to problems and unhappiness and those who do are more content. Significantly, the construction of the father as a good sportsman, rugby player and an athlete in the Comrades Marathon (an annual athletics event) reinforces "rugger bugger" masculinity against which the "sissy" is measured.

Shaping up Nicely: Boys and Mathematical Power

Mrs C and myself discuss the top academic group called the Diamond Group:
DB: What happens in the Diamond group?
Mrs C: This is a fascinating lot. The Diamonds are a very competitive lot.

This section provides an understanding of how boys produce masculinity in the context of the top Mathematics Group called the Diamond group. As noted in the discussion with Mrs C in the previous section, boys are constructed as energetic and mathematically superior. The constitution of gender and mathematics/reading in oppositional terms makes it difficult for girls to be identified as good in mathematics. The discourses most central to this process construct mathematics as mastery-oriented, challenge-seeking, proof of intelligence, knowledgeable and competitive. The association with mathematics is centrally about identity, and doing mathematics is a key site where young people assert themselves. Mathematics has the power to impress and to alienate others (Mendick 2005). Boys, it will be shown, associate with mathematics, engage in oppositional and gendered discourses, claim power over girls and construct a version of masculinity which correlates with prestige and these have inequitable effects. For the boys in the Diamond Group the setting, the social structures in which they lived and their own social positions meant that they drew upon the power invested in mathematics, academic competition and the need to be the "best in maths" in carving out the position of superiority. Mathematics and male power were strongly associated:

DB: Do you work with Jody?
Jordan: No.
DB: Why?
Jordan: 'Cos boys rule and girls drool.
DB: What do you think, Rory?
Rory: Girls serve boys.
Steven: We're the best group and I'm the best in maths.
DB: Jody, do you like these boys in this group?
Jody: No.
DB: Why?
Jody: 'Cos.
DB: Why?
Jody: I prefer to be with the Circles. My friend Stacy is in that group.
DB: What do the boys do?
Jody: They shout all the time.

In the above discussion hegemonic masculinity is being asserted both in relation to Jody and in relation to the other boys within the group. In constructing mathematics as a powerful resource, women and girls are subordinated. When Stephen claims that he is the best in mathematics his power over others including other boys is based on competition. Hegemonic forms of masculinity which are based on academic success in mathematics is differentiated from other forms of masculinities.

Achievement, competition and success in mathematics must be understood in relation to wider claims of white male power at *Westridge* and in South Africa where white men continue to hold economic power, albeit with changes. In starting early, Stephen connects male mathematical prowess with white male privilege and status in the world of work. Unlike other research which shows how boys dissociate with academic success by rejecting 'wimpish' and nerdish behaviour of academic boys (Frosh et al. 2002), here masculine power and knowledge provide a resource for power, connects to white male success in South Africa and the boys do so with a great deal of fun and excitement. Group work is an active site for the construction of masculinity and in the Diamond group hegemonic masculinity is legitimated. Jody finds difficulty in participating in a high status group given the highly gendered and competitive nature of group dynamics. Jody's desire for a group in which she has a friend is based on her understanding of her relative powerlessness in a group where she is publicly marginalised. Without concern that the Circles is a lower performing group Jody's preference is for an alternative group dynamic based on friendship. The consequence of being the only girl in the group was Jody's relative silence. It is possible that the performance of gender, based on an understanding of the limits of one's power, led Jody to be 'quiet' and perhaps a reason why the teacher perceives girls as lethargic.

In this section of the chapter, I focus on the dice game based on my observations and conversations in the Diamond Group. The dice was used as a means to allow children an opportunity to play whilst enhancing mathematical literacy.

DB: So why does Jody get the dice first?
Rory: I don't know why. Preston gave her the dice first.
DB: So why did you give Jody the dice first, Preston?
Preston: 'Cos she's a girl. She'll go first.
Clayton: O no, she's last. She's a girl. Oh yes, men rule.

Jody is positioned as the weaker sex within an overall climate where 'men rule'. Being given the dice first was part of symbolic pattern where women and girls receive special privileges like going first to play the dice. For example, when men open the door for women, the practice is underpinned by male power over 'weaker' women. Similarly, Jody is given the dice first as part of her inferior status within gender dynamics. Hegemonic formations of masculinity were thus reinforced. Clayton has difficulty in understanding the complex dynamic where Jody goes first in playing the dice but is constructed as 'last' because 'she's a girl'. Despite these highly exclusionary conversations, Jody did not challenge the domination. Instead she quietly accepted her position in the group wishing that she were in the Circle group. Her silence however must not be seen as powerlessness. In a group context where she is the only girl, Jody had a sophisticated understanding of her place within these dynamics where 'boys shout all the time'. Instead of seeing Jody as victim, she was able to negotiate the domination by becoming silent as a strategy that protected her from boys' harmful conduct and was thus key to managing the group (Nairn 1997).

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to hegemonic masculinities as they are articulated in a middle class predominantly white context. The chapter has demonstrated the complexity of masculine discourses and how the investments in it create the conditions for male power. Boys make significant levels of investment in their academic power as they have experienced this as measures of successful achievement of hegemonic masculinity. Achieving middle-class masculinity is thus set out by honing mathematical prowess and the early years of primary schooling is pivotal site where this is practiced. Male power however is not monolithic and not all boys are invested with the hegemony demanded by the illusion of a real boy. Within the same context, differentiated masculinities exist perpetuating the pecking order of masculinities, where "rugger buggers" are idealised and "smoothies" subordinated. As bearers of masculinity, teachers contribute to the reproduction of gender inequalities by endorsing hegemonic masculine values. By inscribing discursively within the assumption that boys will be boys, the teachers in this study drew on essentialist arguments privileging boys who demonstrated male power reflected more broadly in society. Specifically, the social location of the school, its material and social accumulation of capital provided the context where "boys will be boys" was endorsed through the valorisation of "rugger bugger" masculinity. This masculinity reaches into the social context of *Westridge* where white maleness is associated with middle-class values, sporting prowess, heterosexuality and with access to economic capital. This is a form of masculinity that reigns powerful amongst teachers creating hierarchies and exclusions. But it is important to stress that the ambiguity of hegemony also imbricates boys in particular patterns of behaviour that are seen to be negative. Investing in hegemonic masculinity is detrimental not only for girls and other boys ("smoothies") but also for boys more generally who are locked into familiar patterns of behaviour that are based on 'men rule'.

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Chapter 5
"Here in the Rural Areas They Don't Say that Men and Women Are Equal!" Culture, Materiality and Gender

> Here I think here in the rural areas they don't say that men and women are equal. *Ja*, the father has his own place in the home. [Interview with Mrs K, a grade one teacher in a rural school in *Umbumbulu*, KwaZulu-Natal].

In rural KwaZulu-Natal, at *Umbumbulu School,* Mrs K talks of the widespread links between gender inequalities, cultural practices and the material conditions shaping unequal social relations amongst boys and girls in a grade one classroom. Under circumstances specific to *Umbumbulu*, children learn their place in gender relations, the social values surrounding manhood and subordinate role of women and girls. Seeking to understand how gender, rurality and the early years of primary school converge, this chapter highlights teaching discourses at *Umbumbulu School* that account for the gendering processes, which bear the mark of culture, materiality and gender inequalities.

Umbumbulu, like many rural contexts in South Africa is a setting where economic distress, sexual coercion and cultural patterns of masculine power are entrenched and often recreate patriarchal relations of power. Teaching discourses are often entangled within local cultural contexts. The previous chapter has highlighted the specific context at *Westridge School* which champions a hegemonic masculinity based on white male success. This chapter will show how culture, materiality and unequal gender relations produce inequalities. Teaching discourses lock into these processes, in order to explain women and girls' relative subordination within the broader social and cultural context. Amidst the social and cultural dynamics in rural *Umbumbulu* that regulate restrictive understandings of gender, the teachers, as this chapter will show, also point to prospects for change. In doing so, teachers highlight their agency in intervention strategies in the early years of rural schooling. Thus, despite structural and cultural constraints teachers can and do work towards gender equality through the deployment of *Ubuntu. Ubuntu is* a local *isiZulu* term based on African philosophy, which argues that people are only human in relation to each other where mutual respect is foundational. In this context the chapter argues that small changes are being made by teachers who resist and challenge dominant cultural patterns that attempt to subordinate young girls.

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In South African rural settings, as Sideris (2004) notes, customary practices converge with material realities to produce gender and age hierarchies putting young girls (and women) in their place despite a political environment that promotes gender equality. Gender equality is a legal obligation but gender is also mapped out by informal mechanisms of customary practices (Phillips 2004) and has effects upon the aspiration towards equality. Customary practices, whilst informal and changing are institutionalised mechanisms of social regulation and remain powerful in shaping traditional forms of gender relations, mobilised around male hegemony. Young children in grade one and two in rural *Umbumbulu* are not discrete from these social and cultural patterns and have already embarked on the process of constructing their gender identities. These gender processes are woven through schools, family contexts and the social location and have effects on the ways in which gender is played out. How teachers understand the material, cultural and social realities of the gendering process amongst young rural children aged six to nine is highlighted in this chapter. Moving beyond social and cultural reproduction of gender inequalities, as powerful as it is, the chapter argues that teachers in the early years of primary schooling are important resources in making small changes in their classroom contexts and are central to negotiating cultural claims of masculine hegemony and the aspiration towards gender equality.

Gender and Rural Education

An understanding of how gender, sexuality and schooling operate within global rural contexts is currently underway (Pini et al. 2014; Pini and Mayes 2015; Milligan 2014; Pini et al. 2015). Recognising the dearth of research around the interplay of gender, schooling and rural experiences, a feminist lens in understanding rural education draws attention to the particular social, cultural and material realities that limit and squeeze out women and girls' agency. This is not to suggest that women and girls lack agency, but rather that the specific social and material circumstances produce different relations of power within different contexts. I began this chapter with a focus on Mrs L who articulates this concern. Milligan (2014) too shows that in rural Kenya, girls face multiple vulnerabilities within rural contexts that require more attention to gender, agency and rurality (Milligan 2014). The research also draws attention to the problematic view of the rural as homogenous, timeless and backward (Woods 2011; Pini and Mayes 2015). For instance, the term rurality may signify gender and cultural conformity rather than feminist orientations regarding change (Pini et al. 2014; Woods 2011). Whilst the term rural is helpful in providing particular an understanding of social location, life experiences and the differentiation between the urban and rural, the term must be understood as heterogenous or as Woods (2011: 265) describes, 'many different rurals'. Pini et al. (2014: 455) conceptualise this diversity as they note that "Rurality is socially constructed, hybrid, imagined, relational, heterogeneous, dynamic and contested".

In line with an understanding of rural education as diverse, feminist research in schools has shown how gender norms place emphasis on women's domestic roles which produce familiar versions of gender roles and identities (Keddie et al. 2008). In sub-Saharan Africa, the differential experience of women and girls in school has been highlighted by particular material realities. Porter (2011) provides a descriptive account of what rurality means for school-going children in Malawi and Ghana. She shows how children have to walk for hours to school up to five kilometres per day in an environment that is not only difficult to manoeuvre in terms of the landscape but also circumscribed by the threat of violence. Porter's (2011) study helps to understand the reproduction of gendered inequalities and the ongoing vulnerabilities faced by girls in rural contexts (Milligan 2014; Morojele 2011) how the particular rural environment interacts with material inequalities including the lack of transport, the gendered scripts which make it girls' responsibility to clean the home and carry water or firewood. In Morojele's (2009: 215) study of in Lesotho this complexity is captured in the following narrative of a primary school-girl:

> Puleng: One day I went to fetch water with my friends from a well and a boy called one of my friends, Mosela. We were still wearing uniforms from school. Mosela went to the boy and I said, 'hey you, Mosela, don't go' advising her and she said, 'please leave me alone and she went and went until they got into a donga [ditch] with the boy and we left. Shortly afterwards we heard someone crying in the *donga* and we ran back to see, hmm, the boy was on top of Mosela, trying to suffocate her and we ran and called her sister …

Gender and sexual violence have greater effects for young girls in rural contexts especially in developing contexts (Milligan 2014). As Milligan argues in understanding girls' vulnerability it is important to recognise both the social and cultural context both in school and out of school that demonstrates girls' continued exposure to and experiences with violence and inequalities. Rural studies of gender and schooling in developing contexts show the prevalence of and continued patriarchal and cultural practices that shape and constrain girls' exercise of agency. It is important here to note the need to work against the homogenising tendencies which rurality with gender inequalities, backwardness and where traditional gender norms work in interrupted ways to produce girls' vulnerability. Attention to the complexities and contradictions as well as the ways in which rurality and gender are lived, experienced, challenged and transformed is suggestive of the multiple ways in which gender is produced (Pini et al. 2014). Pini et al. (2014: 455) capture this best when they argue that the "rural, like gender, is messy, fluid and complicated". Such an understanding of gender and rural education requires attention to understanding the interlocking dynamics of culture, context, materiality and the continuing and contested relations of power. In the next section of the chapter I focus on how gender, race, rurality and culture are constructed within rural KwaZulu-Natal before focusing on *Umbumbulu School.*

Gender and Rurality in KwaZulu-Natal

The rural context of KwaZulu-Natal is often described as impoverished, lacking adequate resources, with high HIV prevalence rates and where adherence to very narrow strictures of gender prevail (Sideris 2004). The gendered social environment here creates multiple vulnerabilities for young African women and girls. Chronic unemployment and persistent social and economic inequalities often mean that rural areas are socially dislocated with widespread family disruptions as a consequence of migration (see Harrison 2008). Whilst careful not to re-create a binary between the urban-rural contexts in KwaZulu-Natal, the material realities in rural African contexts bear heavily on women and children. Indeed, the lack of development in KwaZulu-Natal's rural contexts has resulted in acute suffering. South Africa's economic downturn job insecurity and drought for instance have contributed to the particular vulnerabilities in rural contexts, which are regarded as most deprived contexts especially for women and children (Hall and Posel 2012). Schools in rural African contexts have been historically been poor and under-resourced. The life chances, health and schooling are compromised by historic apartheid inequalities and continuing lack of attention to rural development in South Africa (Sender 2016). Hall and Posel (2012) suggest that women remain vulnerable to HIV, poor health and social outcomes, and high mortality. Beyond material and structural inequalities are ideological patterns that pit rights against patriarchal and cultural norms, as elucidated by Marx (2002: 63):

> 'Tradition' and 'culture' have […] been used to legitimise discrimination and (rapidly increasing) violence against women. The continued erosion of women's rights in the rural areas has occurred under this mantle. Rather than take decisive action to defend women's rights against 'traditional' orders, influential voices within the ANC [African National Congress] have, on the contrary, come to embrace an increasingly restorative and authoritarian conception of the patriarchal family structure as the 'healthy' foundation for a desirable social order. (Marx 2002: 63)

Gender in rural KwaZulu-Natal bears the stamp of historical processes. In the late nineteenth century, for example, a gender and generational system saw men dominate a system of chieftaincy controlling access to land and to the sexual division of labour within the household (Reid and Walker 2005). Male power was legitimised with the chief, his headmen and elder men in descending order of authority with exclusive rights to communal land (Sideris 2004). In this system women and girls had few rights although their productivity, (in agricultural production for example) was important in maintaining the household.

From a young age men were inducted into masculine rituals through cattle herding, stick fighting as they prepared to assume the role of the *umnumsana* (head of the household). Economic achievement and masculine accomplishment was associated with the building of a homestead, accumulating cattle (as symbol of power) as well as having several wives (Hunter 2007). Women's hard work was valued and so too was deferential posture and respect (*inhlonipho*). As Hunter (2009: 142) notes the practices around *hlonipha* saw women bend a knee when

serving food, averting eyes from men and elders stooping with both hands on her knees and adopting a chaste disposition.

Migration and changes to the economic environment in South Africa, the demand for cheap labour in the mines and urban areas, had effects for the ways in which gender was constructed. Migration patterns that are extant today began as a result of the histories of colonial and apartheid policies, which served to undermine rural livelihoods and produced changes in gender relations. Zulu tradition and the power vested in the chief faced intense contestation as young men earned money and struggled against customary traditions. As Hunter (2007) notes in contemporary rural KwaZulu-Natal, men's paths to achieving hegemonic status are threatened by women's increasing economic mobility and the inability of men to create homesteads and marry.

Women's economic mobility, the context of a rights discourse is penetrating Zulu masculinity leading to challenges against women. Women too are aggressive in their critique of men with multiple partners in the context of the feminisation of AIDS. Gender roles are changing even though social and cultural expectations of boy and girls roles remain strong. Women and girls in rural areas shoulder huge domestic responsibilities and those who challenge gendered roles are often under threat to violations including physical violence. Physical violence, whilst illegal, is often permitted by social and cultural norms as well as women's particular vulnerability in the economic sphere (Sideris 2004). As Jewkes et al. (2015) in contexts where gender asymmetrical relations of power are supported by cultural norms that reinforce male authority and power, violence against women becomes more common.

Notes from the Field

Umbumbulu is about 45 km away from Durban and like many other rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal it is significantly economically disadvantaged. Its setting illustrates the effects of state neglect during apartheid and continues to experience challenges in terms of housing and the provision of basic essentials. Labour migration has affected the social organisation of rural life and both men and women migrate to urban areas although mobility between urban areas and *Umbumbulu* remain high. Many of the rural households here are headed by women even though men still yield power over the household in terms of monetary and social power. Rural households rely upon migrant workers but old age pensions and child-support grants are also sources of income. Sugar cane is the chief means through which people make a living. They work in the fields or are owners of land who have contracts with the sugar mill to provide cane. To supplement budgets, householders maintain gardens and keep poultry and goats.

Visitors to this area will see some boys practising *ukungcweka*, where herd boys play-fight with sticks and demonstrate their fighting prowess in preparation for

manhood. Cultural practices of deference and respect, especially for older men, are valued here and are part of what is called *ukuhlonipha* [respect].

The school is impoverished and reflects the economic conditions of the 577 African children who attend it. Grades one and two teachers are the focus in this study. There is one grade one and two grade two classroom, consisting of 112 children, with 63 girls and 59 boys. The children come from environments of poverty. They live either with grandparents or with their mothers. Fathers are mainly absent and work in the cities. Structurally dilapidated, the school is perched at the centre of a hilltop and is surrounded by huts and dwellings made of iron and wood. In the school, food insecurity in the households was compensated through the School Feeding Scheme. The School Feeding Scheme provides *mielie meel* [ground maize] and beans, bread and meat, cabbage, rice and dumplings or potatoes and rice and sometimes chicken. The children bring their own utensils and some share their utensils with others. The saddest moment for me was to see the food being dished by the Grade 7 girls as the children anxiously awaited their meal. Shabby old plastic containers are placed on the floor and once the food is dished into all the containers, the children collect their food from the floor and eat either at the table or outside. Many children stated that they did not bring lunch to school because "granny was too sick" or "no food" but generally they said that they had to "keep the bread for supper".

Chairs in the classroom are broken, as are the windows. There is a drab uniformity in the classrooms with no colourful charts, no early schooling paraphernalia, except for broken crayons or tin caps used in numeracy lessons. The boys wear white shirts and grey short pants. Most of the children do not wear shoes. A visitor can recognise the school uniform from a distance since the children can be seen making the long walk to the school. Many children habitually hold their knapsacks on their backs throughout the day. It is not uncommon to see children writing, sitting at their desks, eating and even playing with their bags and knapsacks attached to their backs. This is perhaps how they protect their school possessions from theft or loss.

The new principal, Mrs Makhaye, had the following to say about gender equality:

> In our society the cleaning, sweeping and washing is done by girls. We are so set in our ways about what girls do and what boys do. The new South Africa will help to make things right. We have a new system in the register that does not separate the girls from the boys … in this school both the educators and the children didn't want to accept me when I became principal here in the beginning. Now there is a change and they do. In *Umbumbulu*, the children think that a doctor is a man. What they see is what they believe.

Mrs Makhaye points to the strong patriarchal and cultural practices in the rural areas which makes her role as woman principal difficult, but she does have hope:

> Women are selling and they are trying on their own. Some are making blocks for building houses to earn a living. Bit by bit there will be change.

There were three issues that Mrs Makhaye had set out to resolve security, school renovations and running water. Toyota South Africa has pledged support for

renovations and computers. During the course of my research, the computer area was demarcated and renovations had begun. Teaching material including transparencies, crayons and charts were donated by the Netherlands government. As for security Mrs Makaye had complained about the theft of a fridge from the office, but with the support of the community she has hope that theft and vandalism will be reduced:

> It's the people here in the community who are stealing. If they steal they will pay for it. I say to the parents: "All the school fees are yours, I will repair the office and I am going to use your money. If you steal I will replace it with your money". The school fees are R80 a year and if they steal then I will increase the school fees in a meeting with parents.

The provision of taps, toilets and water to the school remains unaddressed and I kept wondering about the hygiene, the smell around the toilet areas, the girls and menstruation.

There are three female vendors who eke out a living selling snacks to children. There are no queues to follow. The snacks are quite similar to those sold at *KwaDabeka Primary School* which are made up of broken biscuits which sell for 20c, *vetkoek*, orange and brown chips in clear plastic packets. I observe how children cluster quickly around friends who purchased snacks because there is always a possibility of sharing. Bennett (2008: 7) in writing about doing gender research in South Africa points out that research is done under circumstances where "relative chaos, gross economic disparities, displacement, uncertainty and surprise are the *usual* condition, not the exception". Here is an example from my field notes of these events:

> At 8h30 I entered the stretch of 9 km. of gravel road before I reach Umbumbulu School. As I take a left turn, remembering pole 98, I can see from a distance children and teachers all over. I'm nervous. There were soldiers around. Police vans. The principal and Mrs J are in the back of the van. I take the turn into the school's bumpy sand driveway, avoiding not only the boulders but the police vans, the children and the soldiers. The principal rushes out of the van. Asks me to take her to the Education Circuit Offices in *Umbumbulu*. She has to report to the educational officials of her decision to close the school but also to request police protection for the school. I ask her if it is safe. She nods. As I drive I'm not sure if this has been a good decision. The principal's decision to close the school, call in the soldiers, the police and dismiss the children was a result of an early morning attempted murder at the school.
>
> An attempt was made on the life of a parent and prominent person in the community who had dropped of his three children at school around 7h30. Nobody can tell who fired the shot. The parent was not fatally injured. The stray bullet injured a child. Both the parent and the child were taken to hospital. I hear about the faction fights in the area. The problem I am told was that the chief in the area, who also happens to be a woman was ousted from her home. Her hut was burnt down and she was barred from the area. The severity of the tensions between those who supported her and others who did not resulted in the violence. A lawyer from the area was hired by the community to defend certain individuals accused of violence. Money was given to the injured parent to buy guns and to pay for the lawyer. When the time came to pay the lawyer, the parent could not come up with the money. Embezzlement? The parent had abused their trust, I was told. Apparently the lawyer was killed and the conversation seems to suggest that the parent had a hand in that. "The villagers are seeking revenge", I am told. "That's what has happened today". I am also told

> that the problem here is about who controls the area. Faction fighting masks the real reason: those who control the area can also control which taxis are allowed to enter the area.
>
> As I drive with the principal and Mrs J, I am shown the chief's burnt down hut – about 500 meters away from the school. "It's funny how some of the kids play together even though their parents come from opposing ends", says Mrs J. "They're just kids", I'm told.

Das (1995) calls the uncertain and the surprise as 'critical events' in research. As explained in Chap. 1, *Umbumbulu* is under traditional leadership and controlled by a chief. What is apparent in the above observation is the extent to which interests in traditional power are linked to economic power. The chief who controls the areas also controls which taxis are granted access to the area through monetary deals. This critical event is a striking reminder of the network of power involving disputations of women as chiefs, economic control and tradition narratives of masculinity. Children's understandings of gender are thus redolent of their interpretations of a cultural world where power is unequally distributed.

In situating the school context, I provide the backdrop to the ways in which teaching discourses of gender in *Umbumbulu School* hold specific local meanings and are important in strategising towards gender equality. The data selected for this chapter draws from everyday conversations with teachers. The conversations probed gender related issues pertaining to masculinity and femininity in early schooling and teachers' gendered practices/discourses and their understanding of children's gendered lives.

Father: The Speaker in the House

Gendered material inequalities interact with cultural conditions to produce gender and generational hierarchies. What is critical in this section is the way in which culture and material inequalities come together in shaping how teachers interpret children's gendering processes. Gendered poverty is intertwined with cultural practices reproducing male social and economic superiority:

Mrs J: These kids are very, very poor. They wait for their fathers. If I want money from them for school, you can't say tomorrow you must bring five Rands. No. You have to give them a date. Their fathers work in the town and they stay there and they only come home in the weekends.

Mrs J: (adds) If you want something they say "father is only coming in the weekend". I wait a week for that five Rands. They will have to report to the father. The mothers are mostly housewives and most of these young ones stay with their grandparents. The mother stays in the township. If the girl is pregnant, then she comes here and dumps the baby and goes back to the township. This is what happens here. The grandparents have no money. They have to wait for pension day.

Mrs J highlights cultural production, material inequalities and gendered realities through which male social and economic power triumphs. Children learn that they must "report to the father" to obtain "five Rands" confirming migrant men's material advantage in relation to rural women and children. The teacher goes on to construct the rural-urban (township) migratory circuit confirming the breakdown of family structures, noting women who "dump" their babies with grandparents and the reliance on old age pensions for income. As argued however, material inequalities cannot on its own, explain gendered hierarchies. Cultural and material conditions at *Umbumbulu* come together to fuel gender inequalities.

At the school, gender power relations are reproduced through dominant cultural definitions of femininity (fearfulness of men) and masculinity (male cultural entitlement). Girls are inducted, as teachers note, into many rituals of "Zulu culture". According to Mrs K these cultural practices, for example, mean that girls cannot make eye contact with a male. They cannot hold their heads up when they talk to older men and have to gaze downwards. Moreover they "could not talk anyhow" to an (adult) male, they cannot laugh but have to speak in hushed tones and they have to conform to cultural definitions of femininity, which means that they cannot act "cheeky". These practices represent a deferential expression. Thus, casting the eyes down, for example, works to deploy specific gender, age and racial markers of power and is part of the broad cultural practices termed *inhlonipho* as discussed earlier. Contesting cultural practices can often lead to violence. Bhana (2005) shows how very young boys engage in violence against girls deemed to be too chatty (and thus assertive).

The father as head of the household (whether absent as a result of migration or not) holds a superior position through which *inhlonipho* was reinforced:

Mrs K: It's the home environment which influences them because I come in the class with one thing and they come with another influence from home … It's where the father is the main speaker of the house and they must all respect the man. Here I think here in the rural areas they don't say that men and women are equal. *Ja*, the father has his own place in the home.

Whilst fathers in rural *Umbumbulu* are often distant providers and absent (in the context of migration), the social and cultural value attached to fatherhood remains important. Hunter (2006: 102) notes that a common saying used in *isiZulu* is "*Ubaba walayikhaya*" (father of the house) and adds that despite changes in rural KwaZulu-Natal which saw many men move to urban areas, the role of the father continued to be powerful. This too, is supported by the migrant male's ability to support rural households through monetary means. Mrs K notes that such cultural and material influences are significant when understanding gender relations within the school site. "They must all respect the man" points to cultural entitlement and respect accorded to fathers. However, it is important to note, as the chapter goes on to do, that culture is not fixed and even *inhlonipho* is dynamic and contradictory.

Cultural practices are not necessarily dominant and harmful to girls and women. *Inhlonipho*, for example grants woman a status in the homestead and cannot be equated simply with the subordination of women. While, Mrs K constructs *inhlonipho* in this extract as monolithic and unchanging, with a fixed pattern inscribing male entitlement and oppression, the chapter shows that customary practices do hold, albeit contradictorily, prospects for change.

Move Away, We Are Men Here

Cultural and material conditions come together in the classroom to produce a masculine domain of power not unfamiliar in *Umbumbulu*. Indeed, it could be argued that young boys in grade one and two are tomorrow's *umnumsana.* These boys, as teachers note, are highly invested in maintaining social power. When asked about the classroom experience, Mrs L noted the active ways in which boys maintained their position by excluding girls and highlighting their status as boys:

Mrs L: It's not easy. There are other boys who want to work with girls but there are those who just do not want to work with girls. If a girl wants to join them they say, "no women here," but then I say that we are all the same here. Others say, "move away, we are men here".

Kimmel and Messner (2006) argue that being a real boy is an entitlement and expectation of power—a flight from and repudiation of femininity. The cultural and social context exacerbates these expectations and hinders the work towards equality. The hegemonic pattern of boys' conduct is authoritative, aggressive, based on male entitlement to and expectation of respect and deference from girls. After school children at *Umbumbulu Primary* perform gender differentiated activities including fetching water from the river, washing dishes, sweeping rooms, cutting grass, cleaning the grounds, and herding cattle. The herders are exclusively male. With herding went the practice of stick fighting and this was part of the process of becoming men or "*ubaba walayikhaya*". Cultural definitions of masculinity set the limits to what is possible in schools. Mrs L says, "mothers and grannies do all the work and they respect the men and that's why they do this thing in the class." Whilst boys and girls are inducted into many cultural rituals at home, they are not simply passive in this process. Though children's agency is not being addressed in this chapter, South African research has demonstrated children's active participation in gendered cultures (Bhana 2005). Whilst teachers have painted a grim picture of the reproduction in creating gender hierarchies, it is also clear that these familiar positions can be challenged as the next section illustrates, pointing to beyond cultural and material reproduction of gender inequalities.

Beyond Culture: Contesting and Changing Gender Inequalities

Beyond static accounts of gender, this section shows, that cultural practices, albeit contradictorily, are contested and can be deployed in negotiating claims of masculine hegemony and the aspiration towards gender equality. Teachers' ability to interrogate, question and problematise the social and cultural practices is made possible through *ubuntu:*

Mrs K: What I have been doing now is culture and *ubuntu* and we are talking of the importance of the people who are living around us and the people who are important in our lives and those who have helped us a lot. Then we were talking about doctors … and then they argued that the doctor is a man and then I said that there are females who are doctors and then they didn't want to believe me because they haven't seen a female doctor; and then I had to go and look for a picture of a female doctor and then they agreed that there are doctors who are female. And then I also gave them the example of the teacher. I said that there are male teachers and female teachers. So people are really the same. They all do the same work. But last year we had a male principal and this year we have Mrs Makhaye. At first the whole school had this idea that this is a woman. Things started to go wrong.

DB: How?

Mrs K: Bad behaviour and those things and so we had to tell them, so that they will understand that even if the principal is a female, you have got to respect her. The job is the same as the principal before her, the male one, so now things are … OK. In fact they are all like that but it's my influence that helps. If we go outside to play games and we form a circle. At first the boys did not want to hold the hand of a girl because it was a girl. They would say "I can't touch her" and then I had to explain all over again that it's fine to touch a girl. They used to say that. Now I tell them that we are just like brothers and sisters. I tell them we are the same but I think that it's in some of them. There are those who doesn't want to change … Those boys. They get the influence from their homes.

DB: So is the influence stronger from the home?

Mrs K: I can't say. I have a powerful role as teacher despite what they learn at home. Maybe they change when they are in their homes. I don't know but here in my class they do what I tell them.

Rejecting essentialist conceptions of culture, Mrs K points to fissures in cultural practices inherent in *inhlonipho. C*ulture is not fixed and static but open to contests. Cultural and material conditions shape the limits of gender equality at the rural school, however, it is important to recognise that Zulu cultural practices are dynamic and have different strands and interpretations within them. *Ubuntu*, for

example is a particular cultural practice that is based on positive relations and a more inclusive notion of mutual respect. Goduka (1999: 39) has defined it as:

> The art of being human that affirms commonality and unity while it validates diversity amongs human beings and recognises the oneness through the interconnectedness *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. I am we; because I am in you, you are in me … live together, work together and pool resources to solve common problems.

Structural and cultural forces create gendered constraints, but *ubuntu* as deployed by Mrs K may point to the small undramatic spaces in the search for gender equality. Culture is thus not a static concept subordinating women. Amidst the context of gendered impoverishment and cultural constraints, prospects for doing gender differently exist in rural *Umbumbulu.* Mrs K acknowledges her power and authority as teacher as she deploys the customary practice of *ubuntu* to build on a community spirit and mutual respect and coalesces with the broader national context to revive the spirit of *ubuntu* in South Africa. *Inhlonipha* and *ubuntu* as cultural practices are both pervasive and important cultural realities for young children. They are not only in tension but provide opportunities to create alternate messages about gender.

Reference to the new female principal draws its strength and weakness from culture: "so we had to tell them so that they will understand that even if the principal is a female you have got to respect her." Bad behaviour took the form of disrespect towards the female principal without following instructions. Significantly, teacher intervention is critical in the creation of gender sensitive approach in schools. Intervention is also bolstered by the political context, which affirms women in management and leadership positions in education. These conditions create the possibility for Mrs K to explore gender identity in different ways and to make meaning differently. Beyond structural and cultural forces at *Umbumbulu*, Mrs K's agency meant interrupting the assumed logic of male power. She did so in routine and undramatic ways by providing alternative versions of gender through the photograph of the woman doctor, thus making visible the normative constructions of gender. She re-organised circle formation and resisted misogyny. She provided detailed alternative understandings of teachers' work and challenged and engaged children about misogynistic comments and was able to use the curriculum as a means through which to integrate gender equality.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1999) notes that a person with *ubuntu is* affirming of others and is not threatened by the capabilities of others as a person with *ubuntu* belongs and interconnects with a wider humanity, aspiring towards generosity and goodwill. When others are humiliated, then a person with *ubuntu* is also humiliated and disrespected. Mrs K connects *ubuntu* with the representation of a woman doctor, bringing boys and girls together in the circle formation and in doing so upholds *ubuntu.* A female doctor working towards the better good of people and the circle formation bringing both boys and girls together, shows the interconnectedness of people, not as individuals but joined to each other in the service of humanity. Importantly those who uphold the principles of *ubuntu* are worthy of respect.

However, the creation of a gender sensitive environment cannot simply be assumed. Intervention is progressive but to what extent will the provision of non-stereotypical activities reduce or even remove gender stereotypes? Mrs L says she tries to intervene and "they listen to me but when I am not looking they say those things". Mrs K above notes that some boys are reluctant to give up on what has benefited them. Boys have particular investments in *inhlonipho,* complicating intervention strategies. Ordering children to act in gender friendly ways cannot guarantee equality. But the picture of the doctor, the intervention in circle formation, and provision of alternative narratives about women however are better alternatives than no intervention at all. As Mrs J also notes:

> Sometimes there is that perception but I discourage that. In groups they see themselves as groups and not as boys and girls. With groups if we are doing a project I don't specify that boys must do that and girls must do something else … it's what I see as right.

Conclusion

This chapter continues the argument made throughout this book that gender is critical to the early years of primary schooling. Teaching discourses position children within normative understandings of gender as fixed, the effects of sex-role socialisation under the rubric "children are children, gender doesn't matter". Teaching discourses position boys and girls within specific schooling sites and make and regulate gender identity in the early years of schooling. These discourses inform, and are informed by, differentiated masculinities and femininities and the power relations that are contained within them. This chapter points to the paradox between narratives which make the early years of primary schooling a gender-free arena and the actual realities through which gender is lived through in the early years of primary schooling. By providing situated experiences, the chapter has drawn attention to the ways in which rurality, race, class, culture, masculinity, and femininity intersect in producing gender. Teaching discourses are located within a whole range of complex and interlocking practices that systematically work to re (produce) gender identity. Schools are complicit in the construction and regulation of gender identities but they are also sites where questions are asked and fresh thinking can be stimulated, rendering gender identities capable of and open to change. Even in rural contexts such transformation in small ways, remain possible.

In order to begin the work towards gender equality it is necessary to identify the specific teaching discourses operating within a site and to recognise the dominant patterns in/through which gender is constructed. Against dominant teaching discourses that try to fix gender, are also spaces that acknowledge gender as dynamic, changing and open to change. Significantly, teaching discourses do recognise children's agentic capacity but recognitions occur within dominant teaching discourses, which work to construct the child as a non-reflexive, non-agentic and powerless victim unable to make sense of his or her social world.

Importantly, teachers are highly conscious of gender in ways that reflect culture, materiality and rurality, as well as the enduring patterns of inequalities. However, instead of simple analysis based on gender conformism and continuity of cultural values, I have shown how teachers hold potential for being gender transformative agents. The importance of rural teachers working with young children to problematise restrictive notions of gender remains an area largely untouched in South Africa. In rural *Umbumbulu* such gendered meanings result from material, cultural, symbolic and discursive forces, which effectively constrain the opportunities and choices available for alternate patterns of conduct. Social structures, historical inequalities and cultural forces sustain relations of domination and remain strong, and as the teachers elucidate, such forces converge in complex ways to produce and sustain unequal relations. Changing gendered patterns at *Umbumbulu* requires massive effort at the structural, cultural, institutional and personal level to subvert the complex edifice of gender inequalities. Given that gender processes are related to high rates of violence and HIV in South Africa, educational approaches that focus on addressing these relations of domination and subordination are important. Creating conditions for the achievement of gender equality is especially significant for younger children in rural areas who are often marginalised in intervention programmes.

To date there are no interventions in South Africa that address teachers and children in the early years of rural schooling. The small-scale intervention as outlined by Mrs K does not constitute a material erosion of male power. But by embracing *Ubuntu*—a cultural concept that holds sway in *Umbumbulu*—to negotiate boys' entitlements, suggests the possibility of challenging conventional and cultural codes of male domination. As the teachers have illustrated, the materiality of gender inequalities in the early years of rural schooling interact with cultural practices and have effects for the display of male authority in the classroom. Material, social and cultural conditions intersect in rural *Umbumbulu* and are supportive of male domination. Changing economic circumstances and addressing gendered poverty in rural areas remains important as well as the cultural conditions that support male hegemony. In the context of massive poverty and the state's inability to support development, the prospect for change at *Umbumbulu* looks grim. However, teachers—like this study—are not waiting for change and in the context of the political impulse the gender project is being sustained in small ways, deploying culturally and locally specific knowledge. Interventions at broadening alternative gender positions must develop within the rural area that fosters it. Nonetheless, the promotion of gender equality in rural primary schools will remain uncertain without parallel interventions to undo the structural and cultural constraints within the broader social context that limit women and girls' agency.

Teaching discourses thus provide contextual ingredients for understanding the nature and form of children's social worlds. Specificities in and within each school, point to variations in the construction of gender identities, which also vary the potential for change. The voices in *KwaDabeka Primary School*, for example are suppressed by the culture of violence and the context in which violence is the appropriate means to achieve an end. The specificities are thus important to

understand and are considered in Chaps. 7 and 8. Equally, exploration is needed of how children make sense of their social worlds, in order to understand how the broader teaching discourses are manifested and shape children's gendered/sexual worlds. How do children make sense of gender, how do they negotiate, contest and challenge gender constructions? Gender power relations circumscribe the routines of everyday school life. Issues of masculinity and femininity arise through gender power relations. Teachers have some power, but not always. Understanding is needed about how children make sense of gender and what the resources are in the making of gender.

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Chapter 6
"These Kids Live a Hard Life": Inequalities, Violence and Gender in Everyday Teaching

Mrs I: It's a hard life here. The government is trying to make it better with the feeding scheme but how much can it help? Some can afford a little. Then there are those who cannot afford anything. They say to me "*tisha* [teacher] we have nothing to eat at home". Sometimes they have no food in the morning, no food at home after school. This one they eat at school is the only meal for most of them. The neighbours sometimes help and the grandparents. The parents are 20 years old, sometimes 23, very young. Siyanda's mother is 19. The mother is unemployed and I don't think he knows who his father is … Fathers have died fighting. Velile's father died, the police killed him just recently. The father was in the taxi, the police was after that taxi and shot him …

Located at the very bottom end of the social ranks, children at *KwaDabeka School* have a 'hard life'. Their suffering and affliction, as Mrs I begins to indicate is complexly intertwined with deep seated poverty, food insecurity, fragile households, absent fathers and violence (Kleinman 1996). The social, historical and economic roots of children's suffering at *KwaDabeka School* point to the tragedy of systematic 'structural violence' in South Africa, the legacies of apartheid and the enduring patterns of unemployment and inequalities which continue to have effects for the African majority (Nattrass 2014). As noted in Chap. 1, structural violence refers to the machinery of social oppression (Farmer 2004) reflecting the 'brutality of the political economy' and the social and political processes which shape it (Farmer 1996: 255). Economic disadvantage at *KwaDabeka School,* as Mrs I shows, produces the 'violence of hunger' (Farmer 1996) and food insecurity, showing the uneven distribution of power and resources aggravated by children's experience of violence and death. Rooted in structural inequalities and the legacies of apartheid, the harshness of everyday life produces toxic patterns of gender relations often embodied in violence. Mrs I's moving narrative of children's suffering goes beyond the dominant discourses outlined in Chap. 2, which constructed children as carefree, naïve and innocent. Instead, as Farmer (1996) best describes suffering, her story "illustrate[s] some of the mechanisms through which large-scale

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social forces crystallise into the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering" (p. 263). Mrs I thus sets in motion the differential experiences of gender at *KwaDabeka School*, which create 'hard surfaces' of children's suffering, endemic violence and gender inequalities that constrain and squeeze children's agency. These complexities from the teachers' perspective, are the focus in this chapter. The chapter provides major contradictions to the earlier construction of childhood innocence as it provides insight into the specific manifestation of teaching discourses within the local site at *Kwadabeka School* underlined by structural inequalities and gender violence where the 'survival of the fittest' is a common theme. Chapters 7 and 8 will show that boys and girls at *KwaDabeka* do not simply survive violence and inequalities, they act on it, resist it and accommodate it and in so doing, demonstrate the operation of power relations, their agency and the brutality of their everyday existence.

Gender, Violence and Schooling

In developing countries research around gender violence and schooling has been growing in the context of increasing questions around gender equality and the gendered contours of HIV that place women and girls at risk (Parkes 2015; Pinheiro 2006; Bhana 2012, 2013; Muhanguzi 2011; Stark and Landis 2016; Dunne and Ananga 2013; Dunne 2007; Dunne et al. 2006; Schwandt and Underwood 2016; Sommer et al. 2013). Such research has drawn attention to the various ways in which schools are places for the enactment of and participation in gendered forms of violence. Yet, as Parkes (2015) and Bhana (2015) suggest, the field of gender, schooling and violence in situations of extreme poverty is under-examined with very little information about the nature, shape and form of violence involving children. Similarly, Gevers et al. (2013) note that research, interventions, and debates involving children to address gender violence in South African schools are missing.

This chapter addresses this limitation and shows how gender violence is routinised, engaged in, resisted, and normalised as everyday violence against the broader backdrop of structural violence. Violence defies simple explanation but is always gendered. Noting the problem with concepts such as gender-based or gender-related violence, which assume that some violence is gender related and others not, I adopt the use of the term gender violence (Parkes 2015; Merry 2009). All forms of violence are gendered and related to normative constructions of gender, structure, agency as well as sexuality and bodily appearance amongst many others. As Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois note (2004: 1):

> Violence can never be understood solely in terms of its physicality – force, assault, or the infliction of pain – alone. Violence also includes assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victims. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what gives violence its power and meaning.

Whilst I am explicitly interested in gender and sexuality, this understanding of violence intermingles with other relations of power, and requires consideration of the complex interdependence with patriarchy culture, race and class, which shape gender relations.

In the field of gender violence and schooling in developing countries the naming of violence is more difficult because the body of work is not well developed (Dunne et al. 2006). As Parkes (2015) most recently noted, gender violence is intimately connected to inequality, marginalisation and poverty:

> Violence is multidimensional, and refers not just to acts of physical, sexual and emotional force, but to the everyday interactions that surround these acts, and to their roots in *structural violence* of inequitable and unjust socio-economic and political systems and institutions.

As noted structural violence incorporates enduring patterns of political and economic inequalities and social oppression that create the context for violence. Scheper-Hughes (1993) suggests that an understanding of violence must simultaneously consider structure and the daily expressions of violence at a micro-level. Thus, children's lived experiences could be normalised as an everyday form of violence, which contributes to—and accommodates the creation of—a common ethos of violence. The everyday violence at school often reflects "the levels and patterns of violence in countries, communities and families which in turn, reflect prevailing political and socio-economic conditions, social attitudes, cultural traditions and values, and laws and law enforcement" (Pinheiro 2006: 111).

In 2001 Human Rights Watch (2001: 49) produced a report documenting physical, verbal and sexual assault and everyday forms of sexual harassment and gendered violence at South African schools:

> Girls have been attacked in school toilet facilities, in empty classrooms and hallways, in hostels and dormitories and in other 'no go' areas on school grounds… Sexual assaults were often attempted during class breaks and recess times… boys who commit acts of sexual violence against girls rarely act alone. All the girls we interviewed who were raped or sexually assaulted by their male classmates said they had been attacked by two or more boys.

The research and debate in South Africa has begun to explore girls' particular vulnerability to violence at schools (Bhana 2012). Mainly, it recognises male culpability in acts of violence (Morrell 2001a, b; Morrell et al. 2012). In the social construction of masculinity and femininity, power relations are often lopsided but are advantageous to boys where the realisation of masculinity is also tied to the expression of male power, violence and aggression (Morrell 1998). By deploying Connell's (1995) hegemonic theory of masculinity, Morrell began to set the scene for the examination of school violence through an understanding of masculinity and the political economy. We know that school violence is a problem and a problem for boys and men both as victims and perpetrators who engage in a sexual harassment, rape, coercion, physical fights, homophobic violence and name calling

(Anderson 2010; Hamlall and Morrell 2012; Bhana 2014). Thus, gender violence includes the sexuality whilst pointing to the terror of structural violence. This creates the propensity to enact violence under social, political and economic conditions where African men in particular, use violence to express power whilst simultaneously expressing their marginalisation within the broader political economy and the striking levels of inequalities that mark their everyday experience. Micro-politics of everyday patterns of violence are held in tension within the broader context of structural violence.

A major problem however, is the way in which African men in particular have been depicted as perpetrators of violence, created within a binary of African men as violent and African women as passive victims (Shefer 2014, 2016). This binary is highly racialised where essentialist and biologically determined discourses of gender, reproduce the racist trope of African men as inherently violent. This conceptualisation reinforces apartheid's logic whilst failing to consider the broader structural conditions through which masculinity and gender are shaped. Such a focus detracts from the capacity of both girls and boys to act, mediate, stop, and engage in violence under different social and cultural circumstances.

Another key area in the research is the question of victims and girls' specific vulnerability to violence. Instead of the familiar dichotomy of boys versus girl, the emerging research shows that boys and girls actively participate in, reject, adjust to, mediate and reproduce gender, not simply as subjects of power but as agents, with capacities to engender violence (Bhana 2009, 2013). Violence in schools takes place inside the classroom, in the playgrounds and on the way to and from school where masculinities and femininities play out in hidden ways (Bhana 2012; Moma 2015). Violence, as Dunne (2007) suggests, is not only explicit but also hidden and covert and combines to reproduce gender inequalities.

Whilst this work in South Africa is piecemeal it rarely focuses on primary schools. However, of importance is the multi-dimensional nature of gender violence that rejects an understanding of violence as the sole preserve of boys as perpetrators and women as victims. Violence is actively produced, in relation to gender dynamics and in relation to other structures of inequalities and to sexuality (Bhana 2012; Morrell 1998). Thus, the developing body of work rejects the simplistic understanding of violence and points to the intricate ways in which gendered norms and practices work within local contexts, which reproduce violence but also show how violence is negotiated, rejected and produced (Hamlall and Morrrell 2012). Through close attention to these dynamics at *KwaDabeka School*, Chaps. 7 and 8 shed light on the local processes through which boys and girls enact and resist violence. Chapter 8 focuses on boys and the ways in which masculinities are produced within local contexts where violence is routinised. Chapter 9 focuses on girls' and violence. The next section sets the scene as illustrated by and from the eyes of teachers at *KwaDabeka School,* providing widespread contradiction to the mythical construction of the innocent child.

Survival of the Fittest: Violence, Gender, Culture, Poverty and the School

I began this chapter with a view from Mrs I. In this section I continue this focus on teachers' understanding of children's 'hard life' experiences that contradict the earlier description of children as uninterrupted by the social and cultural worlds described in parts of Chap. 2:

Mrs G: These kids live a hard life. Thobeka's mother died of paraffin burns. She was fighting with another woman about her boyfriend. The other one threw paraffin on her and she died in hospital. Now the granny does not know who Thobeka's father is and she came to me to fill in these forms for a child grant. That's why the government must promote abortions. The kids have to live with grannies and some of them live in the hostel. The hostel is a bad thing in this area. Its like Sodom and Gomorrah. There are little girls staying with men in that hostel.

Everyday struggle and suffering is a signature of poverty and widespread inequalities at *KwaDabeka.* Thobeka, in grade 2, lost her mother due to a fight over a boyfriend, she is unaware of her father, relies on her grandmother and the child support grant—which in 2016 was R320 per month, approximately 21 USD. Mrs G also points to the hostel in the area where girls stay with older men—based on transactional sexual relationships that have been raised as an important concern in the spread of HIV amongst young women and unwanted teenage pregnancy (Christofides et al. 2014).

The hard life is thus situated within highly charged gendered, social and economic contexts. As noted in contemporary South Africa there is fierce competition for scarce resources. The absence of job opportunities generates violent gender relations between men in particular. It is inside these families who generally live in *imijondolo* (informal shelters often made of mud and wattle) that many of the children learn about human relationships and about violence. The violent culture of the school involved a complex interactive network of violence between boys and boys, boys and girls and girls and girls. Mrs G points to this context:

Mrs G: In this school it is the *survival of the fittest*. The stronger you are, the harder you fight. If you are weak you lose (emphasis added).
DB: Who wins?
Mrs G: It depends on the grade. Usually the boys in the senior phase, it's them that win.

The survival of the fittest is a salient construction of the children at the edge of the political economy where poverty, structural inequalities, social and economic distress, and hunger collide to produce violence and marginalisation. Violence is a form of survival amidst the broader structural inequalities with differential experiences for boys and girls. Mrs G notes the connection between boys and violence

but also to size and the physical capacity for violence. As Barad (2007: 153) states, "bodies are not objects with inherent boundaries and properties; they are material-discursive phenomena". A key element in the enactment of violent masculinity is bodily strength (Bhana 2016; Paechter 2006, 2007, 2011; Swain 2006; Bartholomaeus and Senkevics 2015). Bodies are used as tools and weapons to symbolise the capacity for violence (Connell 1995; Salisbury and Jackson 1996). What struck me in *KwaDabeka School* was how social and personal conflicts so quickly turned violent. In the everyday world at *KwaDabeka School*, children's conflicts ranged from the demand for a slice of bread to a fight for an old pencil. Violence was not only the means to maintain control over others but the mere threat of violence was sometimes sufficient to ensure compliance.

Mrs G adds: The smaller boys eat their lunches in the class because the big boys bully them and take their lunches. They all cannot afford lunches here. They have bread without Rama [margarine] and then you see these big boys they take it away …

Mrs G recognises the threat of being bullied and actual bullying. She recognises also that a pecking order of masculinities exists which is age and size related but within the broader structures of inequality:

Mrs G: You see there are young ones in this class. The parents did not send them to pre-school. The fees are too high. What they do is to send the child to grade one. When we ask for the birth certificate, they say that they have to go to the farm to collect the certificate. When they do produce the certificate, it's late in the year and it is too late to uproot the child. There are different ages in my class. Look that one S'bonelo, he is 14 years old. He was in the farm and never went to school and so he is here for two years …

Specific social circumstances explain why there are differing ages in the classroom. Parents cannot afford pre-school fees, thus, children younger than the regulated age enter school to compensate for the lack of pre-schooling. Older children like S'bonelo have come from the "farm"—rural areas as described in Chap. 5. S'bonelo is "14 years old … and never went to school". The unevenness in ages in the classroom is tied to economic impoverishment. Unequal gender relations are thus linked to the unequal power dynamics among boys. These unequal gender relations thus occur within specific structures of inequality "involving a massive dispossession of social resources" (Connell 1995: 83) and where violence is located. Violence and poverty are thus integral in the process of gender relations. The "big bully boys" hold and use the means of violence. Those who lack material advantages vis-à-vis other boys, thus perform masculinity in ways that are violent. Size and age also matter for those who bear its burdens. Small boys avoid the bigger boys who take their lunches. Within the broad context of poverty and violence, children learn that violence is an appropriate form of power.

Girls Cleaning Schools: Contesting Gender Inequalities

There are many structural and socio-cultural inequalities at *KwaDabeka School* that make the creation of gender friendly relations difficult. The use of corporal punishment as I described in Chap. 2 serves to reproduce a culture of violence which dehumanises children's experiences. However, emerging from these conditions are disrupting moments. One such example is the practice of cleaning the classrooms. The teachers in this study claimed that sexist cleaning practices were unfair and that they had changed classroom practices. As an effect of apartheid and differentiated system of funding, African schools lacked resources to ensure the employment of cleaners at school. This problem persists, as many under resourced schools do not have adequate cleaning staff. Consequently, Mthethwa-Sommers (1999: 45) describes schools in African townships as "Sexism—girls still cleaning schools". Mthethwa-Sommers argues that teachers are not being encouraged to change gender specific practices in the township school. The teachers in this study have changed cleaning practices as this quote from Mrs I illustrates:

Mrs I: In my class they are all the same whether they are boys or girls.
DB: What do you mean?
Mrs I: See everyone has to sweep the floors in my classroom. First the boys refused. They said that the girls have to do this sweeping. Deevia, when I was in school, everyday we had to clean and sweep in school and then we went home and again we had to clean and sweep. I told the boys in my classroom we have to share the responsibility. So what happens now is that everybody sweeps.
DB: Does that make them change towards the girls?
Mrs I: I can't say. It's the boys who discriminate and they bring these ideas from home. These values that they bring from home is difficult to break down but we do not live in old times where only the boys herd the cattle. Now boys and girls must share the responsibility. But what can we do when the parents are not even there to help them.

Practices never occur in a vacuum (Connell 1995: 65). In the township schools change in cleaning practices was a specific response to the lack of resources that meant the schools could not afford to hire cleaners. Teachers as schoolgirls had experienced this situation. Mrs I understands the powerful discourse, which was reproduced: "when I was in school, everyday we had to clean and sweep in school, and then we went home and again we had to clean and sweep". The absence of cleaners made it incumbent upon girls to ensure the school was in a habitable condition. Mrs I recognised from her personal experiences how girls have been positioned. She was alert to gender discrimination and intervened. She imposed a gender-equitable approach and was thus able to control conditions in the classroom as far as cleaning was concerned. The exercise of power by teachers enabled a more sensitive approach to gender and challenged the persistence of the "domestication of girls in township schools" (Mthethwa-Sommers 1999: 46). Teachers can and do

exercise power to enhance the quality of human life and indicate prospects for change. However, simply challenging the gendered power effects of cleaning cannot overturn the effects of gender power. This is also recognised by Jordan (1995). Jordan refers to the problems of gender inequalities in primary schools in Australia where non-sexist policies were implemented in order to transcend the male-female dichotomies in primary schools. She notes that children were no longer asked to form gender specific lines and teachers had to try to avoid gender definitions to classroom jobs like tidying. Despite these changes, Jordan (1995: 72) suggests that the school made "little headway in modifying the salience of gender in children's interactions". Jordan points out that discourses children bring with them to school are highly gendered and schools cannot simply ignore these constructions. Mrs I too, is alert to the social and structural inequalities which limit the success of intervention.

Changing practices never proceed in a vacuum (Connell 1995). In conversion from one situation to another material and cultural realities set the limits of what is possible and impossible in schools. The teachers tried to create a social environment based on gender equity but the limitations are clear. Gender identity is complex and schooling is only one site where identity is negotiated and constructed. Children bring their learned experiences about gender into institutional settings. In the context of the material realities in *KwaDabeka School,* children position themselves around familiar gender discourses. In other words exercising power by creating a gender-fair cleaning environment is limited because of the many influences that shape gender realities in children's lives. The family is a significant site in the production and reproduction of gender identity, which is further influenced by harsh conditions of poverty, economic dislocation and general material inequalities. These conditions as they operate in African working-class urban townships foster unequal gender relations (Hunter 2010; Bhana 2016; Morrell 2001a, b). Consequently, many scholars in South Africa have noted the formation of violent masculinities under conditions described so far at *KwaDabeka School* (Stern et al. 2016; Shefer 2016; Mathews et al. 2015). I now turn to these forms of masculinities.

Tsotsi Boys

In this section, I identify how teachers at *KwaDabeka School* construct masculinities as variable and differentiated in stark contrast to the 'boys will be boys' discourse. One example of the range of masculinities lived through *KwaDabeka School* is *tsotsi* [township gangster] masculinity—a toxic version of masculinity. Another example is *yimvu* [sheep] masculinity—a more peaceable and less toxic pattern of conduct. In the school, the hegemonic masculinity drew on *tsotsi* images in a discourse of masculinity, which was subversive of authority and anti-social. *Tsotsi* is an oppositional street masculinity especially alive in black urban townships. *Tsotsi* is usually associated with a flashily dressed black male street thug who

is frequently a member of a gang and is armed with a knife or weapon (Branford 1980). The rugged and violent hegemonic school masculinity draws from the images of *tsotsi* gang cultures but at the same time it also accommodates itself to the rigours of the school where obedience to teacher authority is required (Langa 2010; Graham and Mphaphuli 2015). The boys who forge their identities through violence and who draw from *tsotsi* culture are referred to in this chapter as *tsotsi* boys. The violent masculinity has achieved a position of hegemony in the school but it is not monolithic. It is contested, fluid and unstable. Yimvu are holy boys or in Zulu "*ngcwele ngcwele*" and overall they are constructed as "*olungile umfana*" (good boys). In Zulu *yimvu* means sheep and it is used metaphorically to describe passive, quiet, harmless boys.

Schools are sites for the production of multiple masculinities. The modes of masculinities are shaped, informed and dependent upon access to power (Haywood and Ghaill 2001; Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012). At *KwaDabeka School,* tsotsi masculinity is hegemonic and is intricately interwoven with aggression and violence. Bullying and violence are widespread and enacted in the context of material disadvantage. The scale of inequalities at *KwaDabeka Primary School* is captured here:

Mrs G: They don't get any love from home. The mothers are not there and they don't know who their fathers are. I bring extra sandwiches and give them because this month there is a problem with the feeding scheme. If I ask them for 50 cents [3c $US] for polish there are many who don't have that.

An understanding of *tsotsi* boys and the ways in which violence is engendered requires attention to the social relations embedded within highly unequal systems of dependencies. Mrs G points to fault lines of economic distress. Children emerge from and develop social relations in the nexus of household, child neglect, absent mothers—who are often employed and live at their employers' homes as domestic servants—and massive financial stress. A dynamic tension exists between the everyday violence and bullying at *KwaDabeka School* and chronic hunger, food insecurity and structural inequalities. Significantly, it is the narrative about children's endless economic and social despair and powerlessness in relation to the broader context that creates their susceptibility to vie for power and to craft whatever means are available and strategise to survive. Whilst I pay careful attention to structural violence, the main argument in this book is that children are active gendered and sexual agents—even at the ages of 6, 7, 8 and 9 years old—and they do so under conditions not of their own making. At *KwaDabeka School* such conditions produce violence in ways that children do not simply endure it but they actively participate in it, confront it, produce it, resist it and rise up against it. The context that produces the violence as teachers in this section suggest, illuminates the various structural networks that come together in understandings the complex and varied ways in which boys and girls live out their gender and sexuality as young children at *KwaDabeka School.* Farmer (1996: 280) writes:

> Poverty wields its destructive influence at every stage of human life, from the moment of conception to the grave … to bring a wretched existence to all those who suffer from it.

An ample body of work criticises outmoded and over-simplified claims suggesting that poverty causes violence or being violent creates poverty (Piketty 2014; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). An understanding of the local context in tension with wider social, economic and cultural patterns in the construction of *tsotsi* boys as violent (as they too construct violence) is necessary and appropriate in the interpretation of their conduct.

Child neglect and the wider context of suffering and inequalities has adverse outcomes for gender relations at school:

Mrs I: Yes you see if you neglect them then they will be just like these others and they become like these *tsotsis* … (emphasis added).
DB: Which boys are like *tsotsis*?
Mrs I: These ones who are not interested in their work. You see here there are many many *tsotsis*. They are the ones who are stealing. They don't work. They drink *ijuba* [drink made from fermented millet, aka Zulu beer drink made from fermented millet, aka Zulu beer] and *utshwala* [beer] and fight. All they do is play soccer and fight. The women must go out and work. They wait for the money and drink.

Many of the rituals that induct boys into patterns of violence are recognised. The hegemonic pattern involves a lack of interest in schoolwork, stealing, drinking *utshwala*, fighting and playing soccer. Mrs I identifies the specificities of masculinity and the extent to which boys draw from the context to understand who they are, what they can be. This takes into account the pressures they face from hegemonic *tsotsi* patterns. Mrs I is alert to the specific class and cultural location of the school which draws on particular social practices which prescribe a desirable way of being a boy (man) and how a boy could be a man in the future. Thus, *tsotsi* masculinity is not predictable but transient. *Tsotsi* masculinity cannot be taken for granted because boys do not simply become *tsotsis*. Boys learn it. They also learn to be *yimvu* boys. This section has demonstrated the contradictory positioning of boys within the dominant discourse that tries to fix them as noted in Chap. 2. However masculinities are diverse and embedded within social and cultural contexts. A pecking order of masculinities has been identified by teachers in/through which power relations are manifested.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I turned the argument to *KwaDabeka School* and focused on how teaching discourses situate children's experiences within a wider social, cultural and economic context. In turn, the chapter has drawn attention to the complexity of

power relations and the micro-dynamics involved in the ways in which teachers produce gender. Through the eyes of teachers, the chapter allows us to see how violence is endemic, an everyday format, and routinised. At *KwaDabeka School*, a whole range of complex and interlocking processes and gendered practices systematically work to produce inequalities and for girls in particular, subordination. When teachers talk about children at *KwaDabeka School*, they invoke these structural processes and the hard surfaces through which structure and agency are mediated. Indeed teachers have drawn attention to the highly charged gendered political arena that constitutes their experience in the early years of primary schooling.

Teachers unravel the fallacy encapsulated by 'children as children; gender doesn't matter'. Against dominant discourses which try to position children as unable to make sense of their social worlds, as dupes of power, the chapter shows how teachers can and do focus on boys and girls navigating the everyday at school as they make sense of violence and gender inequalities. An exclusive focus on biology and sex-role socialisation cannot be sustained as it sits alongside narratives of structural violence and children's suffering. Shedding the 'taken for granted' assumptions about children's development, survival and survival strategies at *KwaDabeka School* include violence as a means to obtain resources and address their basic hunger for food.

Far removed from dominant teaching discourses, this chapter has demonstrated the nuanced complexities of power and the multiple networks of structural fault lines of inequalities and the ways in which children are mired into its fold. The social processes profoundly shape how boys and girls live out schooling rooted in inequalities and the social, cultural and economic conditions that produce such violence. As Bourdieu (1997: 233) notes, "the inclination to violence that is engendered by early and constant exposure to violence" as "one of the most tragic effects of the condition of the dominated". Violence is also pervasive in social practice and because it becomes routine and part of everyday life, violent practices are not even recognised as violence.

Schools are complicit in the construction and regulation of gender identities but they are also sites where questions are asked and fresh thinking can be stimulated, rendering gender identities capable of and open to change. Despite the major constraints faced within the local milieu, small steps in addressing gender inequalities for example through addressing the gendered arrangement in cleaning the school are possible. If boys and girls can be persuaded to change gender arrangements, then clearly there is possibility to do gender differently. Thus, instead of being a non-reflexive, non-agentic and passive victim unable to make sense of his or her social world, the rest of the book focuses on boys and girls—not as blank slates and dupes of power—but as able to act, mediate and resist within broader social contexts.

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Chapter 7
'Voetsek!' Boys, Violence, and the Gendered Negotiation of Masculinity

> The violence exerted everyday in families, factories, workshops, banks, offices, police stations, prisons, even hospitals and schools … is in the last analysis, the product of 'inert violence' of economic structures and social mechanisms relayed by the active violence of people (Bourdieu 1997: 233).

By the time boys begin attending primary school they have already embarked on the lifelong process of acquiring and constructing their masculine identities (Jordan 1995; Blaise 2005; MacNaughton 2000; Kane 2013; Robinson 2013). This early part of the life project involves the struggle to achieve power often based on the denigration of the feminine (Keddie 2006; Bhana et al. 2011). A focus on primary boys constructing masculinities in this chapter resonates with many other accounts of boys, primary schooling and masculinity (Renold 2005; Thorne 1993; Martino and Meyenn 2001; Bartholomaeus and Senkevics 2015; Bartholomaeus 2011, 2012; Swain 2006; Paechter 2007). These school-based studies associate hegemonic masculinity with authority, heterosexuality, physical bravery, sport; competitiveness; violence and aggression (Connell 1995; Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2012; Salisbury and Jackson 1996; Frosh et al. 2002; Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997; Connell 2000; Keddie 2003, 2006; Renold 2005; Swain 2006; Bhana 2016). The boys at *KwaDabeka School* who are the focus on this chapter were no exception shoring up their masculinities around violence and misogyny.

In previous chapters I explored how masculinities are based on striking gender hierarchies and involve power and domination. Of relevance is the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005; Connell and Pearse 2015) that has been used in school-based research to understand the multidimensional form of boys' identity (Connell 2005; Swain 2004; Bartholomaeus 2012; Frosh et al. 2002). Connell (1995) theorises hegemonic masculinity as the culturally exalted form of masculinity. In common with other studies of primary boys, schools are analysed as sites where hegemonic masculinities are played out (Bartholomaeus 2011, 2012; Renold 2005; Martino and Meyenn 2001; Skelton 2001). Hierarchical forms of masculinity operate in ways to regulate, expand and define boys' patterns of conduct. Hegemonic masculinity is more respected than other patterns. It is celebrated, presented as an ideal and invested with power. Non-hegemonic masculinity is a move away from power and is subordinated. The ways in which boys enact their

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masculinity need to be understood as gendered practices which are relational, ambiguous and multiple. The important point is that different forms of masculinity exist together and the hegemonic form has to be constantly struggled for and is subject to challenge. There are definite relationships between the different kinds of masculinities. Differences depend on categories of hierarchies, inclusion and exclusion. The patterns of exclusion and hierarchies are an important source of conflict and violence. Hegemonic masculinity can be quiet and implicit but it can also be violent.

Masculine identities in *KwaDabeka School* reach back in time into the family and in turn, the social location of these families plays a major part in the early processes by which masculinities are formed. Emerging from chronically poor contexts where parents are unemployed and where most households get their income state support grants, boy's investment in patterns of violent masculinity are underwritten by the legacies of apartheid, chronic food shortage, fractured families and deep poverty. Violent social relations have an economic and cultural rooting (Bowman et al. 2015). As Farmer (2004) notes life choices are often structured by poverty, which produces fragile social relations (Hearn 2014; Kimmel et al. 2005). They are the main culprits behind children's active participation in violent cultures at *KwaDabeka School*. However, as I have argued children are active agents, not simply dupes of structure. Bourdieu (1997: 233) argues that inert violence is in the last analysis the product of 'economic structures and social mechanisms relayed by the active violence of people.' The tragedy at *KwaDabeka School* is thus not simply determined by poverty and structural inequalities but relayed by the active violence of boys (and girls, as I explore in Chap. 8).

Underwritten by major structural inequalities and the legacies of apartheid, the township location provides contextual clarification in boys', violence and the social construction of masculinity. In this chapter I continue the focus on violent gender relations at *KwaDabeka School* as boys negotiate and interpret the parameters of what teachers described in the previous chapter as the 'survival of the fittest'. I focus on the ways in which boys use violence, avoid it and produce it as an eloquent testimony of the salience and complicated links between the 'survival of the fittest' and the expression of masculinity. The ways in which masculinities are enacted using violence is of central concern.

Being a Boy in Poor Contexts in South Africa: Violence and Masculinities

Being a boy, poor and living in a township context in South Africa with marked by major structural and historical inequalities presents a strong risk for violence (Krug et al. 2002; Pinheiro 2006; Buller 2015; Seedat et al. 2009, 2014; Bowman et al. 2015). As Seedat et al. (2009) report, deaths in South Africa due to interpersonal violence is injury almost four and a half times the proportion on a global incidence

scale. South Africa has extremely high levels of crime and violence. Incidents of murder increased from 16,259 in 2012/2013 to 17,068 in 2013/2014, which is about five times higher than the global average (South African Police Services 2014). Whilst many sexual offences are unreported, in 2015 South Africa reported 53,617 cases of sexual violence with men as the main perpetrators of such crimes.

Violence is often located in large urban contexts especially townships contexts such as KwaDabeka which is characterised by inadequate housing, dense population, poor social and economic capital and unemployment (Housing Development Agency 2011). Almost 25 % of the population in KwaZulu-Natal live in information housing. Such contexts are also setting with high levels of violence and poverty (Hunter 2010). In the context of striking inequalities and growing frustration around poverty, inequality and unemployment township contexts in South Africa are also sites for growing service delivery protests (Bowman et al. 2015). Shisana et al. (2014) report that HIV prevalence in informal settlements is twice as high as that of people in formal housing. Women and girls particular vulnerability to HIV (Shisana et al. 2014) is predicated on constructions of masculinity and ideas of male privilege and male sexual entitlement (Shefer 2014). Men's risky sexual practices including lack of condom use and multiple sexual partners are firmly connected to the construction of masculinity and the expression of power resulting in reduced agency for women and girls and risk for both men and women. Clear links have been established between gender inequitable masculinities, violence, sexual coercion and rape (Connell 2012) where in contexts of abject poverty and suffering, violence is a means gain resources and power (Gibbs et al. 2015; Shefer 2014; Mathews et al. 2011, 2015)

There are two major problems that emerge in a context of racialising young masculinities in South Africa Firstly, boys in township are often homogenised as bad (Shefer 2016) leading to racist tropes which associate violence with African boys and men. Instead of understanding the ways in which masculinities operate within contexts of major inequalities, African boys become fixed as violent, homogenised and painted under the brushstroke of an essentialist and racialised subject (Morrell et al. 2012). These biological and racialised versions of gender fail to consider the variety of masculinities and the different ways in which masculinities are constructed under different social circumstances. Not all boys are violent and there is resistance to and avoidance of violence even in the same setting as teachers too noted in Chap. 6.

Secondly, by focusing on boys and violence in township settings, there is tendency to excavate the subject of agency by foregrounding the contextual factors that make violence flourish. Like Parkes (2007, 2015), I argue that children are active makers of their social worlds—as agents within a highly constraining economic and social context underlined by violence. There are different patterns of masculinity and different ways of being a boy. Thus more than one kind of masculinity can be found in a given cultural setting or institutional location. Breaking from the tendency to view boys as inherently violent or simply victims, I take issue with the dominant conception of children as passive showing how even very young boys

enact violence like a 'gasoline on a fire', (Holter 2000: 62) in order to gain rewards, status and power. As Connell contends "the claim to power that is central in hegemonic masculinity is constantly negated by economic and cultural weaknesses" (Connell 1995: 116). Violence is often used as a tool to reclaim power in mediating the loss of power in other spheres of life. Boys can also be soft and gentle like sheep. They are not simply dupes of power but the social conditions produce differential access to power and differential responses to it pointing to active agency. The social location thus creates the conditions for relations of power. We need to understand boys' constructions of masculinity within this dynamic tension between structure and agency. As Bowman et al. (2015: 246) note:

> … our definitions of violence need to accommodate understandings that foreground social structure … individual and group subjectivity … Furthermore, constructions of masculinity are deeply implicated and mobilized as young men are most frequently involved as both perpetrators and victims, reflecting again the recalcitrance of the historical legacy and socio-cultural construction of … masculinities in South Africa.

Bearing these complex tensions in mind between structure, agency and masculinity, I focus on boys as they negotiate violence at *KwaDabeka School*. I aim to show how hegemonic masculinity is contested in relation to *tsotsi* and *yimvu* masculinity. Masculinities are also constructed in relation to body size, bigger size girls and age. This means that the fact of belonging to the group of boys who exhibit hegemonic masculinity is itself unclear and shifts over time, as boys get older and bigger. This violent masculinity is also challenged, at least at the level of being a cultural ideal, by the *yimvu* that offers alternative, more peaceable models of behaviour. Not all boys at *KwaDabeka School* draw on the toxic *tsotsi* model (Glaser 2000). *Yimvu* or holy, innocent boys do not readily resort to violence. They are more agreeable. The existence of *yimvu* boys suggests that not all boys practise violent and subordinating strategies at all times and in all circumstances (Mac an Ghaill 1994).

The chapter also aims to show that violent masculinity is fluid in that its shape changes depending on context: in the classroom, on the sports field, outside the school and in the company of girls and boys and in the presence of teachers and thirdly, it is unstable. It is not impervious, for example, to the threat of teachers or to the critique of girls who prefer peaceable *yimvu* masculinity. Violent masculinity may be hegemonic when might is right but it is not consistently and universally the most favoured way of performing masculinity in the school.

Violence is seen as an ideal way of gaining and maintaining status and resources. However, violent hegemonic masculinity was not stable. They are complex and fragile. In fact boys find it difficult to maintain and sustain a gender identity, which is hegemonic. While boys recognise violent masculinity as an ideal, they are sometimes unable to meet the hegemonic ideal. Their age and their bodies are changing and this impacts on their ability to occupy hegemonic positions. In examining this complexity and the way in which boys actively struggle to accomplish a hegemonic form, the focus is on boys girls and misogyny, boys and boys, boys and authority, sexuality and finally to positions of fragility and stability.

Their approaches and practices bear the signature of gender inequalities, legacies of apartheid, poverty, everyday struggle and the horror of gender and sexual violence which interlocks with gender, material and discursive forces which effectively reduce agency:

Boys, Girls and Misogyny

Young *tsotsi* boys resort to violence, which is a signifier of their masculinity, as a means of gaining control. Power over girls dominates the gender processes within the school and shapes relations that are harmful to other boys and girls. In this section the violent expression of masculinity as it impacts on girls is considered.

In my conversations with the *tsotsi* boys they told me that "girls are naughty, they talk too much" and so they hit them. Girls were expected to speak in hushed tones and not "anyhow" to a (adult) man. *Tsotsi* boys were learning adult ways of being male, and talking too much was in opposition to the general expression of deference, which was part of Zulu cultural practices. That the girls talk too much is thus an expression of an 'unacceptable degree of freedom'. If girls fail to give deference to *tsotsi* boys, then it is seen as bad conduct, which ought to be punished drawing on male entitlements based on cultural values where women's subordination was expected (Bhana 2015).

The struggle for masculinity always occurs on the presumption of superiority over girls, as the following data illustrates.

DB: Why don't you like girls, Andile?
Andile: Girls are rude. They are funny. The girls try to impress the teacher and I hit them.
DB: Do they get hurt?
Andile: Yes and I hit them again.
DB: But why?
Andile: They must not be rude.

Andile states, "they must not be rude", with a sense of indignation. This resonates with the point made earlier that the cultural construction of male entitlement and the idea that women and girls must speak in hushed tones is pervasive in the abuse of girls. Andile argues the he hits the girls because they are "rude, funny and impress the teacher". Violence is a pattern of behaviour that he feels he is obliged to carry out.

Tsotsi boys dominate the space at schools. As space invaders the *tsotsi* boys disrupt the girls who play *ije*—a game of rhythmic clapping and song. Rita refers to the domination of space and the girls' private moments: "when we are playing *ije* the boys don't like it and they always trouble us". *Ije* is the means through which girls find a freer and private space within the public site of the school but that space too is fragile with the constant threat of "boy trouble".

DB: Do you like boys?
Eli: No.
DB: Why?
Eli: I am scared of them.
DB: Why?
Eli: They are rough.
DB: What do they do?
Eli: They hit. I am scared of him [pointing to Spesishle]. I am scared that he is going to hit me. I'm scared of hitting.

"Violent males … exaggerate, distort and glorify those [hegemonic masculine] behaviours" (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997: 121). It would seem here that I am painting a picture of girls as docile but girls do resist:

Mncedo: The girls say: "He's mad in the head". They say: "*voetsek*". The girls say: "come here" and they raise their dresses
He shows me what he means.

Mncedo knows the power and agency of girls and sees it in operation when they try to humiliate boys by raising their dresses. However, their agency diminishes whenever violence and the threat of violence constructs and limits everything that they do and can do. The boys are not simply the product of patriarchal discourse although patriarchy is always embedded in their relations. Their violence and aggression are part of the process of blending a potent and lethal mix of masculinity (Sundaram 2013).

Boys and Boys

At school, boys constantly struggle with each other for positions of power. Generally, this involved force and was premised on the importance of aggressive forms of behaviour for gaining and maintaining a particular status. Violent masculinity relates to where a boy was and with who he was in those places. Age and body size were clear factors in acquiring hegemonic status. In the limited confines of a classroom, for example, some boys could use their size and age to dominate other boys and girls and yet in the field these boys would have to struggle to compete for hegemonic status as other older and more powerful boys and girls took over. Hegemonic masculinities are contextual constructs. Not all boys are the same and have varying access to the hegemonic ideal.

From the early days of the research violence and the threat of violence provided the immediate lens through which young boys struggled to forge their identities. The following incident was observed in Mrs G's classroom:

> Sandile and Nkanyiso fight with Thulani. They try to convince the younger boy to release his pencil. The child fights back and Sandile says "*ngizokushaya*." [I will hit you]

Incidents like these are part of the everyday world at *KwaDabeka*. In the incident described above, Sandile and Nkanyiso are older than Thulani. Sandile threatens with *ngizokushaya* the child after school. The word *ngizokushaya* like *voetsek* followed me in most of my observations with children. Violence and bullying can be seen as a means through which the boys try to position themselves in relation to "smaller" boys, establishing a pecking order of social relations and through which bodily enactments are used to establish an identity.

Tsotsi boys would generally use "*sukha wena*" (get out) or "*voetsek*" and these were enough to threaten other boys into compliance. Fighting for things provided the avenue through which a masculine identity was developed. Fighting for food was key in the development of a masculine identity and it shifted speedily into violence. Very few children bring lunch or snacks to school. If they do, it is usually brown peanut butter bread wrapped in newspaper and sometimes, as Mrs G pointed out, "bread without Rama" [margarine]. Having a sweet is a luxury, but I noticed that even a small chocolate éclair sweet had to be shared with *tsotsi* boys who demanded it.

Sexual Violence: Boys Want to Do Things with the Girls but the Girls Don't Want to Do Those Things

This study shows that verbal and physical harassment relating to sexuality against girls is rife. During the break I chatted to Thabani (male) and Thulisile (girl) who were in Mrs G's class:

Thabani: Why are you asking all these questions?
DB: I want to know what boys and girls do in the primary schools.
Thabani: That's easy. They play.
Thulisile: They play and they hit.
Thabani: Girls fight; boys and girls fight and girls fight with girls.
Thulisile: It's better in the other school because the Zulu people fight a lot.
Thabani: No, in any school they fight, not only in the Zulu school. Children fight all the time.
Thulisile: Boys are criminals [*tsotsi*s]. They steal our pens and they swear, "fuck, fuck, fuck".
Thabani: Girls smell. They give us diseases. Their armpits smell. Girls tease boys. The boys don't sleep with the girls because the girls stink.
Thulisile: The boys kick. The boys want to do things with the girls but the girls don't want to do those things.

The denigration and the polluting effects of femininity within the context of *KwaDabeka School* quickly turn to violence and part of the sexual dominance and exploitation of girls (and women). Thabani's reference to girls who smell and boys who don't want to sleep with the girls suggests contempt in the nature of dominance

and exploitation. Is Thabani preparing for sexual harassment activities as he learns adult male *tsotsi* patterns of behaviour? These are young boys and girls and sexual activities are considered adult (and taboo), but the explicit nature of the conversation was a public performance as Thabani produced and reproduced his masculine sense of identity. Significantly this conversation also blurred adult-child relations as explicit sexual knowledge is usually adult, which Thabani challenges. This conversation was held as a large group of boys and a few girls gathered around me and it served as a struggle for the boys to give meaning to adult knowledge. Thabani's ability to discuss sex, the callousness of his attitude towards girls and his misogynistic taunts provided a strategy to challenge both the dominant discourses on childhood and me as adult, and provided a space both to gain and maintain status amongst the group of boys and to produce and reproduce adult ways of knowing (Robinson 2013; Kane 2013; Blaise 2005).

Boys and Authority

Violent masculinities are intricately associated with an anti-authority position (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Connell 1995; Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997; Bartholomaeus 2012; Paechter 2007; Swain 2006; Renold 2005). At *KwaDabeka School* relations of dominance and subordination are often worked through defiance to sustain a masculine identity and as a way of gaining a reputation within the male group:

DB: Tell me Spesishle, do you stop if the girls tell the teacher that you have hit them?
Spesishle: The girls cry (laughing) and they tell the *tisha*.
DB: What does the teacher do?
Spesishle: She hits me
DB: So do you stop hitting the girls?
Spesishle: No I will still hit them.
DB: Why?
Spesishle: They're naughty.

I use the above conversation again to emphasise the defiant pattern of *tsotsi* conduct.

Spesishle points to the anti-authority performance of *tsotsi* boys. Acts of defying institutional authority by hitting the girls become recognisable as part of the hegemonic masculinity. *Tsotsi* boys will not want to give up power easily as it is the chief and most celebrated means through which they maintain a sense of status and reputation. The question remains about the kind of incentive there is for them to be otherwise (Paechter 2007) when they have nothing to lose and much to gain in the continual performance and display of defiance.

Spesishle conforms to a particular pattern in violent masculinity that also reacts against authority. An important point needs to be made here regarding the blurring of adult-child relations. Spesishle is able to blur relations with me as he says, "no I will still hit them". This defiance is an example of the anti-authority pattern of *tsotsi* boys. In this sense the conversation above is a public one, and the emphasis on hitting girls is as much for my benefit as it is for his sense of masculine reputation. This conversation and the others in this chapter must not be seen as a representative account of the children's conversations with me. They were, however, expressive of a struggle to position identity between themselves and between them and me.

Not all boys at *KwaDabeka School* engaged in this potent and lethal definition of hegemonic masculinity. When I asked Thabani if all boys were like him he said: "There are quiet boys but they're not nice. The names of the boys are going down". I consider these quiet boys or *yimvu* later in this chapter. They too suffer from the ignominy of the pain of potential and actual violence.

Fragility and Stability

In the early years of schooling *tsotsi* boys dominate but are dominated as well. Power is relative and they live in fear of the bigger boys especially on the soccer field and the bigger girls who sit on them like chairs:

DB: Are you afraid of any of the girls?.
Mncedo: Yes, I am afraid of the big girls.
DB: Which one?
Mncedo: I am scared of the girls in standard 5, standard 3 and standard 4. I am not afraid of the standard 1 and 2 girls.
DB: Why aren't you afraid of the standard 1 and 2 girls?
Mncedo: They're small and short. I am afraid of the tall girls. They sit on me. They make me like a chair and they sit on me.

The construction of masculinity occurs through relations that are far from monolithic. In one situation, *tsotsi* boys experience potent masculinity while in others; they are thwarted by other relationships. Sport provides an interesting theatre for the performance of hegemonic masculinity. Both Mncedo and Spesihle would like to play soccer. There is no soccer field at the school, just a makeshift goalpost behind the school as boys squeeze in for a game. Mncedo and Spesihle are alert and vulnerable to age relations. They assert their masculinity by subordinating girls yet simultaneously they know of a pecking order of power relations between males and males on the "soccer field" which renders their power fragile. They are learning how to be in relation to older *tsotsi* boys and at the same time (re)produce patterns of *tsotsi* masculinity. The boys' masculinity is on the constant offensive and defensive (Swain 2006; Bartholomaeus 2011).

Mncedo and Spesihle invested, albeit tenuously, in the production and projection of their *tsotsi* boyhood. The size and age of a person was integral to the production of a "proper" boy. The effects of gender power were clear for Mncedo when it came to larger and older girls, as his size and age were clear markers for the production and maintenance of masculinity, as it was for the production of other forms of masculinity and femininity. Clearly, his ability to act and resist older and bigger girls and boys was based on his perception of risk, which was his knowledge of different relations of power through which he organised differently according to the discourses at play. He was able to take power but only according to the risks involved for him.

Yimvu Boys

Many of the boys are not happy occupying the space of the 'rough and tough' *tsotsi* boy. Those who position themselves as more gentle are *yimvu*s. In their everyday relations, *yimvu* boys encounter threats of and actual violence. *Yimvu* boys' negotiation with violent *tsotsi* boys was often a question of establishing physical distance from them out of a consideration for their own safety.

Khanyiso and Uvula were in Mrs G's classroom and were constructed as *yimvu* boys. They tended to sit together in class and play together in the playground. They were also more likely to be attacked by other boys, and *tsotsi* boys in particular, and were uniformly excluded from playing soccer and other games like marbles. Their togetherness represented a strategy of survival. Part of the strategy meant that they would sit in the classroom during the break and have their *pap* and gravy, or whatever else was served by the School Feeding Scheme. Many of the teachers including Mrs G, and, to a lesser extent, Mrs H had their lunches in the classroom. Khanyiso and Uvula most often chose to sit in the classroom. Their response was one of avoiding the threat of attack and also the humiliation of being excluded by developing their own protected spaces. The teachers in the school do not go on ground duty, thus making the classroom a much safer environment during break.

DB: Do they [referring to *tsotsis*] hit you?
Khanyiso: (softly) Yes.
DB: Are you scared of those boys?
Khanyiso: Yes.
DB: What do they do?
Khanyiso: They hit me, they push me. Sometimes they take my food away.
DB: What do you bring for lunch?
Khanyiso: Nothing.
DB: What food do they take from you?
Khanyiso: The food the aunties are cooking for us.
DB: What do you do when they hit you?
Khanyiso: I cry.

DB: Do you fight back?
Khanyiso: No. They hit my friend also.
DB: Do they hit you, Uvula?
Uvula: Yes they hit me, they slap me, but I don't cry. I don't like them.

While I have documented the effects of violent gender relations for girls, for boys described as *yimvu* there were similar effects. Khanyiso draws attention to the pecking order of masculinities that exists and shows how certain boys are targeted and bullied. There are definite relationships between the different masculinities, the most salient being one of hierarchy and exclusion. Khanyiso and Uvula do not fit the dominant hegemonic masculinity and are 'hit and pushed' which works to reinforce an oppositional structuring of gender relations.

Mrs G indicated that the *yimvu*s were boys who went to church and were holy or in Zulu "*ngcwele ngcwele*" boys. This is quite similar to Hemson's (2001) study of African lifesavers in Durban some of whom are constructed as *amaKholwa* (believers), who are converted to Christianity and whose masculinity is emphasised through piety and respectability. Like the *amaKholwa*, *yimvu* masculinity is not core in the township area but it does present an alternative, less violent, and a more peaceable form of being. The process of acquiring masculinities occurs around and within a framework of discourses in *KwaDabeka* that the boys drew from and were located within. Alternate positions do exist even though they are not the most favoured at *KwaDabeka*. Boys do have agency. While *yimvu* masculinity is not hegemonic it does gnaw at the hegemonic status of violent masculinity. Masculinities evolve spatially. Violent masculinity is dominant and not easy to challenge openly but the existence of *yimvu* masculinity means that not all poor, African boys choose *tsotsi* culture. Less dominant forms of living do exist and some boys can and do position themselves within this.

Friendship among *yimvu* boys provides a protected space, a collective practice establishing distance from *tsotsis.* Friendships are important for *yimvu* boys because they provide the pressure-free space in which they are able to express their experiences in school. The expression of their feelings occurs in a context where hegemonic prescriptions were against the expression of such emotions. Expressive emotional practices are not congruent with hegemonic masculinity. Emotions are attributed to effeminacy and an indicator of an unacceptable form of masculinity.

Uvula suggests that he "does not cry" while Khanyiso does. He tries to distance himself from crying and the expressive emotional side of gentler masculinities. He struggles to give meaning to himself as he is constructed outside the dominant masculinity but also shows signs of aligning it. The potential does exist to change and change for the worse. The status of violent hegemonic masculinity creates pressures for boys like Uvula producing contradictory *yimvu* masculine identities.

Yimvu boys are targets for abuse because they do not engage in disruptive behaviour and their visibility as *yimvu* casts doubt on *tsotsi* boys. During the break I had a conversation with a group of boys:

Mdu: We don't like quiet boys. The name of boys are going down. They're not nice.
DB: Why?
Mdu: The girls talk to them like that. They're stupids.
DB: How?
Mdu: Nkosinathi is quiet and the girls talk to him.

Dominant masculinity has to be won by dominating alternative patterns of conduct. The mockery directed against *yimvu* boys is part of the process that reproduces violence in general and sustains aggressive and violent masculinity and violence against girls and women.

Yimvu*s and Girls*

Yimvu masculinity is more peaceable than *tsotsi* and favourable to girls, as Samekeliswe suggests:

DB: What do you think of the quiet boys?
Samekeliswe: I like the quiet boys. Khanyiso and Qubelo. I like them because they are so quiet and so beautiful, but their work is not good but they have good behaviour. If tisha[teacher] says something he listens Khanyiso doesn't hit the children. The other boys hit him, the other boys hit him.
DB: Why?
Samekeliswe: If he doesn't give something then the other boys hit him. He doesn't tell *tisha* because after school the other boys will catch him. They walk with him and then they will hit him (…)
DB: What do the other boys think of them?
Samekeliswe: They tell them that they love girls, like they say, "Hey, do you love Nomvula" and they laugh. They don't want to play with them because they tease them.

Samekeliswe draws attention to the normative processes through which *yimvu* boys are policed: "if he doesn't give something then the other boys hit him". She also draws attention to the stylised version of *yimvu* masculinity, which is associated with "good behaviour" and respect for authority instead of the anti-authority stance of *tsotsi* boys. *Yimvu* boys who do not enact an aggressive violent masculinity are constructed as easy targets in getting "something", which is usually associated with material goods.

Yimvu masculinity on most occasions is gender-friendly, but othered. This can be seen very clearly in the heterosexual bullying: "they tell them that they love girls" and works to police the boundaries of acceptable masculinity. *Yimvu* is presented as less than normal, through misogynistic mockery and within the

heterosexual matrix. *Yimvu* boys learn how to negotiate their masculinities within these normative boundaries. *Yimvu* boys' contradiction thus lies in their association with girls, which can at any given time give rise to teasing behaviours associated with the feminine.

Yimvu boys are generally tolerant and gender-friendly but the pressures to align with dominant *tsotsi* masculinity are always present. This means that even subordinated masculinities can perform hegemonic forms of masculinity. However, at the same time, their less toxic masculinity means that gender arrangements are always multi-levelled, contradictory dynamic, changing and open to change. In the making and remaking of masculine identity there is always complexity and fragility. Mrs G captures this here:

Mrs G: Some boys are very soft, not like this one but the soft boys get pushed around and they say "this one is fooling me" and that's how they become murderers. And they don't want to hurt but they become murderers because they don't want to fight.

All masculinities are vulnerable. Mrs G refers to the possibility that gentle masculinities can alter for the worse so that soft boys can become murderers. Significantly, Mrs G points to the pressures that face non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. The underbelly of all masculinities is the driving force of rage and ambiguity (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997: 119).

The existence of *yimvu* masculinity points to the existence of gender-friendly patterns of conduct. This pattern is important in the work towards gender equality in South Africa. These subordinated masculinities challenge hegemonic masculinity and have the potential to disrupt the conventional assumptions about masculinities. Despite the lethal blend of the hegemonic patterns of conduct and the violence that it engenders, alternative patterns of conduct do exist. This opens up the possibilities for teachers to exalt alternative ways of being, which boys do inhabit and which others can also (Blaise 2005; MacNaughton 2000).

Conclusion

In this chapter *KwaDabeka School* provided the specific context in the making of gender as a violent expression of certain types of masculinities. Attention has been drawn to some of the violent gender-arrangements that occur within the massive structures of inequalities. Violent masculinity as a hegemonic form provided a fertile context for the eruption of violent gender relations. *Tsotsi* boys align to dominant patterns of aggression and violence as a means to maintain a sense of status and, through such enactments, gain material dividends. Not all boys at *KwaDabeka School* perform hegemonic *tsotsi* masculinity. *Yimvu* boys suffer from the ignominy of potential and actual violence, as they are effeminised through misogynistic mockery. *Yimvu* boys struggle to perform their masculine sense of

identity, as they are othered in the policing of acceptable hegemonic masculinity. In the 'survival of the fittest', *yimvu* boys struggle to maintain and contest daily battles of bullying, mockery and actual violence.

This chapter has highlighted the importance of masculinities in the early years of primary schooling and its association with violence in the contexts of poverty, unemployment and economic dislocation. Ending violence and ending violent gender relations are thus also inseparable from ending economic inequalities (Piketty 2014). The fight for food, lunch, *vetkoek*, sweets, pens and pencils shifts speedily to violence and fuels violent gender relations. The children in this school have to see a new sense of economic possibility if alternate and peaceable gender relations are to develop. Anti-violence work has to be part of the broader strategy of reform in gender arrangements that will equalise resources and opportunities. Thus, the chapter also illustrates the need for a framework for working with boys in the early years of primary schooling within the complex tension that puts structure and agency in a knot where gender inequalities and constructions of masculinity are enacted and regulated through the everyday forms of violence in the school context and requires attention to the specificities of these social locations and to the complex process through which power is negotiated (Jewkes et al. 2015; Keddie 2006; MacNaughton 2000).

Notes

The word *voetsek* derives from the local Afrikaans language and is the contraction of Dutch "*voort seg ik!*" ("away, say I!") It is typically used to address an animal. It forms part of *isiZulu* everyday language and is regarded as derogatory, offensive and abusive and generally takes on the same meaning as 'fuck off'. In February 2016, Deputy Higher Education Minister Mduduzi Manana had to apologise for using the word "*voetsek*" in the National Assembly. The minister had said "*voetsek*" to the opposition party during a debate following the State of the Nation Address in Parliament.

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Chapter 8
"Girls Hit!" Constructing and Negotiating Violent Femininities

> *Tisha* [Teacher] says that the girls who hit are 'grabbers[1]' because the girls are better than boys. The boys are '*skelms'* [criminals] so the girls mustn't hit like boys. But the girls hit! [Interview with Nompilo, an eight-year-old girl at *KwaDabeka School*]

South African schoolgirls have often been depicted as victims of and vulnerable to the violent boys and men. Yet, in contrast to this static approach, eight-year-old Nompilo presents a somewhat different perspective. She argues that despite the teacher's attempt to regulate acceptable feminine identities, which exclude violence, 'girl's hit'. Nompilo positions African schoolgirl femininity within the dominant discourse of docility (and victimisation). Alternate expressions of femininity in the study of gender and school violence in South Africa is uncommon and even less examined is the study of violence amongst primary schoolgirls (Cobbett 2014). As the previous chapter has illustrated, there is of course a strong case to be made for the continued focus on boys doing violence. The focus on boys, violence, and masculinities is an important feminist project, and in the context of the enactment of violent masculinities at *KwaDabeka School* remains relevant. In this chapter I focus on girls' violence in the context of major structural challenges reported in Chaps. 7 and 6. By focusing on how girls participate in and negotiate violence, I aim to contest the construction of little girls as good, and as innocent and victims of boys' violence. In situating their experiences within the context of striking inequalities I continue the leitmotif that suggests boys and girls are active agents but their agency is circumscribed by the prevailing contexts. Instead of discredited arguments that seek to pathologise girls who perform non-normative identities, this chapter resists this conceptualisation by drawing attention to the major structural challenges previously described at *KwaDabeka School*. Like boys, we cannot assume that girls are simply passive recipients of their social conditions (Wright and Fagan 2013). The problem with misrecognising girls' active agency in the enactment of violent gender relations is in part related to the dominant discourse that positions girls within the gender oppositional binary. This binary—as I have

[1]Grabbers—girls who take, who embrace non-normative gender roles.

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argued in the previous chapters—functions on the male power logic where girls are docile and submissive and simply victims. This linear thinking does not take into account girls' ability to contest, stand up and challenge and use readily available tools in a particular setting—including the use of violence—to gain power (Huuki and Renold 2015; Ringrose 2008). As Cornwall et al. (2007: 14) note, women "may not be as nice, peaceful, harmonious and caring as gender myths and feminist fables would have us believe". I extend this argument to girls although my intention is not to resuscitate discredited discourses which pathologise women and girls' violence without due attention to the major structural challenges which are in tension with gender violence. In so doing, my aim in this chapter is not to detract from the widespread forms of violence that continue to create vulnerabilities for girls in South Africa (Human Rights Watch 2001; Bhana 2012). Instead, a close focused analysis on girls' actual lives within fragile settings such as *KwaDabeka School*, contributes to enriching our understanding of the fallibility in the dominant teaching discourses identified in the earlier chapters of this book revealing the paradox of childhood innocence and girls particular conceptualisation as more innocent than boys. In critiquing the dominant essentialist discourse, Cobbett (2014: 312) states "the essentialism that is apparent in simplistic generalisations of girls and women as *only* vulnerable and subordinate and boys and men as *only* violent and dominant". By showing how girls actively engage in and participate in cultures of violence within the deprived setting in *KwaDabeka*, I distance from discourses which try to pathologise girls as bad and erode children's agency at the same time.

I argue that a more capacious view of primary school girls, alert to their agency, and informed by the broader social conditions of their self-creation, can provide a fresh perspective on the ways in which agency is expressed in the context of gender violence, not simply as victims of violence. The approach views girls not simply as muted victims of Africa's vanguard, but also as active participants in everyday school life within larger contexts of persistent violence and persistent inequalities. To evoke and contextualise this approach, this chapter points to girls' active agency; they are agents, albeit shaped by material and social deprivation and gendered inequalities. The chapter is structured in the following way. After a discussion of girls, beyond victims, I situate the study of girls within South Africa's history. Showing how feminist social historians are reframing the image of African working-class women (and girls) as politically active agents during apartheid resistance, the chapter goes on to argue that such nuanced analysis disrupting gender polarities has yet to reach into studies in violence and schooling in South Africa. The purpose of this section is not to provide a comprehensive report on the work of feminist social historians in South Africa but to point to the ways in which African working-class women take on gender roles beyond that that are normatively ascribed to them. After noting the complete silence on younger girls' agency within South African historiography, the chapter points out that there is scant focus on younger children in the study of violence and gender. Young children are not considered to be properly gendered, and as MacNaughton (2000) argues, myths

prevail about the aptness of addressing gender in children's lives, as children are regarded as blank slates without the capacity to think, know and feel. The chapter then addresses elements of schoolgirl violence as articulated by Nompilo in the transcript above, before concluding that the research on girls, violence and schooling is under-theorised and too narrowly defined.

Girls, Beyond Victims

Feminist research on women's violence is not new (Alder and Worrall 2004; Macdonald 1991). Disrupting violence as a male domain, feminist research shows how women who do violence are often constructed as monstrous, more ruthless than men reproducing rigid gender binaries. Violent women, it is argued, break with the natural gender order and are often seen as pathological (Macdonald 1991). Younger girls' violence has been under-theorised in feminist research, and this chapter makes a case for such theorisation and begins such work.

As noted, South Africa has the worst statistics on gender and sexual violence in the world. At least one in three South African women will be raped in her lifetime, and one in four will be beaten by her domestic partner (Jewkes et al. 2002; Moffett 2006). In South African schools, pernicious forms of gender violence have been recognised by the Human Rights Watch in its descriptive accounts of violence:

> I was scared. The last day at school came and he beat me like he never did before. He told me he was going to kill me. I apologized and he beat me again and asked me to kiss him and I did because I was scared.
>
> Interview with a 17-year-old African schoolgirl in a township school in South Africa (Human Rights Watch 2001: 55).

While little quantitative measure of the extent of the violence exists, the Human Rights Watch acknowledges the widespread phenomenon of gender violence in schools. The violence includes physical and sexual assault and rape and harassment perpetrated by male classmates and teachers. That men and boys are actively involved in making schools unsafe for girls, increasing their vulnerability to violence and HIV/AIDS, has been recognised as an important concern in African schools (Dunne et al. 2006; Dunne and Ananga 2013; Leach et al. 2003; Mitchell and Smith 2003; Pinheiro 2006; Willemsen and DeJaeghere 2015). Examining these trends, researchers tend to dwell mainly on the ways in which girls are victims of male violence, which is hardly surprising given the South African context of violence. Significant questions are raised about the social and cultural milieux in which school violence takes place and about the social and economic factors in South Africa that permit such gender violence (Bhana 2012). However, while focusing on the ways in which patriarchal structures work to the detriment of African women and girls, hardly any attempt has been made to investigate the ways in which girls navigate the context of violence in schools.

Because of the grim picture of gender violence in South African schools and the effects of such violence on girls, the inclination of many researchers is to see African girls as victims who fit into the good girl/bad boy representation of gender relations. This suggests an innate opposition and a degree of rigidity between a dangerous and fearsome African masculinity and an innocent African femininity. Scholarly work in gender and schooling in South Africa (and this has resonance beyond the continent) sees violence chiefly as an area where boys and men are supposed to realise themselves as masculine just as girls are supposed to understand themselves as being 'better than boys', passive, quiet; similarly, Skelton's (2001) UK study of primary schoolgirls notes that they saw themselves as selfless and sensible.

Viewing African schoolgirls simply as victims of violence not only fragments our knowledge about their schooling experiences, as Nompilo attests to, but also creates an analytically unhelpful dichotomy which reduces girls to homogeneous stereotypes and ignores the possibility of multiple forms of femininities, just as there are multiple forms of masculinities (see Connell 1995). Breaking with gender binaries, Halberstam (1998) argues that gender ambiguous constructions are often pathologised and suggests that female masculinity can be empowering models in gender relations.

It is especially important to challenge static representations of African schoolgirls, particularly in popular discourse that portrays young African men and boys as vicious killers, diseased and vectors in the spread of HIV/AIDS leading to a racist image of a 'whole sub-continent of *Lord of the Flies*' (Barker and Ricardo 2006). In the context of the frightening reality of gendering of HIV/AIDS these racist analogies remain major tropes in the analysis of gender identities in schools where African boys are consistently seen as bad (Pattman and Bhana 2006). Thus instead of addressing the nuanced and complex understandings of gender violence and the social context within which violence emerges, many educational researchers look no further than African boys in their articulation of violence. Notions of gender identity are static, and girls are given the status of victims with narrow (and polarised) conceptions of gender, assuming that the changing South African context has not altered or modified patriarchal dynamics.

Primary schoolgirls are rendered particularly invisible in patterns of gendered school violence, and this research caveat extends beyond the African continent. (See Alder and Worrall 2004; Bright 2005; Burman et al. 2001; Currie et al. 2007; Jackson 2006; and Simmons 2002, for emerging work on girls and secondary school violence, though none of these feature schoolgirls in primary school.) Part of the neglect in researching gender and school violence in the early years of primary schooling stems from longstanding tropes of childhood innocence, which as Chaps. 2 and 3 have argued, postulate children primarily as objects of concern and in need of protection (Connolly 1998; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Jordan 1995; MacNaughton 2000; Renold 2005). Not only are girls placed under the gaze of innocence, but their innocence—more than boys'—is eroticised, vigorously policed and reinforced. Young girls who are sexually explicit, for example, are seen as stained and forgo the prized status of innocence (Walkerdine 1999). Within this

conceptualisation of girls' innocence (and docility), there is little place for making girls' violence visible. In the African context of war, famine, poverty, and social and economic upheaval, it is women and girls who are rendered most visible, not in terms of their resilience in conditions of social and economic vulnerability, but as objects of pity. The presence of African schoolgirls in the study of gender and schooling is thus mostly passive, framed by their need for protection from violent boys and men.

These framings are necessary but not, as this chapter argues, sufficient. They do not provide an explanation of the ways in which young primary school girls actively participate in school cultures of violence whilst also being victims of it, as the previous chapter addressed. Research in African contexts and in South Africa has been quick to seize upon the discourse of 'poor African schoolgirls' as the only way of understanding gender relations, which makes it imperative to challenge any static representation of girls as simply victims of violence—rather than complicit with the gender regime and the respective gender positioning within schools. This point has been noted by Dunne et al. (2006: 85) who suggest that the limited research evidence of girl-on-girl violence in developing contexts tends to present girls as innocent victims without agency. Research scholars have not placed sufficient weight on girls' strategies for survival. Taking issue with the dominant construction of young girls as passive and dependent, proponents of the new sociology of childhood attribute greater agency to African children (Bhana 2012). This development is particularly important in the African context, given the mythical representation of girls as innocent and pitiful. It is important to recognise, as Dunne et al. (2006) do, that gender violence in developing contexts—unlike the north—is embryonic, and remains an under-researched topic resulting in violence in schools remaining invisible and unrecognised.

South African Context of Gender and Political Resistance

Ideas about African women's and girls' involvement in resistance and violence under conditions of social and political vulnerability are undergoing revision, though this has not yet been imported into education. Notwithstanding the tendency of research scholars to position African women as objects of pity, the history of resistance against apartheid celebrates the example of children (boys and girls) as political actors. Whilst there is little examination of the agency of younger girls under 10, the work of social historians is beginning to redefine the roles of women and adolescent girls in political resistance (Gasa 2007; Hassim 2005; Meintjes 2007). These scholars argue against the tendency to construct South African women as a homogenous group who exclusively perform conventional gender roles. Younger women in certain situations were able to play the roles normally assigned only to men—aggressors. While this section of the chapter does not attempt to

delve deeply into the work of feminist social historians, the main line of argument here is that South African historiography demonstrates that African women and girls, whilst victims of violence, were also supporting and organising violence of various kinds in the turbulent history of racial oppression and resistance (Gasa 2007). Bonin (2000), Hassim (2005), Suttner (2007) and Cherry (2007) argue that whilst there has been an attempt to downplay or ignore the ways in which women resisted traditional classification of gender in South African historiography, the evidence suggests that rigid male-female dualisms do not explain the resistance history in South Africa and women's involvement in political protest: 'it means that you are fighting, even though you don't have a weapon… and now you have broken this characteristic of a women who is quiet and doesn't involve herself in fights' (Bonin 2000: 315).

Bonin describes the experiences of women who took charge in the tumultuous period of conflict between the apartheid state and the resistance movement. In the mid-1980s, for example, the mass African movement came increasingly into violent confrontation with the apartheid state but these clashes were mainly confined to African townships. Within these contexts, African working-class women emerged as a powerful force for change within their communities, taking charge and transgressing gender roles. Older women, the literature argues, were less open to changing roles; generational differences between older and younger women and adolescent girls are thus highlighted (Gasa 2007). About younger girls, however, there remains complete silence.

What is the significance of this theorisation of women in the political struggle for the young schoolgirls in this study? One of the most interesting aspects of African working-class women in the political struggle was the ways in which gender identities were being presented. In the first instance, African township women were identified according to traditional gender roles; they were expected to nurture and protect their families even as they too were victims of the apartheid state violence. But this was not the only violence that they faced. Morrell (2001), for example, argues that whilst African men challenged race and class inequalities, they were simultaneously defending their masculinity which also involved efforts to re-establish and reinforce power over women, often in violent ways. On the other hand, the political protests created space for women to challenge these gender roles. Young African women activists were militant and proactive, though fewer women than men participated in leadership structures and militant structures. Women's involvement in resistance campaigns was not merely supportive, but women actively encouraged dissemination of information, persuasion and even coercion (Cherry 2007). In other words, the perception of violence as a masculine domain and women as passive victims of male violence goes against African women's experiences and is in reality far more complex and varied than this. However, young men were more likely to perpetrate violence particularly in the context of the dominance of traditional gender roles, the domestic division of labour, and apartheid's vicious entrenchment of gender and racial inequalities (Gasa 2007).

Shedding assumptions about the fixity of gender roles, South African historiography of African working-class women resists the stereotype of poor women (and girls). The latter were actors, who were not just supportive but taking the lead and offering resistance, and using physical violence in the process of transition to warrior femininities (Gasa 2007). Thus the particular political, social and economic circumstances created the space for alternative forms of femininities.

Another important example of women's agency was the extent to which African working-class women were able to use their bodies and sexuality as social power to fend off attacks from the apartheid police. Meintjes (2007) shows how women and girls resisted the apartheid police from demolishing their shacks—the only source of shelter for many disenfranchised, unemployed African men and women—by stripping naked. The tradition of African women using nakedness as a signal of anger and as a means of cursing perpetrators for unacceptable behaviour has a long history. Meintjes (2007) argues that it is hard to imagine men using their bodies in a similar act of protest; this example of sexuality, body and gender within specific race and class contexts raises fundamental questions about agency and struggles over fundamental material needs. Their actions showed their agency, their strategic understanding of their position, and ways in which they used sexuality to recast attention to themselves by mobilising their vulnerability as a tool, and using the cultural and social capital of sexuality to make claims for their right to shelter.

In Chap. 11, I show how young girls can and do use their sexuality to fend off violent space invading boys at the school. By 'showing boys their panties', young girls use their sexual capital to embarrass and humiliate boys and momentarily gain freedom from invasion of their play space at school. Feminist-orientated historiography in South Africa has been important in disrupting the binary opposition of innocent women and girls versus violent males and argues for a more sophisticated and nuanced analysis of women's role in resistance, defying the boundaries set up for them as women. Importantly, such work is helpful in arguing that South Africa's girls are not a homogeneous group, and that violence is not the exclusive domain of men. In the current political context, African women's broader engagement has challenged politics in South Africa and intensified challenges to gender identities and practices. While South African women's successes have been widely celebrated, particularly in terms of one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, translating gender equality into reality is a formidable endeavour (Walsh and Scully 2006). Not only do these changes produce innovations and resistance to gender roles, but they also show the inflexibility of gender roles reflected in the increasing rates of violence against women and girls. Publicity about gender violence in South Africa is growing, and there is now evidence to suggest increasing levels of violence and that perpetrators and victims are getting younger and younger (Meintjes 2007). Yet for all the richness and complexity of this literature on women (and girls) as political actors, there is silence on the ways in which younger girls were/are agents and resilient actors.

'I'm Not Scared of Girls Because the Girl Is Wearing a Pantie like Me'

Not only are African working women victims of male violence but in a context of declining economic conditions, material insecurity and urban crime, women are both victims and offenders, a point noted by Zimudzi (2004) in her study of violent crime amongst African women in Zimbabwe. It is argued that under certain circumstances women might become masculinised. Masculinity is not confined to men. Women who are strong and assertive (and violent) defy the boundaries imposed by femininity and as Connell (2000) argues, are making masculine excursions into masculinity and are recognised as laying claims to social power. The girls in this study are all too familiar with violence and have to make sense of it routinely in their lives, incorporating it, resisting it and rejecting it.

Under the specific material, social and cultural conditions prevalent at *KwaDabeka School*, the girls' use of violence is highly strategic and embedded within the knowledge of their vulnerability to violent boys. Violence inheres in the everyday life of many girls—they avoid it, negotiate it and indulge in it, but always within the broader social context that sets limits to their identities as girls. These material and ideological conditions thus create the conditions for relations of power, making girl-on-girl violence an important means through which to attain social and material reward. The rest of the discussion focuses on Nompilo who constructed her femininity in ways that defied the traditional version of docility, whilst simultaneously recognising the limits of her agency in relation to violent boys. She was most often with a group of girls, including Zama; together they routinely played clapping and rhythmic games often associated with junior years of schooling. These games allowed a variety of gendered and heterosexual positionings that included moments during which they could mock and tease the boys. I shall consider these games in Chap. 11. Boys would often harass the girls and invade their spaces and hurt the girls, including Nompilo. But there were contradictions. As a tall girl with a commanding voice, Nompilo carved out a sense of identity that defied gender boundaries (see Thorne 1993). Her voice, her size and her bullying practices meant that she was able to share lunch with boys who used violence against other boys and girls. I often observed how Nompilo would share her lunch with Andile (a nine-year-old boy who often committed violence against other girls), and how he would share his lunch with her. This sharing has important meaning as boundaries of gender-defined friendships and alliances were broken (see Thorne 1993). Significantly, Nompilo was able to use her transgressive femininity in ways that meant collusion with and collaboration with other boys who were often avoided by the majority of girls. Nompilo developed a strong position with her group of girl friends:

Nompilo: Zama, she hits the other girls if they don't share lunch with her.
DB: What does Zama want?
Nompilo: She wants their lunch or anything they have. Zama hit Amanda. Amanda told *tisha* [teacher], and *tisha* hit Zama, but Zama hit Amanda

after school, and then Amanda told sir [reference to male teacher], and sir hit Zama, then Zama hit Amanda in the break. So I hit Zama, and then Zama cried.

DB: Why did you hit Zama?

Nompilo: Because Amanda is my friend and Zama hit her.

DB: I thought it was only the boys who hit?

Nompilo: No, the girls learn from boys. If the boys say, 'Can I go on that side' and the girls say 'no' because the boys didn't say please, the boys hit the girls and that's how the girls learn to hit. *Tisha* says that the girls who hit are 'grabbers[2]' because the girls are better than boys. The boys are '*skelms*' [criminals] so the girls mustn't hit like boys. But the girls hit.

Breaking the myth that girls are often victims of violence, Nompilo confirms the extent to which schoolgirl violence is complexly connected to the overall climate in the school and the social context (see Alder and Worrall 2004). Within the complex matrix of violence described, is the recognition of the material basis in and through which the violence arose. Avoiding the image of innocent girls, Nompilo is complicit in violence within the school regime. Boys and teachers are not alone in perpetrating gender violence—girls do so as well, although, as Bright (2005) argues, it is important to recognise that when compared to boys' physical aggression, girls' violence often goes unrecognised and is made invisible through the narratives of the good girl versus bad girls ('grabbers') image. Resisting simplistic forms of analysis which offer little in the way of understanding the complex dynamics of girl-on-girl violence, the overall climate at the school, its gender regime, the prevalence of boys' violence and teachers' use of corporal punishment are all co-factors in making sense of girl-on-girl violence. It is true that African working-class girls enter schools under social, material and emotional conditions that are extremely unfavourable to the development of gender equality. Nevertheless, girls like Nompilo and Zama arrogate to themselves the authority and power to express violence in these very conditions. Violence causes humiliation and hurt for both the perpetrator and the victim. Nompilo's defence of her friend, Amanda, must be seen in the light of these conditions of deprivation, where violence flourishes as a tool in the negotiation of power. Violence is a claim to power, and Nompilo uses it not only to stake her claim but also to create solidarity amongst her girlfriends, whilst at the same time positioning herself with authority and power over other girls. As suggested later in this section, friends might be the chief resource in navigating the hardships of poverty, food insecurity, lack of parental care and support both within and outside school. Nompilo's strategy of coming to her friend's defence must be seen within these circumstances. Significantly, it was not Amanda who initiated violence—a fact that highlights the multiple ways in which some girls in the same context avoid violence and at times use it. It was therefore not surprising to see other 'gentler' girls align themselves to Nompilo

[2]Grabbers—girls who take, who embrace non-normative gender roles.

where the sharing of lunch and snacks was crucial in the maintenance of friendship groups. There were always benefits for gentler girls to be seen in alliance with a hard girl who did the dirty job of hitting and defending, (re)producing the violent girl status. Against the backdrop of harsh material inequalities and unemployment, violence is therefore a significant means to attain material rewards as well as social and emotional rewards. Gentler girls also attain reward in the form of protection and friendship. Both Zama's and Nompilo's use of violence reinforces their power position against more fragile and delicate femininities like Amanda's. Zama has little to lose and much to gain by shifting to violence in order to get 'lunch' and 'anything they have'. Violence is thus not about boys, although it is necessary to see the context of the male gaze in the gendering of violence. Violence is connected to the site of massive structural inequalities, where social conflict shifts speedily to violence and where children with limited access to alternative patterns of conduct resort to violence (and succeed) in the fight for survival. It is therefore not surprising that girls too incorporate this conduct into their repertoire. Violent contexts produce not only violent masculinities but also violent expressions of femininities although it is the girls who more generally bear the main burden of male violence. The girls' use of violence is tenuous and the strategy intimately linked to their overall vulnerability in asymmetrical relations of power:

DB: Do they [boys] hit the girls, then?
Nompilo: Yes they do but I hit them. I beat them too.
DB: Who do you hit?
Nompilo: You see him? (Pointing to Mncedo). He is a hitter. He is a boss of hitting.
Mncedo: She lies. She hits me.
DB: Do you hit the girls also, Nompilo?
Nompilo: *I'm not scared of girls because the girl is wearing a pantie like me*. They have a private part like me. The boys… ai ai… they got a underwear. I touch my panties not theirs… (emphasis added).

The above quote demonstrates the ambiguities and contradictions through which Nompilo forges her identity. The extent of her power is relative. She refers to Mncedo, a violent lad, as the 'boss of hitting', which establishes the patterns of hierarchy. Asymmetrical relations of power are reinforced as Mncedo is positioned as 'boss', raising the point that girls bear the main burdens of boys' violence. Nompilo does hit boys, but she is alert to her limits as a young girl at *KwaDabeka Primary School*. Nompilo, states that she is 'not scared of girls because the girl is wearing a pantie', whilst the boys 'they got underwear'. Nompilo sexualises the difference between boys and girls (although she transgresses it), but the polarity works to underscore the acute sense of recognition of the enormity of male violence. Some boys present for Nompilo the threat of and the capacity for violence. The reference to 'private part' also refers to boys' potential for sexual violence and her vulnerability as a South African girl (Richter et al. 2004). Nompilo is thus alert to the general pattern of boys' (and men's) violence against women and girls and to the

diffused nature of power. The indulgence in violence is thus severely circumscribed by the threat of and actual violence both physical and sexual (see Human Rights Watch 2001). Within the structure of gender relations and the dynamics of the school and broader social context, the regulation of girls' use of violence is thus evident. Alternate forms of femininities are thus perpetually ebbing and flowing, contesting, challenging, and reproducing and forming patterns of hierarchy and exclusion:

Nompilo: I'll hit the girls if they are hitting me. Phindile is naughty and so I hit her. She takes our names and tells her friends stories about me and my friends and so I hit her.
DB: I don't understand. Tell me again.
Nompilo: It's like this. Phindile and her friends were talking about us and we heard them. I asked her why she did that, and then Phindile cried.
DB: Why does she cry?
Nompilo: She is not my friend. She shouts at us and she doesn't share lunch with us.
DB: Did you hit her?
Nompilo: I only hit if she hits me.
DB: Did you hit her?
Nompilo: I'll hit her again.

Currie et al. (2007), in their study of adolescent girls, suggest that girls, who lack economic and social power, find a resource in peer status groups. Nompilo is able to assert her power amongst her peers by challenging and using violence. Lloyd (2005) notes that friendship is an important resource for girls, they use it to define and mark out the 'other'. In the above context, the other is constructed as the rival —Phindile—whose power is squashed through Nompilo's questioning of her. Nompilo's expression of femininity is callous and insensitive. Telling stories or gossiping is seen as an attack on Nompilo's status and leaves Phindile open to attack: 'Phindile and her friends were talking about us and we heard them. I asked her why she did that and then Phindile cried'. Through the othering of Phindile, Nompilo could publicly defend and maintain her position, thus reinforcing her reputation and status amongst her group of friends, and excluding others. The exclusion, however, is not simply based on gossiping or shouting but is embedded within the material context of poverty and the extent to which food (lunch) was shared. Nompilo says that Phindile 'doesn't share lunch with us'. The sharing of lunch was key to forming and maintaining friendships and exclusion. In the context of deep poverty and food insecurity, Nompilo has much to gain in the expression of violent femininity, not only friendships, a claim to social power but to the most basic necessity—food—supported by sharing with other girls in friendship groups. The litmus test of friendships is thus the ability to share food. In Thorne's (1993) study of boys and girls in the primary school material objects like lip gloss, cars and trucks can become the focus of provocation and dispute, through which friendship alliances are launched and disrupted and become painful markers of exclusion and hierarchies. At *KwaDabeka*, the sharing of lunch was significant in the construction

of friendship alliances. Within an impoverished context like *KwaDabeka School*, shouting, gossiping, and not sharing lunch are key areas that can diminish respect and leave girls like Phindile open to attack, violence, exclusion and pain. Femininities are constructed within and against each other in the constant battles for power in the context of wider social and economic inequalities where the most basic necessity (food) is lacking. The violent expressions of femininity, its location within the broader social context of inequalities including food insecurity and poverty, its relation to violent masculinities and the formation of friendships and friendship hierarchies complicates and contributes to the understanding of girl's violence.

Conclusion

While uncommon, violence is more than simply a one-dimensional expression of male power expressed in African secondary schools. The challenge to essentialist thinking and women's and girls' particular subordination within gender relations is enormous and even UNICEF conceptualises gender within the victim-perpetrator binary:

> … violence is used in cultures around the world as a way to both preserve and maintain women's subordinate status *vis à vis* men. In other words, acts of violence against women are both an expression of and a way to reinforce male domination – not just over individual women, but women as a whole class of people (UNICEF 2008: 18).

This conception alone betrays the complex fabric of young working-class African primary schoolgirl experiences in the mobilisation of violence as I have shown in this chapter. This monolithic construction of gender is highly problematic as it erodes the possibility of understanding the different ways in which girls experience, deal with, negotiate and avoid violence.

Arguing against the dominant depiction of the poor African schoolgirl, this chapter has demonstrated how violence (mainly hitting) is negotiated as a strategic ploy to stake a claim for power in the presence of material and social impoverishment. The coming together of specific cultural and material domains, as attested to by the school context of *KwaDabeka*, together with the violent gender regime, allows violence to flourish, including the violent expressions of femininity. Violence is unquestionably part of African working-class primary schoolgirl experiences, not as victims of boys and teachers alone, but also as agents as they struggle to secure power, friendship, respect and food from other girls. Analysis rooted in the agency of African primary schoolgirls—rarely featuring in debates about gender violence—has an important role to play in replacing stereotypes with accounts that recognise the complex and contested processes through which violence is constructed. As Vetten (2000) in her study of gangs in South Africa argues, the emphasis on women as victims reinforces stereotypes of women as passive and living on terms dictated by men. While Nompilo in this study has an acute

awareness of the extent of her agency in relation to boys with 'underwear', it is clear that this is only part of the picture.

In the last chapter I stressed the deep social roots of violence. It is undoubtedly true that gender violence in school extends beyond the school, as many researchers inside and outside of South Africa argue, for violence intersects with race and class to produce specific gender relations (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Mills 2001; Morrell 2001). But so too must feminist scholars begin to re-assess what is meant by violence as a chief domain of masculine formation. This chapter has given attention to girl-on-girl violence in the primary school, suggesting that such violence not only defies gender polarities so often used in making African girls victims of male violence, but also situates violence in an area of schooling that is not featured in research around gender and school violence. There is very little work in the area of violence, primary schoolgirls and agency, and theoretical work needs to begin exploring primary school girl agency and its relationship to violence. Gender violence in African schools can no longer be simply conflated with male power—and this has implications for feminist research. Girls are not simply passive recipients of male violence. They engage with violence, use it, and resist it. Linking masculinity to maleness and to power and domination does not cover the ambiguous ways in which power is manifest in gender relations. As this chapter has shown, the complexity through which power is deployed by young working-class African girls contests the rigid binary definitions that separate boys from girls. Halberstam (1998) affirms the ambiguous figure of the masculine woman. Criticising an essentialist relationship between men and masculinities, Halberstam attempts to restore some of the complexities of gender relations by focusing on masculine women (particularly lesbian women) and the pathologisation of those representing gender ambiguities. Empowering models of female masculinity have been neglected or misunderstood because of cultural intolerance towards gender ambiguity that the masculine woman represents. The possibility of a conjunction between female and masculinity that challenges the pathology associated with transgressive women and applied to young girls in this study makes it possible to argue that African women are not waiting to be victims—that female masculinity can be empowering and suggests the multiple forms of power and domination—not just the exclusive preserve of boys and men.

Girls, like boys, are not simply dupes of structure and whilst structural inequalities loom large, they do have a level of agency. At the same time when Nompilo says: 'The boys… ai ai… they got a underwear. I touch my panties not theirs', is an indication of the capacity to know when to commit violence and when not to. This requires that, despite the ongoing material crisis, schools can and do have a part to play in working with girls and boys in ending violence. This I will consider in Chap. 12. However, aggressive behaviour amongst girls is often unrecognised in the context of dominant discourses of childhood innocence that make gender invisible and gender violence a minor concern with almost no possibility of the diversity of experiences and actions of girls (Jordan 1995).

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Chapter 9
"Boys Rule, Girls Drool": Masculinities, Femininities and the Fight for Power

> It's nine kilometres of gravel road after turning right from the tarred road. I remember pole 98, the left turn to the school, high on the hill. A herd boy delays me as nine cows cross over the gravel road. The boy waves at me. I enter the school and wait outside the principal's office to announce my arrival as usual. Greeted by two big girls … Girls are cleaning the office area. They bring water in a bucket. Outside a whole activity of cleaning and clearing this morning. Little brooms, water buckets. Five boys take the rake and spade and clear the small garden patch area. It also functions as the school assembly area. Those five girls are now scrubbing the entrance to the principal's office. Cleaning chairs and now polishing the floor. [Observation and field notes from *Umbumbulu School*]

In this chapter I explore the salience of gender through the accounts by, and observations of: boys and boys; boys and girls; and girls and girls. The primary concern is to explore the micro mediations, contestations and negotiations as masculinities and femininities are enacted. These contestations provide a framework for understanding how children become active agents in shaping their worlds. As I have argued throughout the book, power is the most significant dynamic through which boys and girls contest, navigate and negotiate the everyday as they give meaning to being a 'real boy' and a 'real girl' (Renold 2005). Children's subjective worlds are structured around the battle for power and struggle to get gender right. As this chapter suggests gender struggles are strongly connected to and influenced by the broader social world. Boys and girls come to school and operate alongside identities already arranged by gender binaries and divisions where masculinity and femininity are oppositional and hierarchically ordered categories (Butler 2004; Francis 1998; Richardson 2015; Robinson 2013; Renold 2013, 2005; Bartholomaeus and Senkevics 2015; Bragg and Kehily 2013). By paying close attention to boys and girls, I argue, like many other ethnographic studies, that the early years of the primary school are a critical site where gender is enacted—performed within the constraining and regulatory framework of male power and the struggle to achieve hegemonic masculinity (Bartholomaeus 2015; Renold 2005; Swain 2005, 2006).

I begin this chapter with observations at *Umbumbulu School* where being real boys and real girls locks into the broader social world where girls are responsible for cleaning and sweeping. Boys on the other hand were responsible for raking and

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working in the gardens. This division of labour, as shown in Chap. 5, was shaped by lack of resources and in part, promoted the domestication of girls. Indeed, girls and boys are caught in the crossfire of poverty, economic dislocation, history and cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity where femininity is subordinated leading to real consequences and narrowing options for both boys and girls. Foregrounding children's cultures as a key arena for the production and reproduction of gender identity and gender relations, this chapter goes beyond the simplistic portrayals of young children as unprotesting, innocent victims. Children are not blank sheets on which gender patterns are stamped. Gender is learnt and for boys and girls, the early years of primary schooling are an important site for the construction of gender identities. As in previous chapters, I take children seriously and follow from others who have made similar revelations about children's active agency through close-focused attention:

> Children's *own* views and experiences is emphasized in this research so that our (adult) understandings of children's gender and sexual cultures are located in (and challenged by) the rich and diverse views of boys and girls themselves (Renold 2013: 7).

In the process of learning gender and sexuality, children actively contest, challenge and contribute to the dominant definitions of identity. Boys and girls resist, manage conflicting points of view and shape as they are shaped by structures of power. The data I explore shows the complexity of boys and girls taking up certain gendered positions and discourses across the school sites at a general level. As I explained in Chap. 1, I refer to children's enactment of gender discourses as momentary. Momentary discourses are thus utilised to explain the rapidly shifting, elusive and episodic moments of power through which children construct gender in the interstices between freedom and structure. They are potent, ephemeral and episodic spaces that exist in schools in the shifting balance between production and reproduction of gender identity, but when evoked they also carry a sense of performance (Thorne 1993). Butler's notion of gender as performance is useful because the common sense understandings attached to gender are illusions which create immutable truths about gender that are then performed on a regular basis (Butler 1990). Drawing on episodic moments across schooling sites, this chapter explores how children respond and contribute to dominant definitions of gender.

The chapter focuses on how hegemonic masculinity is struggled over and the concomitant negotiation and mediation across the school sites. Whilst Chaps. 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 have provided contextual specificity in the operation of gender relations of power, my aim in this chapter is to provide an account of boys and girls momentary discourses that discredit dominant teaching narratives which wish gender and sexuality away from the early years of primary schooling. A striking characteristic of the study, are the ways in which boys are constantly in the frontline as they struggle for power. As Keddie (2003) and others suggest (Paechter 2007; Richardson 2015; Bartholomaeus 2015), primary schools are masculine domains involving the active construction of gender. It is boys in particular who have massive investments in ensuring appropriate gender norms, under pressure to prove

masculinity as they engage in multiple forms of conduct to gain self-legitimation and power. This is a striking feature of boys' interactions in this study.

In this chapter I explore how boys and girls negotiate and contest hegemonic masculinity. I integrate the construction of femininities into this. I use hegemonic masculinity as a useful tool to articulate how boys struggle to accomplish particular patterns of conduct. I integrate the construction of femininities into this to avoid the danger of shifting all attention to boys and marginalising girls. As Richardson (2015) also notes primary school's institutionalise gender where expectations about masculinity and femininity are often defended in the service of patriarchy promoting gender inequalities and limiting options by reducing gender to the biological imperative of boy and girl, where power is often exercised by boys as they defend masculinity. Chaps. 10 and 11 will focus on the ways in which sexuality infuses the children's cultural world as they topple the grand master narratives of adult teachers who assume that children are 'just kids, still young'. Within the public domain of schooling, potent ephemeral spaces exist through which sexuality is constructed. For boys and girls these moments of slippage and excess provide the opportunity to produce their own pleasures and negotiate their own desires. These moments of power provide a more reflexive account of femininities and masculinities. In what follows I explore the gendered experiences of young children, and how they are negotiated and maintained in the battles for power.

Constructing Hegemonic Masculinity

Making Heroic Stories

Making stories is one way in which boys exhibit a particular form of masculinity and establish patterns of hierarchies. Here is a picture of me sitting with Michael and a group of boys at *Westridge School* telling a story of the spitfire, an aeroplane.

> Michael: My grandfather flew in a Spitfire and he had two chances to shoot somebody and he lost two of them. The one of them was shot down and the other was grandpa … was after him (sic) and he kept on turning after him. The other one he was after and he went back up in the hills and he couldn't shoot, went into the clouds and over and they were going up through this one big straight cloud like this and he went into the clouds and they couldn't see each other …

Michael's story is one of many that I heard while sitting in classrooms. The story through which Michael engages me and the other boys in the group is a means through which boys fashion their masculinities. The story about the Spitfire, the shooting and manoeuvring through the hills and clouds was spoken with actions and expressions and through which power was exercised as I and the other boys listened to him. As Connell (1996: 220) states, '[t]he peer groups, not individuals, are the bearers of gender definitions'. Michael thus claims a particular kind of

masculinity by association with an ancestor and alongside other boys who carefully listened to this story. Michael claims a space for himself. In this sense the story is utilised to substantiate a dominant masculinity that is in tune with spitfires and shooting and through which masculinities are regulated. However, I also discovered that once Michael's story was almost complete the attention was diverted to other boys who began telling similar stories about heroic deeds involving guns and bravado masculinity. Boys telling stories is thus a means through which to gain power and take on particular masculine identities.

You're Useless! Even a Girl Can Beat You!

In this section, I show how masculinities are constructed through traducing femininity. Many boys in this study resorted to defining and asserting their masculinity through practices of misogyny in order to create the illusion of an essential identity. I observed David and Robert with spin tops as they competed with each other:

David: (laughing) *You're useless*. You can't even spin a top. *Even a girl can beat you.* (Emphasis added)

David tries to validate his own masculinity through the subordination of femininities. David tries to construct his identity in opposition to girls. David tries to express to Robert the horror that "even a girl can beat you". This performance functions through misogyny and is an attempt to reinstate the boy's dominance over girls (women) that is now brought under attack by Robert's inability to perform up to that expectation. The horror for David and Robert is that if you can't spin a top you become like a girl. Thus to be a normal boy one has to demonstrate prowess in top spinning, otherwise face the risk of being the target of misogynistic teasing, and of being constructed as effeminate and thus subordinate. This suggests the complex means and the pressures under which boys forge their identities. To be bad at games can be read as a measure against dominant masculinity, which implies a lack of manly qualities. David's put-down of Robert is accompanied by laughter. Laughter was often used as a strategy that produces power and hierarchies (Allen 2014).

Boys are subject to the pressures of hegemonic patterns of conduct in different ways and they struggle in the constitution of their gendered identity. Here is another example. When I sat in a group in Mrs L's classroom, Nhlanhla said: "Girls don't help. I don't want them to help me. They irritate me". Nhlanhla thus positions himself as anti-girl and is thus used to show his availability for hegemonic masculinity.

Rugby Tackles, Ruffians and the Wedgie

Sporty masculinities are an important means through which boys establish power (Bartholomaeus 2015; Renold 1997; Swain 2006; Bhana 2016). As Swain (2006: 1) notes: "Having the ability to demonstrate and perform athletic prowess has become

an important requirement for establishing and maintaining status in the majority of male peer groups in both primary and secondary schools". Throughout the schools, boys dominated space and the playing fields investing in sporty skills and sporty postures that were chief indicators of successful masculinity. Knowledge of and skills in a particular sport afforded boys an opportunity to embody gender normatively (Coffey et al. 2016). At *KwaDabeka, Umbumbulu* and *Umhlatuzana schools*, soccer was paramount. At *Westridge School* it was cricket and rugby. In the conversation that follows, the constant pressure to maintain gender identity is evident through the boy versus girl challenge. The discussion provides the context in which sport is discussed and masculinity is imputed:

Shaun: She [Catherine] is a tittle-tattle.
DB: What's that?
Shaun: She is a tell-tale. It's a person that keeps on telling lies, telling stories about other people.
Catherine: You're a ruffian, Shaun.
Shaun: Do you know why I'm a ruffian?
DB: No.
Shaun: 'Cos my 13-year-old brother is also a ruffian. He plays rugby and he also tries to do rugby tackles on me. Do you know what he does?
DB: No.
Shaun: Picks you up, takes off your underpants and pulls them up like this and you should have seen the *wedgie* that I gave him once. Do you know what I did?
Catherine: Shaun, you're disgusting!
Shaun: I gave him a huge red mark. Once Labuschagne gave him a wedgie that gave him a big red mark because my brother was pulling me at the camp out. So I made the *wedgie* even worse.
Catherine: Yuck, Shaun!

Using gender as a binary construction, Shaun and Catherine differentiate from each other as boys and girls. Constructing Catherine as a 'tell-tale' 'tittle-tattle', Shaun seeks to denigrate Catherine for telling stories about him, particularly, as I discovered, to the teacher, which operates as good girl sensibilities and boys' defiance of teacher authority. Whilst Catherine fights back against the construction of the 'tittle-tattle' by labelling Shaun as a 'ruffian', Shaun willingly accepts and accommodates this label as it fits into forms of masculinity that seek to draw attention to being tough, associated with sporty rugby boys, and boyhood tactics involving tackling and the *wedgie*. The *wedgie* refers to the practical joke of pulling a person's underwear tightly between their buttocks, which provides a huge source of fun, laughter and power. The conversation is central to laying claims to hegemonic masculinity where ruffian is positively constructed as powerful, sporty and involved in boyhood fun-filled activities. At the same time, Catherine's disgust and contempt as she listens to the story about the *wedgie* is an attempt to present a good girl image where anything that deals with the crude and the rude is put down in compliance with a respectable femininity.

Sissy Egg

The following data indicates the dynamics through which boys struggle to accomplish the ideal hegemonic pattern of conduct:

I sit with a group of boys and girls and listen to their conversation about breakfast. I ask them what they thought about their breakfast. The discussion is around who makes breakfast. Many say that it's their maids who do so. This is an affluent area and most households have live-in maids. I chat to Samit who in a previous visit had proudly showed me a framed picture of his home that won the best architectural design in Durban that previous year (*I thought he was overbearing. Delighted at his home and quite a show-off, pompous in fact*).

DB: Who makes your breakfast?
Samit: My mom.
DB: Does your dad make breakfast too?
Samit: No.
DB: Do you think he should?
Samit: No.
DB: Would you do it if you were a dad?
Samit: No … but sometimes my dad does make a sissy egg
DB: Why do you call it a sissy egg?
Samit: …'cos the yolk's broken …

In the extract above I have used an ordinary classroom experience to show how Samit enacts a particular version of himself to get his gender right across the racial boundaries. Samit is a rich Indian boy but boys' unity is achieved across racial categories. This is a very ordinary experience in schools. Gender is made salient surreptitiously through ordinary unexceptional experience that promotes particular hegemonic versions of masculinity. In the struggle to achieve a particular form of masculinity, the alternative (sissy) has to be put down in relation to the ideal-heterosexual.

Pink Is for Stink

In another observation in Mrs B's classroom at *Westridge*, some groups are busy colouring a worksheet. Colouring is a major activity in the early years of primary schooling where the colours pink and blue have a universal gloss. For the majority of boys in this study, the polluting effects of the colour pink were clearly articulated, and not to distance oneself from pink meant being subject to ridicule and insult. The ridicule, the laughter and the teasing works as a powerful device for exalting the dominant form of masculinity and for whipping others into shape (Nayak and Kehily 2001).

Ricky laughs and teases Zande:

Ricky: Zande's favourite colour is pink. I don't like pink … It's a girl's colour and Zande likes pink.

The following vignette extends the universality of pinks and blues as they were played out in Mrs F's classroom:

Brenton: I like red. Pink is for girls …
Avashen: (giggles) That's a girl's colour, not a boy's colour.
Brenton: (quietly) Yellow is for shit in the pillow.
Mrs F: Boys, why don't you like pink?
Avashen: It's a girl's colour.
Mrs F: Who told you so?
Avashen: Jason said so … Mam, also if you have pink, they tease you, all the girls.
Mrs F: What if the boys wear pink?
Brenton: Yucky. People will tease them that they are wearing girls' colours. Pink is for stink.

Colour is a descriptor of gender and is tied to patterns of hegemonic masculinity and homophobia: pink is for girls and pink stinks (Grieshaber 1998; Blaise 2005). Pink is conflated with femininity (and homosexuality) thus boys assert their masculinity through practices of disassociation from pink. The boys claim that misogynistic teasing is the reason for boys not wearing pink. People, especially girls, tease boys who wear pink. Boys can and do wear pink but with risks. Pink is perceived to be a proper way to be feminine. Thus, the discourse around the colour pink is an attempt to assert the assumptions about the inferior position of girls. In particular, it works to produce and regulate boys' patterns of conduct and suggests the pressures through which boys make sense of their identity.

The above extract also demonstrates the ability of the boys to blur adult-child relations. Here, these eight-year-old boys are conducting this interchange as I sat in their group. While their conversation with Mrs F is a public one, they are able to blur adult-child relations. The pink for stink discourse positions Brenton as male and Mrs F and me as female. The moment is ambivalent. Brenton refuses to be cast as powerless and resorts to misogynist mockery, "pink is for stink", and challenges adult female authority, positioning both Mrs F and me as objects. The momentary position allows the space for disruption of established relations. Recreating pink with stink and yellow for 'shit' is also a means through which the boys find fascination with things that adults consider rude. While the boys assert their own type of masculinity, their discussion around colour can also be read as an assertion of their own "paradoxical pleasures" (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997: 22) derived from rude things and which work to blur adult-teacher control. Later when Mrs F asks the question whether boys can wear pink the conversation picks on homosexuality with homophobic underpinnings:

Mrs F: What if the boys wear pink?
Children: (in chorus) No!
Thandi: *Moffies* wear pink.
Mrs F: What is another name for them?
Thandi: Gay people.
Mrs F: Right. Sometimes gay people wear pink. There are exceptions where boys can wear pink and can have lipstick and so on.

There is very loud laughter in the class
Mrs F: That's nothing to laugh about. These people have been accepted because they are born to be like this. Long time ago boys who looked like girls and dressed like girls were not accepted but people are learning to accept these people. Nobody is perfect. So if you see somebody dressed up in girls clothes will you laugh at them?
Children: (in chorus) No!

Homosexuality is not unknown to children as young as six and eight years old. The colour pink invokes and traduces the feminine as it derogates alternate forms of sexuality based on the heterosexual norm. Thandi uses the offensive word '*moffie*', which has the same meaning as fag and sissy to construct the gay person. Quite unexpectedly the discussion turns from pink to shit in the pillow to the disparagement of women and girls to the repudiation of gay sexuality. As DePalma and Atkinson (2009) notes primary schools are not simply active sites for the construction of gender identities but as Butler (1990) also notes gender is intricately connected to the heterosexual matrix upon which other forms of sexuality are subordinated. Against the dominant backdrop that denies children's sexual agency, heterosexuality is both naturalised and expected (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Renold 2005; Renold et al. 2015; Ryan 2016). Once the taken for granted assumptions of children's sexual knowledge is disrupted, Mrs F intervenes but does so by creating a deficit model of homosexuality arguing that tolerance of people who wear pink, lipsticks and are gays is necessary because they are biologically deficient. In doing so she creates a pitiful sexuality, wins group confirmation to stop the laughter against 'gays'. Whilst the intervention worked to challenge children about gay sexuality, it is also premised upon the dominant heterosexual narrative (DePalma 2014; Ryan 2016).

When attention is given to the ways in which boys and girls actually make sense of their social worlds, the dominant narrative of childhood innocence come tumbling down. Here is another cameo of children in Mrs F's classroom based on a worksheet with sentence constructions and colouring in:

Mrs F says 'Read these sentences:'
"*The boys are playing with their marbles*."
"*The girls are dressing their dolls*."
"*I am watching my brother play ball*"
"*Sammy is playing with her tea-set*."

Teacher hands out a worksheet and instructs the children to colour in.

The ways in which boys and girls learn about gender and sexuality are heavily weighed down by normative constructions of gender with boys playing marbles and girls dressing their dolls, which work to reinforce rather than challenge gender binaries.

Gender, Dress and Toys

In the process of sitting with children, observing and chatting with them in the classroom and outside, I found gender dualism to be a profound way in which masculinities and femininities were produced leading to contestation, debate and accommodation of gender differences.

Umhlatuzana School

Mrs F:	Right. Rattle is a toy, right? They were very happy as well, right? So when children are born, when anyone is born in the family, right? whether it's a boy or a girl, right? there is lots of happiness right? … If you're a boy, people will bring certain kinds of presents and come and clothes. If you're a girl your mummy will dress you up in a certain way, certain clothes and people will also bring presents and come and visit you, right? And everyone is happy about a newborn baby. And as you start growing up you are no more a baby and then you start crawling and then what happens after you crawl?
Children:	(in chorus)Walk!
Mrs F:	Right, you begin walking.
Nithia:	No, first you stand.
Mrs F:	You stand and you begin walking right and you do all the little activities, which your parents are very proud of, right? Now today we are going to be discussing the toys that people bring and come for you or that your parents buy for you and so on, right? And where do people buy toys from?
Heena:	Toy store.
Mrs F:	Where else can they buy toys from?
Dhiren:	Supermarket.
Mrs F:	Yes the supermarket.
Sunil:	Fleamarket.
Mrs F:	Right. Brenton, where did your parents buy toys from?
Brenton:	From the shop.
Heena:	From Checkers [supermarket].

Mrs F:	Right, Checkers is a shop.
Brenton:	My mother and father bought mine from the toy section.
Mrs F:	What can you tell me about boys? Sashin, you're a boy what can you tell me about boys, about yourself?
Sashin:	I don't know what to say.
Mrs F:	Okay, Sunil you're a boy what do you have to say?
Sunil:	Boys only like to go outside and play and get toys and sweets.
Mrs F:	Alright, Vishanta, you stand up and you tell me what girls like?
Vishanta:	They like to play with all kinds of toys.
Mrs F:	Right, they like toys. What else do they like?
Ria:	Girls like dresses and they like to play with their dolls.
Mrs F:	Right.
Nita:	They like swimming.
Mrs F:	Yes they like swimming.
Thandi:	Some girls like to bake.
Mrs F:	Who do they bake with?
Thandi:	Mummies.
Mrs F:	Right, mummy. Who will girls follow, mummy or daddy?
Children:	Mummies!
Mrs F:	And boys, who will they be like?
Children:	(in chorus) Daddy!
Mrs F:	Right they'll be like daddy. Yes?
Nita:	Girls can do the things that boys can do.
Mrs F:	Right, good. What kind of things?
Nita:	They can become builders.
Mrs F:	Right, do they? Yes
Anil:	But boys can do better things than girls.
Nita:	Girls can also become a nurse.
Mrs F:	Right, can only girls become nurses?
Children:	(in chorus) and boys!
Mrs F:	Right, yes.
Thandi:	Girls can be a doctor.
Mrs F:	What about dressing?
Anil:	Boys like short pants.
Mrs F:	Right, yes.
Mohammed:	Boys like jeans and all different kinds of clothes.
Sunil:	Nike. Boys like Nike.
Mrs F:	What about girls? Do they like boys' clothes as well?
Children:	(in chorus) No!
Mrs F:	What do they wear?
Children:	(in chorus) Dresses!
Mrs F:	Right, they wear dresses. What about some girls? Don't they wear jeans?

Children: (in chorus) Yes!
Mrs F: And what about some boys don't they wear jeans?
Children: (in chorus) Yes!
Mrs F: Right. So boys and girls dress up, right. So girls can wear pants, jeans and shirts. But can boys wear girls' clothes?
Children: (in chorus) No!
Mrs F: When will they wear girls' clothes? We saw one the other day.
Sunil: In the Fun Run. Boys were wearing saris and other boys were wearing dresses.
Mrs F: Right, and could you make out whether they were boys or girls.
Children: (in chorus) No!
Sunil: I thought they were girls.
Mrs F: Remember we had a fancy dress parade and some boys were dressed up as girls and one boy had a wig and I didn't even know he was a boy. So sometimes for acting, right, boys dress up like girls and girls dress up like …
Children: (in chorus) boys!
Mrs F: Yes Thandi.
Tara: *Moffies* wear dresses.
Mrs F: *Moffies*, right. Who are they?
Tara: People who act like girls.
Mrs F: Right. They are. They feel like girls and like girls and dress like girls and their bodies are also like girls. Ok children, I want you to get into your groups and you are going to talk about your toys and why you like it …

In this lengthy transcript, I show how boys and girls responded to Mrs F's positioning around gender roles and identities in ways that confirmed, contested and reproduced girls and the feminine as subordinate, with the offensive word '*moffie*' being repeated with no action from the teacher. Whilst it is clear that Mrs F privileges oppositional gender categories, children's responses do suggest some potential and flexibility to disrupt the privileged status of men. For example, in response to work career options, Nita suggests a non-normative role for women—builders. Mrs F responds with surprise but agrees with her. However, the immediate response from Anil was to block this potential by reproducing male power, with men constructed as better builders than women. In the overall pattern above however, the gender binary works to divide men from women and boys from girls, with both children and the teacher colluding to make this happen. When it comes to dress however, the teacher shows flexibility, drawing children's attention to diversity, different dress options not based on the rigid male-female binary. She reminds children of the Fun Day and cross-dressing with men wearing *saris* [Indian female dress] and dresses. On the question of '*moffies*', in this instance however Mrs F leaves this unchallenged explaining diversity of sexuality through biological differences.

Teasing: Boys Versus Girls

The following observation in *Westridge Primary* illustrates the public display of hegemonic masculinity:

Reading. Mrs D instructs the children to come to the mat area. They take their places on the mat in gender-differentiated ways. Grant trips Nicola. Nicola reacts:

Nicola: Stop that Grant.

Samit intervenes and comes to Grant's defence.
Samit(*teasing Nicola*) I want my mummy. I want my mummy.
The boys around Samit laugh and snigger at Nicola.
Mrs D hears the commotion and says "children you'd better behave".

The above extract suggests the public display of support for Grant and for a kind of masculinity that is strong and daring and doesn't need consolation from "mummy". Thus, the boys are able to position Nicola and woman as weaker. Nicola is sniggered at and Samit makes mocking sounds. The boys try to display a mutually supportive network through which they are able publicly to assert their dominance. The dominance is not just assumed but has to be constantly policed and Samit does so through recourse to misogynistic teasing. In this way, Nicola's femininity is denigrated but also women (mummy) in general are positioned as subordinate. The mutually supportive network suggests how boys police each other and others by performing and demonstrating their strength through collusion with each other. In doing so, a sense of solidarity is established amongst the boys, to show that they are like each other, and they share a masculine desire to be seen as strong. They gain security in this collusion and are able to position themselves as the stronger sex. They construct themselves in relation to a dominant image of gender difference by positioning girls and women as inferior. Simultaneously, the above context works to police a particular form of masculinity in which boys aligning to mummy or being seen as mummy's boy is manifested as unacceptable. Thus they reproduce acceptable and unacceptable forms of masculinity in which mummy's boy becomes an indicator of an unacceptable form of masculinity. The boys guard and defend their masculinity. Their "togetherness" is an attempt to claim and make real their collective identity as boys (Connell 2000). The togetherness is important for boys to be "toughened" up in order to enact an appropriate masculinity.

Boys Fighting with Girls

In Chaps. 7 and 8 I showed how violent gender relations are constructed amongst children at *KwaDabeka School*. In this section I show too that violence get played out, not only against the backdrop of structural inequalities, but used as a means to express power as indicated in the cameo below:

Group of three girls and three boys
Problem: One turtle laid 34 eggs another turtle laid 23 eggs. How many eggs altogether?
Sumit gets an answer wrong. Mrs D says to the group of girls closest to her table: "Can these girls help?"
Faith comes forward

Sumit: No, not you Faith.

Later. It's library line-up. Boys separate from girls. Shaun hits Faith on her hands as they leave.
Faith: shouts (hitting back) Shaun, you pig!
Mrs D: What is happening over here?
Shaun: Mrs D, Faith tried to kiss me and I hit her.
Mrs D: (ignoring the complaint) Well you must act nicely to each other.

As I have noted, masculinities are variable—they could be based on sporting prowess, academic intelligence, as noted in Chap. 4, or they could be violent involving the denigration of girls. In the dialogue above, Sumit's display of aggressive masculinity is embedded within the group dynamic. His weakness in the mathematical equation gets played out in his powerful rejection and belittlement of Faith—"no, not you Faith". The turtle and egg solution is much about power and his attempt to consolidate his masculinity and resuscitate his power amongst the group. Getting assistance from a girl was a repudiation of power and questioned his masculinity. Once again, the ways in which masculinities are produced involved differentiation and based upon the gender binary. As noted throughout this chapter, gender dualisms function to restrict boys in particular in working with girls. The attack on Faith continued in the line-up with Shaun accusing Faith of trying to kiss him. Whilst boys and girls are brought together through sexuality as I will show in Chaps. 10 and 11, Sumit substantiates his violence through his resistance of femininity. Whilst older boys' sexuality is based on proximity to girls and sexual prowess, younger boys such as Sumit suffer sexual shame when close proximity to girls is revealed (Renold 2005). Sumit was in a tenuous position where the public kiss could impinge upon his masculinity. His violent retaliation is an attempt to sustain a credible masculine position and avoid the shame of being associated with a girl. Sumit thus proves his masculinity by drawing on an already available discourse which positions boys and men with power and a sense of entitlement in relation to girls. As Mac an Ghaill (1994: 92) notes, these constructions are 'crucial … in setting the parameters of prescriptive and proscriptive' schoolboy performance masculinities'.

Cubs and Brownies

I have shown that the production of masculinities is inextricably tied to dominant notions of what it means to be a boy. In particular I have shown how gender matters and how children dynamically generate identity through gender dualisms based on

boys and girls as oppositional and different. The following extract focuses on Scott and Shaun at *Westridge School*. Mrs D had constructed Shaun as the boy with "a lot of knowledge":

Scott: I love animals. I'm going to be an animal scientist to fight the disease that gorillas spread. Do you know what that is? SPCA, does that ring a bell?
DB: Yes. Who are the animal scientists?
Scott: We know scientists.
DB: What are they?
Scott: There are two types of scientists. One works for the SPCA. The other one is trying to find the cure for the disease that gorillas spread. These are the ones who work for the government and they try to prevent the disease that affect animals and they affect people also. About 300 people have died. They want to find something in gorillas that keeps them alive. Me and Shaun have just invented something that keeps the mosquitoes away
Shaun: It keeps all the dogs' fleas away.
DB: What is it?
Scott: Mixing mint and parsley.
Shaun: The parsley keeps the fleas and ticks away and the mint gives the flavour.
Shaun: My brother had tick bite fever.
DB: How many do you have?
Shaun: I have a brother that's 13 and one who is 26. He's a doctor. I know quite a lot from Cubs.
DB: I should have been a Cub myself.
Shaun: No, that one's Brownies.
DB: Could I have belonged to Cubs?
Shaun: No, well not exactly, because girls wear different uniforms to Cubs and Cubs wear different things. Girls get easier badges and the boys have to feed their dogs for a month and also feed their dogs to get their pet badge and their animal badge and they have to know about eight or six types of animals …
Scott: The oldest dog who [ever] lived was about 20 years old.
DB: Do brownies know about that?
Scott: Well, I think they may know some of that but not all.
DB: Maybe they should have only one group. What do you think?
Shaun: I don't know; maybe because they don't get along so well. Maybe because boys, um, boys might be content with them. Maybe they don't want to share the same tent with each other.
DB: Would you like to have girls in your group?
Shaun: I don't know. I'll have to think about that question. There's all sorts of things that you have to think about.
DB: Like what?
Shaun: I don't know. They're stuck in my head.
Scott: I think boys are Cubs. I'm trying to earn my home craft badge and I have polished silver and brass …

Both Shaun and Scott construct and define a particular form of masculinity through which scientific knowledge is integral. Here it needs to be borne in mind that this conversation on science and knowledge is as much for my benefit as it is for Scott's and Shaun's. Knowledge about the disease that gorillas spread is generally 'adult' knowledge. Shaun's ability to discuss this competently and confidently asserted his status over Scott and me, as an adult researcher. The tone and the confidence with which he asked me the question, "SPCA, does that ring a bell?" positioned me as ignorant of the SPCA. I knew the boundaries had been blurred and I sat feeling "cheated" of my power as an adult as he questioned me. His tone, his question, his confidence provided a performance through which he could challenge me as an adult. What emerges from their knowledge of animals, science and diseases is objectification of me as woman (researcher) and the ability to transgress adult-child relations. This also serves to remind me as a female of my place in society (as less than scientific) but also of the potential for the boys to be animal scientists. Interviews such as these became very popular with children who saw it as a means of re-telling and reproducing adult ways of knowing, and provided the space to challenge and to impress me as an adult researcher.

"I know quite a lot from Cubs", is integral to establishing their boyhoods with knowledge, prestige and power. In this way the boys were learning the patterns of their boyhoods by blurring and bumping adult-child relations. Who they were and who they would be was based on their boyish solidarity. Both Scott and Shaun were members of Cubs in *Westridge*. They exhibit their power through their solidarity as Cubs and as a particular type of boy. Their power was based on inventions (mint and parsley), knowledge of tick bite fever, the government, animal scientists and disease, men in training as rational and scientific. Who they are, though, is not simply the result of belonging to Cubs but the value that is attached to boys with knowledge. Mrs D had positioned Shaun as having a lot of knowledge. Cubs have knowledge but Brownies are accorded a lower status. As the boys in this vignette produce themselves with knowledge and power, girls are constructed in stereotypical ways. The boys imagine themselves with knowledge and future scientists but the girls are accorded a lesser role. The boys make things happen for themselves but they suggest that the girls can't. Power is meant to reside with them as boys with scientific knowledge: "girls get easier badges". Shaun does acknowledge that girls do have knowledge but "not all". Science and biology becomes confused with gender. The presumed truth about knowledgeable boys is based on what they have learnt about science and are learning to be associated with science. Thus the boys participate in reiterating the power relations through which men and women are reproduced. The limits of girls (and women) are specified: "Well, I think they may know some of that, but not all". This is similar to women entering the scientific world where limited expectations have been imposed on how much they know and should know as women. If they know too much then the cub-brownie dichotomy will be made less than real and fragile. Shaun and Scott try to maintain the categories because there are "all sorts of things which you have to think about" including, I suggest, giving up on power and thereby risking marginalisation.

In this section I have tried to show how boys closely guard and maintain their sense of masculinity through projecting their knowledge of science and scientific things. Getting their science right means being seen as knowledgeable boys and this allows them to interpret themselves with power through which the limits on girls and girls' knowledge are imposed. The boys try to exalt a position for themselves that regulates their thoughts and actions and those of girls. Within and between the cub/brownie dichotomy, are spaces which are actively occupied which are more gender friendly. The next section turns to this issue, which I term gender-bender. This refers to a form of masculinity that exists and is tolerated within the regulatory framework of gender identity.

Gender Bender

The production of masculinities is intimately connected to dominant notions of what it means to be a real boy. The making of masculinities involves a constant battle, a constant policing of the boundaries (Steinberg et al. 1997) in which the dominant notion has to be won and re-won through patterns of hierarchies and exclusion. Thus far, I have pointed to some of the patterns of exclusion operating alongside gender as a binary construction. However, within and between the battles are moments that are created, allowed and even tolerated which explicitly abandon the "dual spheres" (Salisbury and Jackson 1996: ix) or ping pong relations. Boys do differ. Some boys decline to participate in hegemonic masculinity and display alternate versions of masculinity (Connell 1995). This section explores the moments in which some boys refuse to participate in hegemonic masculinity. The act of refusing, however, always occurs within the broader patterns of dominance. I call these moments of refusal gender benders.

I focus on Keolan a seven-year old Indian boy whom Mrs E describes as follows:

Mrs E: Keolan is just a one-in-a-million case but I don't know how long it will last. He plays with the girls. His best friend is Tamara and he's not afraid to say that. His mum is a teacher. She's the only one working …

During my visits to Mrs E's classroom I inevitably found myself scanning the room for Keolan. His posture, his language, his actions and the tone of his voice were compelling (Best 1983). That he played with girls showed how the gender divide was broken down, pointing to the variations in masculinity as it interrupted the gender dualistic ways in which children were positioned as they too inserted within familiar gender roles.

Keolan's group was working on the theme "About Me" and this is the data I produced from my conversation with them.

The children are busy colouring the picture, which shows a girl skipping and a boy holding a ball:

DB: What does this picture tell us?
Devlin: Girls skip and boys play with balls.
Me: Do you have a skipping rope?
Devlin: (laughing) No.
DB: Why?
Sewraj: Because only girls have skipping ropes.
DB: Do you have a ball?
Sapna: And only boys have balls.
DB: Okay so do boys have balls and girls have skipping ropes?
Keolan: Mam, I skip. I have a ball and a skipping rope. My sister she lets me use her skipping rope. It doesn't matter if you're a boy or a girl.
Devlin: I won't use a skipping rope.
DB: Why?
Devlin: It's dumb. It's for girls.

The playing of sport is a highly gendered activity (Connell 1995). Playing ball and avoiding skipping emphasises physical strength and skill and would appear to represent hegemonic masculinity. Devlin, for example, suggests that skipping is for girls because "it's dumb" not requiring the skill and the rigour that he associates with ball playing (Paechter 2007; Swain 2006; Bartholomaeus 2015; Richardson 2015; Thorne 1993; Connell 1995). Devlin tries to align himself with hegemonic patterns of boys' conduct. This means avoiding skipping. Skipping and its association with less skill and girls is a move away from power, thus regarded as subordinate. The sense of the masculine ideal tells him that it is normal for him to be interested in balls and not skipping. Interest in sport thus works as a normalising practice in which misogynistic strategies are used to give ascendancy to boys and balls. Devlin's masculinity operates through the processes of sporting differentiation in which skipping is readily recognisable as a marker of deviance from the hegemonic masculine norm. This is peculiar to the construction of masculinities in early schooling. Boxing for example (a male dominated sport) has skipping as a major element in the training regime.

Keolan declares his interest in skipping and balls and violates the hegemonic norms in early schooling. The tenuous nature of gender relations is exposed and subverts the conventional social relations. However, his challenge occurs in relation to dominant positionings. Keolan is able to challenge and work against the position which privileges and reproduces gender identity. There are consequences, as "dumb" and "girls" are aligned. There are costs for gender benders. For Keolan it means being regarded as not quite normal. These are not quite apparent in the conversation above. I did observe Keolan share his lunch with Tamara, but when it came to playing "girls games" like clapping and singing, Keolan was not invited to do so and he quickly reconstituted his boys-only friendship network. His experience was transient. As already noted, Keolan likes girls (his best friend is Tamara) and he is interested in skipping. These activities are not valued by the boys or the school. Nevertheless, he was able to offer a challenge to hegemonic patterns of conduct. In the day-to-day maintenance work of hegemonic masculinity there are small spaces

that open but are closed so quickly. The momentary openness challenges familiar gender definitions that can and do occur. This incident may represent an insignificant and negligible contest but it does represent a better prospect in the development of gender relations. Contesting hegemonic masculinity was not fixed as Keolan did reconstitute masculinity when he was excluded from girls' games. As Bartholomaeus (2015) finds, masculinities in the primary school are plural. Boys can draw upon non-hegemonic forms but they also draw on acceptable forms of masculinity. Renold (2005: 89) notes: '[t]here were boys who could blur gender boundaries, so long as they engaged in some masculinity-making activity'.

Keolan was not alone in defying hegemonic masculinity. Here is an example in Mrs F's classroom as I chat with Luke, Shanice and Jennifer:

Luke: I don't like to play with the girls.
Shanice: I play with the boys. I play with Akhil.
Jennifer: (busy colouring a girl skipping) I don't like boys.
DB: Can a boy skip?
Jennifer: No.
DB: Why?
Jennifer: Only girls skip. My mom skips.
DB: Can your dad skip?
Jennifer: No.
David: It doesn't mean that because girls skip and boys can't they can't play with each other. I play with girls. I play with the girl club.

Like Keolan, David defies the parameters set out through gender dualistic thinking. Consistent with significant other work in primary schooling (Francis 1998; Renold 2005; Swain 2006), the conversation shows how both boys and girls were seen as maintaining and regulating friendships and play through boy-girl gendered division. Nonetheless, David challenges the fixed definition of gender, play and skipping and in so doing presents an alternate pattern of masculinity not necessarily hinged on the subordination of girls. Similarly, Shanice challenges Luke and Jennifer publicly stating that she plays with a boy – Akhil. Contesting gender as a fixed category, both Shanice and David bend gender in ways that suggest plurality of identities (Bartholomaeus 2015).

Parents and Work: My Mom Drives a Car

The following cameo is presented from Mrs F's classroom to show how everyday life in the school provides opportunities for the elaboration of gender relations and power. The children are expected to discuss people and work. Mrs F draws attention to their parents' field of work highlighting the gendered division of labour:

Mrs F: People and work.
Mrs F: How many of your parents work?

Most of the children raise their hands
Mrs F: What do your parents do, Ravi?
Ravi: My mom is a housewife and my dad is a mechanic.

This questioning continues …

Later. The children are given instructions to complete a drawing for each of the following:

This is Thabo's father.
His name is Peter Radebe.
He is a carpenter.
This is Thandi's mother.
Her name is Jabu.
She is a nurse.
This is Tom's father.
His name is Alan.
He is a mechanic.

I sat with a group of children and question them about the topic on hand.
DB: What do your parents do?
Lea: My mom is a housewife and my dad is a driver
DB: Can mums be drivers?

There are five children in the group. I hear them say: "Noooo … Miss Bhana."
Avril: My mom drives a car. She is a driver. You see sillies, moms can be drivers.
Nathan: Yes, but your mum can't drive taxis and buses and trucks.
Avril: I didn't say she could do that … but she is a driver.

Developing from the worksheet, which put men and women in gender stereotypical career pathways, the children lock into these gender dualisms when asked if women, or their mothers, could drive. Here we can see how both boys and girls attempt to maintain gender boundaries despite the reality of their everyday lives where women do drive, including the female teachers at school. Again, boys and girls repeatedly draw on the dualistic understanding of gender to expand gender differences and power inequalities. Rejecting and negotiating the gendered allocation of work, Avril decries the false division of labour. Nathan challenges this further as the need to prove power over women as well as the pursuit of boys' status and prestige within the group is central to his clarification and limits to what women can do and drive. Accepting the argument, Avril confirms nonetheless that women can drive as she tears down the gendered division of labour.

Boys and Girls: Long Hair/Short Hair

On another occasion the discussion in Mrs E's class turns to the issue of difference and the attempt to lock into gender binaries is brought down:

Mrs E: We were talking about all of us being different. Everyone in the class is different because …
Sanusha: … the way we act.
Mrs E: … the way we look.
Rita: … our hair.
Mrs E: Let's look at our hair. We have different shades. We have black hair and silver hair.

The class roars with laughter as the mention of silver hair.

Mrs E: Your granny has silver hair does she? How else are we different?
Sewraj: Boys have short hair and girls have long hair.
Keolan: I saw Michael Jackson and he has long hair so it doesn't have to be a boy …

In this example, Keolan disrupts the discourse through which difference is made biological and based on gender dualisms. It occurred unexpectedly, and in an instant it was over. These are momentary power positions and work to disrupt in a small way the legitimation of hegemonic masculinity. What I have represented thus far is the diversity of experience, how hegemonic patterns of conduct are reproduced and challenged. Keolan provides the example through which the contradiction emerges in the structures of gender relations. Thus hegemonic masculinity is not monolithic but complex and has to be constantly fought over. In the battle for power, boys and struggle to make sense of their gendered worlds, with boys in particular heavily invested in status, prestige, power and the expansion of hegemonic masculinity.

Boys Don't Cry

The next example illustrates how cry/baby masculinity, a subordinate form of masculinity for seven-year-old boys, is contested:

The class is busy with the theme Happy and Sad
DB: Do you cry when you're sad?
Sewraj: No.
DB: Why?
Sewraj: 'cos I'm not a baby.
DB: And you Devlin?
Devlin: I don't cry because I'm strong. Only girls cry *wee! wee! wee! (laughing)* I don't like to cry because other people will tease you, "cry baby".
Keolan: (interupting) No mam, girls cry and boys cry. Mam, when my grandmother died my father cried. Girls cry and boys cry. You don't have to be a baby to cry.
Devlin: When you go to a funeral, who carries the coffin? The men! They are strong that's why they carry the coffin.
Keolan: But they cry and carry the coffin. My father carried my grandmother's coffin and he cried and so did my uncle.

Devlin: Women are not so strong that's why they don't carry the coffin.
Keolan: My sister is strong. She goes to the gym.
Devlin: I don't like to cry because other people will tease you, cry baby, cry baby.

As boys growing up they try to forge their gendered identity by challenging and reproducing "adult male" ways of being. Cry/baby masculinity is the occasion when boys might risk having their masculinity brought into question. Devlin states that, "other people will tease you". Clearly, expressive emotional practices such as crying are key in the patterns of exclusion in the formation of hegemonic masculine identities. Displaying overt forms of emotion is identified as incongruent with hegemonic masculinity—a move away from power. Devlin refuses to be seen as contravening the normative construction: "boys don't cry". Hegemonic masculinities are thus policed through practices that boys learn to attribute to effeminacy. Boys who display behaviour associated with girls or femininity can lead them to becoming targets of harassment "cry baby, cry baby". Devlin thus tries to forge his identity, which is subject to the pressures of hegemonic masculinity and through discourses and practices of misogyny. "Boys don't cry" is applied as a measure of hegemonic masculinity.

Keolan provides the disruption but it occurs with contradiction: "My father carried my grandmother's coffin and he cried and so did my uncle". Hegemonic masculinity is not monolithic. Keolan contests the pattern of conduct that inscribes particular practices for boys and girls. The myth that "boys (and men) don't cry", demands justification pointing to the complexity and the contradictions in gender relations (Keddie 2003; Renold 2005; Richardson 2015). In this way the meaning of what it means to be boy and girl is opened up. However, Keolan's reference to expressive emotions draws attention to the occasion on which it is appropriate for men to behave in this way. While he challenges the myth, his example suggests that an overt display of affection amongst men (his father and his uncle) would be acceptable only in extreme emotional situations and circumstances. If the situation involved the death of a family member, emotional display by men is perceived to be legitimate. Thus, under extenuating circumstances, Keolan suggests that crying is appropriate, however, the everyday pattern of conduct for boys limits expression of feelings since to do so is to risk enacting cry/baby masculinity, a subordinate feminine form.

The next section explores further how hegemonic patterns of conduct are challenged.

Tiger Without Teeth

Getting masculinity right means claiming power and in the process subordinating cry baby masculinity and girls in general. But there is no simple boy-girl, powerful-powerless binary, as the gender bender example suggests. The binary is not fixed but as the data demonstrates far more fluid than the grand narratives based

on boy-girl differences. However, as was the common case, discussions often started on the boy-girl contest based on gender dualisms:

Boys, Spiders, and Mud Versus Girls and Barbies

Megan: Do you know why girls are different from boys? … because they are gross. They play with spiders and mud, and girls don't. Girls play with Barbies.
Bryce: I hate Barbies.
Megan: My 13-year old brother plays with my Barbie.

The boys laugh
Bryce: Barbie, stupid Barbie.
DB: So what's different about girls?
Sunil: Girls are stupid. They can't play soccer, cartwheels or rugby or do a head stand in the pool.
Megan: I can.
Bryce: Well, they can't run as fast as boys can. Warren is the fastest boy in the class.

The children in this vignette struggle to make sense of their identity resorting to contestation and contradictory gender differentiations. Contestation occurs through pleasurable moments of squirming, giggling, laughing and chatting. They do chat to each other. But the pleasurable moments of chatting are always infused with freedom, desire and power. In the vignette, there are moments of conflicting agendas and desires—each one in pursuit of getting gender right in terms of traditional masculinity and femininity. Boys are aligned to spiders, cartwheels, soccer, rugby, fast running, and the head stand in the pool. Girls are constructed as stupid with interests in Barbie dolls. The typical dualism functions to put girls down as Megan tries to contest. There are also other transgressive moments:

DB: Do you play with girls, Warren?
Warren: Nope.
Amy: Yes he does. We chase them all the time.
DB: Do you play with Amy?
Warren: (smiling) Yes, I play with Amy but she's not my friend …

In this scene, power and opportunities for resisting the categories are made available. There are great pressures to conform to gender stereotypes. Warren does play with girls. The canon is compromised. Chaps. 10 and 11 will explore this in more detail. Warren's validation, though, occurs through constraint: he plays with Amy, but he won't (can't) make her his friend. Cross-gender friendships do exist, but they can't be named, or at least they can only be named in particular contexts and ways. Gender binaries or "gender separation is far from total" (Thorne 1993: 47). The need to refer to other boys limits Warren's ability to name and claim friendship

with a girl. This suggests the pressure at the age of eight that he and others have to bear in trying to get their gender right. Boys are made subject to the pressures of hegemonic masculinity where to be a normal boy involves the projection of a coherence, which renders proximity to girls an ambiguous experience.

Birthday Parties: I Had a Party and I Invited Two Boys

In this vignette I present further evidence to show how boys attempt to champion hegemonic masculinity through the perpetuation of gender as oppositional and girls as contaminating and subordinate. In doing do they legitimate their power as boys within the group, validate a collective form of masculine power but also work in the interests of self-legitimation (Keddie 2003). The discussion about the birthday party in the transcripts below serves to perpetuate the restrictive understandings of gender and masculinity:

Bryce: … girls are just clumsy.
DB: What's clumsy about them?
Bryce: They just knock everything over.
Warren: I won't invite girls to my party.
Megan: I had a party and I invited two boys.
DB: Warren, were there only boys at your party?
Warren: No.
Megan: He plays with us and he catches us all the time.
DB: So why didn't you invite them to your party so you could play catches?
Warren: 'Cos …'cos they're slow.
Megan: No we're not.
Amy: No we aren't …

Here we can see how Bryce and Warren attempt to legitimate their masculinity through disparagement of girls as clumsy, 'knocking everything over'. This functions within the gender dualism where masculinity and femininity are rendered oppositional and in hierarchical order with boys on top of the pecking order. The slanders and verbal belittlement and shaming of Megan and girls more generally operated on power relations. The verbal hostilities are important means for boys to attempt to gain power and express prestige. Thorne (1993) refers to this gender borderwork in the reproduction of the gender binary. Collectively, Warren and Bryce legitimate understandings of masculinity that are restrictive and operate on the understanding of what is deemed appropriate within the border work of gender (Keddie 2003; Thorne 1993; Paechter 2007).

Clearly, the boys seem to have higher investments than girls in getting their gender right. For Megan there do not appear to be high costs involved in inviting boys to her party. The boys, though, are subject increasingly to the pressures of getting their masculinity right, and struggle to maintain the illusion of it. The issue is the different content of what is right and its rules. The boys try to assert their

masculinity through discourses and practices of misogyny. The girls though challenge and contest them. These ordinary chats are significant and of great value in opening up the space for power and pleasurable moments in the classroom.

Boys and Computers. Girls Are Kittens

In the following extract I illustrate tenuous power positions as they occurred at *Westridge School* policed through gender dualisms but contested and broken down:

DB: Why don't you want to work together?
Tyron: Sometimes boys and girls understand things differently.
DB: Like what?
Tyron: Like painting and computers.
DB: How do you mean? Can't girls paint?
Tyron: Yes, my mom paints. She paints flowers.
DB: So what else?
Tyron: At computer time they're so slow.
Leila: No, I'm not. I beat Zande.
Tyron: *Ja*, but you are sometimes …
DB: But can they paint and play with computers?
Tyron: Yes I think so.

In this incident, Tyron's power is invested in displacing girls to a subordinate position with regard to painting and computers. Computers and painting constitute the social repertoire within and through which gender identity is constructed. Computers, for example, equate with specific class commodities and are racialised. Tyron's race, gender and class explains why he makes the connection with specific commodities and why he privileges them. These are commodities that are more readily available to him as a middle-class consumer. Through these connections he reproduces the stereotypical image of girls and women as less than able, thus making his way of doing art and computers more attractive. There are contradictions. His investment in art is compromised through reference to his mother's ability to paint flowers. Leila too breaks the canon and claims a position of power. She is faster than Zande. Tyron's investment in computers is compromised but it happens within a discourse that positions girls and women as less than capable with computers. He agrees that she is capable with computers but only sometimes. He thus specifies limits to what she can achieve. Computers position boys within a social practice hegemonically regarded as a man's domain and it is regarded as a desirable way of being a male. Tyron tries to position himself within this esteemed domain. Elkjaer (1992) suggest that boys are seen as hosts in information technology and feel a need to maintain their dominant position regarding their masculinity: "It is threatening to their gender identity if they are not allowed to" (Jones and Smart 1995: 159). Leila says that she "beat Zande". Zande's position is threatened. Leila's power temporarily shifts the domain that he tries to hold for

himself. Zande's lack and Leila's power represent the challenge to forms of masculinity that try to position women as other, and less able, but they are always contestable as the following vignette illustrates:

I am sitting with Lauren, Kayla, Megan, Marian, Shaun and Tim.
DB: Are you working on your own or with the girls Tim?
Tim: Not with the girls.
Shaun: No girls.
DB: Why?
Tim: 'Cos …
DB: Megan why don't you work with the boys?
Megan: I don't work with boys
DB: Why?
Megan: Boys talk too much.
Tim: She's a kitten.
Megan: (laughs) And you're *a tiger without teeth* (emphasis added).
Tim: You're a kitten. You're a kitten …

The everyday experiences of young children suggest pushing the boundaries and transgressing the norms of classroom life. Constant bickering is part of the routine of everyday school life, as the above extract demonstrates. This challenges the idea of gender boundaries and the teacher's desire for "good" classroom management. Teachers are constantly saying "be good, be quiet, no noise, no talking" and in doing so they suppress the power contests. They also suppress cross-gender chats and bickering, which are the spaces through which hegemonic discourse is simultaneously enabled and constrained.

Tim and Megan try to position themselves within the boy/girl dichotomy as separate and apart; however they do work together in their constant and humorous battles with each other. For both Tim and Megan this provides the opportunity to produce their own pleasures. Tim tries to position Megan as a kitten, attaching explicit passive value to it. Megan's "tiger without teeth" response suggests that Tim's projection of himself as not kitten but tiger is without substance. The tigers do not possess power but power is fluid, rendering tiger and kitten positions for both boys and girls. In this humorous way power is made contingent, tentative and unpredictable. Tim is not with power as Megan is not without it. Both have power and exercise it. Their bickering is not without pleasure as both laugh and tease each other. It is through these daily subversive activities that power is being constantly positioned and re-positioned. It is through their interaction that tigers (which represent the dominant masculinity in the classroom) are sometimes rendered toothless. The following vignette illustrates this further:

Bryce: We [Warren and Asante] share answers but not with Amy.
DB: Why?
Bryce: Amy is greedy. She doesn't like us. She shouts at us and she bosses us around.

Dylan: Me too, I don't like Amy. She bosses me around.
Amy: Liar, liar you're greedy. You took my Astros [brand of sweets] and you finished most of it.

Amy claims power: "She bosses us around". It appears that Amy has been able to shift power in her favour. She is the tiger. I observed that Amy relished bickering with the boys in the group as powerful moments, but it occurred not without difficulties for her. The boys collectively formed a strategic force against her. They did not want to share answers with her. But Amy was in the top group for maths and reading. Amy was caught between two contradictory desires. She wanted to be the boss, but she wanted to be with the group. Her desire to be the boss came from what she could accomplish as boss. Dylan had taken too many of her Astros. Significantly, the Astros suggest the cross gender sharing. I wonder if Amy would have been less angry if Dylan had not eaten most of them? Amy had shouted and screamed at him. As boss she could do that and it invested her with power. Crossing the boundaries meant that Amy faced the dilemma of being limited by the strategic solidarity that the boys had put up. She was able to be boss but the extent to which she was boss was clear. The boys prevented her from sharing their answers. The limits of Amy the boss, happen through a power battle: bickering, calling each other names like greedy and liar. Name-calling is a powerful means through which power battles occur; name-calling is an injury. In this vignette, I have tried to show that Amy was constructed as a tiger but lacked teeth (as a girl) to maintain it. Amy had constantly to bicker as a means of negotiating power relations. To be a boss was a desirable position, but there were clear dangers in being the boss.

Hiding Answers: From Boys and Girls

When boys and girls were expected to work together in groups, such work was highly gendered as I have shown in Chap. 4. Here is a cameo of me as I observed numeracy at *Westridge Primary*:

I am sitting with a group of seven. They are busy with this problem:
Problem – There are 25 pencils. How many more pencils do we need if we have 34 children in class?

I write: Five girls; two boys.

> Stacy, Andrea; Norma show their answers to each other and giggle. Nadia cannot work out the answer. They do not show her the answer, hide their answers from her. Leave her out of their conversation while they giggle and whisper. Nadia quietly listens but does not offer to join in. Then Stacy says: "They [the boys] are going to see." Andrea, closest to James, quickly hides her work from both James and Ben.

Working within the gender binary, girls who are in the majority in the above group collectively take over power as they snigger and sneer at the boys. By hiding their answers they express excitement as they subvert the power relations that

constantly work against them. Strikingly, the collective force of girls did not include Nadia who was not part of the clique and who was excluded from the conversation, from their chatter and giggles. The dynamic play of power amongst girls functions far more complexly than simple girls versus boys. Girls too have a pecking order that is central in defining femininities, friendships and working together. In paying close attention to the group dynamic, hierarchies are established, mobilised not only against boys but against girls too, pointing to the restrictive ways in which femininities are produced.

Conclusion

To date few scholars have recognised the pressure to get gender right in the early years of primary schooling (Bartholomaeus and Senkevics 2015; Myers and Raymond 2010). Gendering and sexualisation is an integral process through which lives are managed in early primary schooling sites. In this chapter I have analysed the mundane everyday ways through which boys and girls negotiate and contest hegemonic masculinity through the accounts by and observations of boys and boys, boys and girls and girls and girls in various settings in the school both inside and outside the classroom. As I have argued in the introduction of this chapter, the focus on masculinities is important, because throughout the study it was boys who were invested in and struggled to achieve hegemonic status through the denigration of the feminine (Renold 2005; Keddie 2003; Skelton 1996). In Chap. 4 I explained that the concept of hegemonic masculinity is useful in delineating how boys take up various positions in the school setting as they invest in the constant but interrupted disparagement of girls. In portraying dominant masculinity, I have provided examples from mundane everyday school activities where momentarily boys and girls fight, contest and negotiate gender and sexuality in ways that tear down the dominant regime of innocence, contest hegemonic masculinity and reproduce it. In so doing, I have argued that boys and girls are active agents within an already established gendered pattern and reinforced in the schools. The legitimation of masculinity occurs at the expense of girls (who are subordinated) and other boys who display effeminate forms of conduct. In this way hierarchical forms of power are produced.

From a very young age, both boys and girls are pressed—as they press themselves—into rigid and restrictive understandings of masculinity and femininity based on the gender binary. Within their peer groups both boys and girls police, regulate and monitor their identities as they constantly attempt to get power (Renold 2005). Boys and girls negotiate these relations within larger social and cultural environments supporting and endorsing hegemonic masculinity. Under these circumstances, boys and girls face major pressures to take on gendered identities structured around gender binaries. They do so with contestation as they wrestle with, conform, reject and accommodate gender norms. Boys are not boys and girls

are not girls as the dominant teaching discourses suggest. They become as they struggle to align and contest dominant hegemonic patterns of masculinity.

What potential is there to challenge? I have explored gender bender as the moment in which familiar gender positions are disrupted but they occur within dominant definitions of masculinity. Keolan's transgressive moment is small but it does exist. It appears in unexpected places. Mrs E suggests that he is "one in a million" and that "it won't last", but his diversity escapes the rigid gender definitions and it is a rejuvenating moment in the work for gender equality, despite its brevity. By opening up masculinity, Keolan and others like him offers the hope that boys and girls can skip and cry, challenging the devaluation of counter-hegemonic masculinity. Thus there are spaces with potential to threaten hegemonic forms of masculinity and boys and girl do. There are opportunities available to teachers to allow children to do their own thinking in this area with the potential to disrupt the devaluation of subordinated forms of masculinity. As Keddie (2003: 301) notes: "…young children's understandings and behaviours are far from innocent, harmless, natural or inevitable" (Alloway 1995; Davies 1993; Grieshaber 1998; Jordan 1995; MacNaughton 2000; Renold 2000, 2002). Indeed they are highly gendered and inequitable on the one hand, as well as particularly dynamic and socially contingent on the other.

Against this backdrop, Alloway's assertion (1995: 19) 'eight's too late, to begin thinking about issues of gender' is pertinent. The malleability of gender identities and subjectivities in the early childhood years … points to an opportune time to begin work with children in exploring, questioning and problematising taken-for-granted and restrictive notions of gender.

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Chapter 10
Kiss and Tell: Boys, Girls and Sexualities

Abby: O la la! Kissing nana! Kissing your boyfriend in the shower …
Brent: You can ask Grant'cos he always kisses them [girls] and holds onto them and once he kissed … a long, long, very long smooch on the lips. [Abby and Brent, aged between seven and eight at *Westridge Primary*].

Sexuality, whether adults approve or not, is an important resource through which young children account for being and becoming boys and girls in the early years of schooling (Martin 2009; Hlavka 2014; Myers and Raymond 2010; Blaise 2013; Renold et al. 2015; Egan and Hawkes, 2010; Robinson 2013; Jackson and Scott 2010; Taylor 2010; Kane 2013; Bhana 2016). As Abby and Brent begin to illustrate in the quotes above, children's knowledge of and investment in romantic cultures and sexual practices are not unusual accounts of sexuality from a child's perspective.

Abby and Brent's narratives, whilst unexceptional, remain silenced (Epstein et al. 2003; Renold 2005) under the dominant presumption of childhood innocence. As I have argued in Chap. 1, when it comes to thinking about children and sexuality, sexual abuse and sexual coercion often remain the only angles to be considered appropriate through which sexuality and childhood may be viewed. Teaching discourses, whilst contradictory, do not recognise children as capable of and invested in thinking, feeling and acting on sexuality, as many scholars have noted (Tobin 1997; Epstein et al. 2001; MacNaughton 2000; Bhana 2007). Tobin (1997) has argued that putting children and sexuality together is considered dangerous. This is because longstanding conventions view the association of children and sexuality as malignant, thus effectively silencing young children's right to sexual expression. Sexual innocence functions as a strategic tool whereby adults attempt to hold power over children, even as children contribute and contest it, providing adults with the role of protecting children from corrupting sexual knowledge (Renold 2005; Egan and Hawkes 2010; Renold et al. 2015; Epstein et al. 2003). As Jackson and Scott (2010: 119) note a, "childhood free from the shadow of sexuality is thought necessary both to keep children safe and to secure their future sexual health".

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The social and sexual landscape in South Africa has fuelled the position of the child as a victim of sexuality, in need of protection, without recognising also children's capacities and competencies to enact sexuality, as they are produced by these sexual landscapes. The exclusive focus on children as 'in need of protection' denies the recognition that children are sexual. The argument that children are sexual should not however, detract from the heinous sexual/gendered crimes in the country where young girls, in particular, have been victims of sexuality. To start with the premise that boys and girls as young as seven, eight and nine years old have agency as sexual subjects as this chapter will proceed to demonstrate, wavers uncomfortably with reports which reinforce sexual danger, disease and children's disproportionate vulnerability to sexual suffering. Between 2013 and 2014 for example, 45,230 contact crimes against children were reported, of which 50 % were sexual offences—an average of 62 cases per day (South African Police Services 2014).

Explaining these trends, researchers have noted that girls' risk to sexual danger is heightened by poverty, gender norms and inequalities, multiple partners, transactional sex, age differences between men and women and widespread patterns of sexual coercion and violence (Gevers et al. 2013). Articulated in the nexus of deep structural inequalities, an enduring conceptualisation of childhood in South Africa remains hinged on sexual vulnerability and suffering, squeezing out the space for a consideration of children as sexual agents with passions and desires. Under these circumstances the question of children as sexual agents, with competencies and capacities to express, feel and think sexuality becomes complex.

As the silence on younger children's pleasures, powers and sexual curiosities continues, there is increasing concern and sensitisation in South Africa to address gender inequalities, the scourge of sexual violence and the hyper-endemic context of HIV which disproportionately affects young teenage women (Jewkes and Morrell 2010). It is well recognised that gender relations are critical in structuring and legitimating ideas about masculinity underpinned by sexual entitlement, control, and aggression, manifesting in women's and girls' subordination (WHO 2010). In South Africa the call has amply grown to develop interventions that address and build new versions of gender identities, that change ideas about what it means to be a young man and woman, ideas that might make the constructions of masculinities and femininities less invested in risk, less harmful, less toxic and more invested in ideas that espouse gender equality. Intervention work has thus justifiably focused attention on building gender equality, changing toxic patterns of masculinity and addressing and changing femininities that are invested in hyper-sexualised performances of femininity which often works in the interests of male sexual power (Butler 1990). Yet for all the richness and complexity of this emerging work the implications of working with and exploring younger children's sexualised and gendered practices in South African early years of primary schooling remain unexplored (Bhana 2007). In this chapter I address sexuality from children's own point of view about the everyday forms of sexuality that matter to them, which gives them pleasure whilst simultaneously revealing the asymmetrical relations of power.

Friendships, kissing, discussion of marriage, and love letters are reported in this chapter as boys and girls actively negotiate, while they remain disciplined by the heterosexual matrix. Young children actively produce sexuality, express their desires and do so by investing in 'boyfriend and girlfriend' cultures involving sexual practices that include love letters, kissing and games. Children's active participation in these sexual cultures and practices is simultaneously embedded within normative constructions of gender involving relations of power. Both boys and girls express sexuality, have fun and pleasure and in doing so they counter the myth of childhood sexual innocence. Their expression of sexuality however, involves tension and contradictions and is marked by gender power imbalances. Boys' tensions involve contradictory association with girls, invoking sexuality, power and misogyny. Girls' desires tend to be already in the service of the heterosexual male gaze. The expression of childhood sexuality is thus an important site where gender power inequalities are played out, and, as this chapter illustrates, important to address.

As Kincaid (1998: 15) notes "children's sexuality, in so many contexts, turns out to be 'more complicated than we supposed'. 'We might'—if we let ourselves explore these complications—'find (new) stories that are not fuelled by fear'.

Queering Childhood

In redefining the image of the sexually innocent child, the chapter draws from scholars repositioning the field of childhood studies and sexualities arguing against commonly held beliefs that deny the everyday practice of sexuality in early years and primary schooling (Thorne 1993; Renold 2005). Such work emanating from the queering of childhood (Rasmussen and Allen 2014) works to shed assumptions about children's assumed sexual incompetency and has opened up our understanding to the creative ways in which boys and girls maintain, navigate, contest and live sexuality under the very discourse of sexual innocence in/through which gender relations are constituted.

There is widespread debate about what constitutes queer theory but it is meant to include theorists who have radically problematised and rendered visible the ways in which heterosexuality is socially constructed within specific social, cultural and material conditions. Martin (2009: 190) for instances talks about the mundane everyday ways in which heterosexuality is privileged and taken for granted as normal and natural (2009: 190). What is interesting about queer theory for this chapter is that it involves the constant questioning about the 'normal' heterosexual identity of children in the struggle to get gender right. Queer theorising questions the normal ways of getting gender right including the heterosexual compulsion and the norms attached to the categories boy and girl, best summed up in the following way:

Queer theory is linked to a form of politics which deliberately seeks to break down the fixed boundaries between hetero/homo, gender and other binaries, to

multiply sexual categories and ultimately to dissolve them, insisting that 'queer' itself is not some bounded community, or not only so, but is everywhere (Steinberg et al. 1997: 9).

Butler's (1990) important work has been helpful in opening up the ways in which sexuality permeates early years' settings. Butler suggests that heterosexuality is an effect of gender. She argues that we do gender through repeatedly producing bodily practices and actions, over a period of time to give a sense of naturalness in/through a 'heterosexual matrix'. This matrix is regulatory and produces masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality as the only appropriate ways of being. The real expression of masculinity and femininity, as Butler argues (ibid), is embedded within a presupposed heterosexuality, and is invested with power. People and children subject themselves to the everyday and recurrent rituals and practices that produce the effect of a being a 'real' boy and 'real' girl (Renold 2005). In other words to be seen as a real boy or girl would involve projecting and desiring the opposite sex. Being a boy and gaining power and rewards involves a demonstration of sexual prowess, strength and manliness amongst others, integral to girls' subordination. Being a girl involves compliance, projecting and acting on desires for boys and accommodating the desires of men. This is not an automatic linear process but involves protestation and contestations.

Given the dominant idea that childhood is a stage and phase of innocence, scholars from the new sociology of childhood have explored the merit of Butler's idea of identity as a repetitive performance that creates the illusion of a fixed gender (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Renold 2005, 2006; Blaise 2005). Great strides have been made in the area of understanding gender identity as a performance (see Davies 1993). Butler (1990: 33) argues that gender is a cultural fiction, a performative effect of reiterative acts, as '[…] the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being'. Gender is not a state of being. Instead, Butler argues, it is a process of doing. Following Butler, gender identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (1990: 25). The idea that gender is a construction a performance, is valuable in understanding the struggles reflected by children's ongoing attempt to present a coherent gendered self. Whilst Butler's account of gender is well featured in discussions of children's identity performances (Thorne 1993; Davies 1993), much less attention has been given to Butler's ideas of sexuality—and specifically heterosexuality—in childhood studies (Renold 2006; Blaise 2005; Tobin 1997).

Heterosexuality has been rarely scrutinised as a dominating and dominant discourse. Rather it has been naturalised as a taken-for-granted norm. Mellor and Epstein (2006) argue that the matrix of gendered practices render unnoticed the heterosexual framework by which people have to live. Gender cannot be collapsed into a normalised expression of sexuality, but the dominance of heterosexuality makes it appear so. Butler (1990) argues that the real expressions of masculinity and femininity are embedded within a presupposed heterosexuality. In other words to be seen as a real boy or girl would involve projecting and desiring the opposite sex. This is the power of the heterosexual imaginary. In this chapter, the projection of

desire as demonstrated in boy-girl friendships and games suggests the power of heterosexuality in coercing children as they themselves insert into the dominant heterosexual norm.

What is the value of Butler's work for the study of young children and sexuality? In turning to how younger children maintain, police and give credence to heterosexuality, researchers show that the projection of desire is already being practiced in the early years as demonstrated in boy-girl friendships, romantic cultures, ambiguous relationships between boys and girls underpinned by heterosexual norms and heterosexual games through which children are 'coerced' to embed themselves into the dominant heterosexual norm (Blaise 2010). In childhood studies, romantic love, boyfriends and girlfriends, and fashion, are now being investigated for their complicity in the heterosexual matrix (see Renold 2005). Younger boys find it especially problematic to relate to girls. Early association with girls, whilst premised on heterosexuality and important for masculinity making, can also be seen as polluting—closeness to a girl can lead to being named and mocked as a 'sissy'. By investigating the powerful ways in which children are subject to and subject themselves to heterosexuality, we now have a developing framework of understanding the sociology of childhood sexualities through which discussions of kissing, imaginative games, and going out provide evidence of children' sexual agency.

In South Africa (and Africa) research that problematises and renders visible the *minutiae* of the workings, regulations and desires of young children in early childhood remains embryonic. Emerging work has illustrated how heterosexuality is policed and experienced differently in different social settings, demonstrating the intricate links with race and class (Bhana 2007). The value of the heterosexual matrix, as such research has shown, to the study of South African children lies in its ability to break down the myth of sexual innocence, to analyse the finely-tuned ways in which gender and sexuality are practised as part of the everyday experiences in early childhood settings, holding on to the ways in which children shape and are shaped by material realities.

Boys, Girls and Heterosexuality

The analysis in the rest of the chapter explores the salience of sexuality in the lives of young children and deconstructs earlier discourses which try to fit children into barren worlds without the ability to make sense of their gender (and sexuality). I highlight the early years of primary schooling as a key cultural arena for the production and reproduction of sexuality and sexual identities, by addressing what is absent from teacher portrayals of young children. The main argument here is that children are active makers of sex/gender identities. Children actively produce and reproduce their sexual identities whether teachers intend this or not (Epstein and Johnson 1998). Specifically, I examine the enactments of sexual identities through

the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler 1990), and through which masculinity and femininity are embedded.

From the first days in the field, I became increasingly aware of the ways in which boys and girls invested in heterosexual masculinity and femininity. This involved investing in heterosexual teasing, girlfriends, kissing, love letters and daily rituals that included playing heterosexual games. These games are considered in the next chapter. As in the previous chapter, I draw from boys and girls throughout the school contexts to illustrate the major argument around children's active agency in the production of and regulation of gender and heterosexuality. "Heterosexual idioms might seem to unite the genders but when used in teasing contexts, these idioms create risks that drive girls and boys apart" (Thorne 1993: 53; Thorne and Luria 1996; Myers and Raymond 2010). As Butler (2004: 186) notes, "the regulation of gender has always been part of the work of heterosexist normativity". This study confirms this and is evident in the following extract in a conversation at *Westridge Primary*:

Claudia: I don't like boys. They whinge. They nag. That's why I never told my mum to have a brother … that's why I have a sister.
Brandon: What happens if I come to stay with you?
Claudia: Then I will tell you to find another woman.
Lizette: (interrupting) Do you know what my sister said? She has a date (laughing)
Claudia: Don't embarrass us!
Lizette: Yes … with a boy and his name is Morné. Don't laugh Claudia, its true.

A little later.

Claudia: Nicholas loves girls because he always copies them.
Nicholas: You love boys.
Claudia: You love girls.
Nicholas: Sometimes I hate girls. They get me into trouble.
Claudia: And I won't forgive you for calling me a cow … Sometimes I like boys and sometimes I hate them. Nicholas loves me but I'm not marrying him.
DB: Why not?
Claudia: Because he's a pain. He comes and does this to me … (Claudia imitates the sounds of kissing) … It makes me vomit … it makes me disgusted. It's so embarrassing … (giggling.)

The data captures episodic and momentary spaces that materialise (as quickly as they vanish) in unexpected places and at unexpected times and through which gender (and sexual) identities are produced and regulated. All of this was captured as I sat listening to this conversation. In my presence, the introduction of "taboo" subjects involving kissing and dating provided a successful strategy for children to challenge both the dominant discourses on childhood manifest within teaching discourses, and my authority as an adult (Renold et al. 2015). As Robinson and Davies (2015) show young children are always heterosexualised through their

position as gendered subjects. These scholars go on to show that kissing, marriage, and having children are part of and mediate children's everyday social worlds. Similarly, the above exchange serves to deconstruct earlier notions of childhood innocence and suggests that talk about marriage, dating, kissing are fun and pleasurable moments that bring the genders together but also sets them apart. Heterosexual teasing, for example, took the shape of "you like" and "you love" followed by laughter and giggles. Claudia invests in a heterosexual future and it connects to power and masculinity. Power is manifest in sex-based harassment (being called a cow, the kiss) but it is made invisible through the naturalisation of heterosexuality. Claudia finds pleasure in heterosexuality, but at the same time "it makes her vomit".

Heterosexuality is an integral part of hegemonic masculinity, but for young boys aged generally between six and nine, it is a tenuous experience. As young boys they have to distance themselves from girls but at the same time invest in heterosexuality, which renders proximity to girls an ambiguous experience (Bragg 2015). It was impossible to talk of boy and girl friendships without being complicit in the heterosexual matrix, although it was boys who feared and felt anxious about the assumed sexual association with girls:

DB: Do you play with girls, Warren?
Warren: Nope.
Amy: Yes he does. We chase them all the time.
DB: Do you play with Amy?
Warren: (smiling) Yes, I play with Amy but she's not my friend …

Eight-year-old Warren's "nope," and later "yes" indicates the struggles, the fears and the contradictions of being associated with Amy. It was only after Amy intervened to confirm, rather than deny, his association with girls during play that Warren was willing to change his "nope" to "yes". To be associated with girls was not considered proper for an eight year old. This short cameo also demonstrates how young boys are invested contradictorily in rejecting (and playing) with girls as part of masculinity making. Amy on the other hand had no fear in intervening and asserting the association. It is argued that boys in the primary school are far more invested in dissociating (and contradictorily associating) with/from girls as they learn about being and becoming boys (Bragg 2015; Robinson and Davies 2015). Once the gender boundary was broken, Warren is quick to invoke the heterosexual matrix by denying being Amy's friend. Warren's validation of girls occurs through the (heterosexual) constraint: he plays with Amy, but he won't (can't) make her his friend. Cross-gender friendships do exist, but they can't be named, or at least they can only be named in particular contexts and ways. "Gender separation is far from total." (Thorne 1993: 47) but the heterosexual idiom is enough to drive boys (and girls) apart This suggests the pressure at age eight which boys like Warren have come to bear in trying to get their gender, sexuality (and their age) right. Renold (2005) argues that not only are boys made subject to the pressures of hegemonic masculinity where to be a normal boy involves the projection of a coherence which

renders proximity to girls an ambiguous experience, but also that age is an important category in denying association with girls by claiming sexual immaturity and discourses of boyhood innocence are tied up with gender inequalities. Heterosexual teasing is a means through which young boys become vulnerable to attack. The heterosexual ambiguity of boy-girl friendships is highlighted in the following transcript:

Luke: I don't like girls.
DB: Why?
Bryce: They're too fancy.
DB: What's fancy about girls?
Storm: I know. They wear fancy things and they go to stores and buy lots of things and carry handbags.
DB: Are boys fancy?
Megan: Yes they are. Bryce wore a mask to my party with all this gold stuff. That was fancy too (mocking). Bryce gets mad at girls if they do something wrong. When I bit his *koki* [fibre tipped pen] he …
Bryce blocks his ears
Storm: (interrupts) Shut up Megan!
Megan: … he tried to kiss me.

Davies (1993) notes that almost all mixed gender relation in children's everyday schooling interactions are always heterosexualised. Like Davies, the conversation with Megan, Storm, Luke and Bryce position their interactions with each other in terms of gendered heterosexual relations and as such make the possibility of friendships, free from heterosexual hegemony almost impossible. Here is evidence of Butler's (1990) assertion of the power of heterosexuality as children insert into the dominant heterosexual norm. Significantly, the social and material context of *Westridge Primary School* provides the repertoire within and through which gender and sexual identity is constituted. This contextual specificity allows Storm to make the connection with shopping, fancy clothes, handbags and gender identity. Identity is thus produced as Storm actively constructs gender in relation to his material and social condition. The repertoire of social discourses associates subjectivities with specific commodities. Shopping, fancy clothes and handbags is the association that Storm makes with girls (re)producing gendered and sexual identities.

Again, like Amy before, it was Megan who felt comfortable in "coming out" and disclosing "he tried to kiss me". Storm's defence of Bryce and Bryce's blocking of his ears are part of an intricate masculinity-making process where to be seen as an eight-year-old boy disallows association with girls and heterosexual practices like kissing. But Megan breaks the canon—children do perform heterosexuality even at an age not considered appropriate but they do so in ways that reinforce gendered and sexual hierarchies. As girls like Megan insert into the dominant heterosexual norm, they do so in ways that reconstruct gender inequalities. As Thorne (1993: 53) suggests: "heterosexual idioms might seem to unite the genders but when used in teasing contexts, these idioms create risks that drive girls and boys apart." What is

important here is the role the girls play in constructing and reinforcing masculinity. Megan disrupts the coherence of meaning as Bryce is exposed and his identity is brought under threat: going to a girl's party with a mask and with "gold stuff" and the attempted kiss. Hegemonic masculinity is reinforced and Bryce's masculinity is put under scrutiny, as he is humiliated/teased about the gold stuff and the kiss. As eight-year-old boys, proximity to girls, even within the discourse of heterosexuality, is a fragile and ambiguous experience. To kiss a girl is heterosexually acceptable but not at age eight. Megan says: "When I bit his *koki* [fibre tipped pen] he … he tried to kiss me." Megan laughs as she successfully humiliates mocks and teases Bryce, as Storm tries to come to his defence. Megan enjoys the pleasure of breaking the canon and revealing Bryce to be effeminate—the ideal masculine norm has been revealed to be a fiction. Moreover, she has publicly humiliated him by revealing his attempt to kiss her. But Megan's power is quickly made tenuous with the knowledge that power games are also risky. Megan knows her limits "Bryce gets mad with girls if they do something wrong." Storm said "shut up" to her and the reason why she got kissed is because she bit Bryce's *koki* [fibre tipped pen]. Gender relations are constructed in ways that are unequal and reinforce boys' power over girls. Megan appears to normatively insert into this version of relations. Moreover, she is far more invested in making pleasure out of the kiss. As the analysis here shows asymmetrical relations of power are reinforced through a naturalisation of boy's behaviour (and Megan's heterosexual pleasure). Girls' bodies become sites of potential danger, but are naturalised as part of the heterosexual discourse (Renold 2005). I consider these issues further in the section below. First I examine boys and heterosexuality. Next I consider girls and heterosexuality as they experience, negotiate and maintain sexual (and gendered) identities.

Boys: Girls and Girlfriends

Throughout this section it will be shown how young boys resist dominant discourses of childhood sexual innocence whilst simultaneously investing in a hierarchal ordering of masculinities involving an ambiguous relationship with girls as they associate with, distance and repudiate femininities. In so doing the boys learn and practise adult male ways of being (Cobbett and Warrington 2013). The construction of masculine identities draws upon a range of complex heterosexual discourses, such as the identification and distinction of "girlfriends" and "girls as friends". This is different from older boys in more senior phases of school where it is more assumptive and acceptable (but also ambiguous) to be boyfriends, to make overt sexual advances and to ask girls out (Renold 2005).

On the question of friendships it was impossible to talk of boy and girl friendships without invoking the compulsion of heterosexuality and it was boys particularly who expressed anxieties about the association with girls:

DB: Who is your friend Shaun?
Shaun: Vikal is.
Vikal: (smiling and teasing) Jess, Jess, Jess.
Shaun: She's not my friend.
Vikal: What's the other girl's name? Jessica and …
Scott: Mary Anne, Sarah … (laughter in the group).
Shaun: (denies this loudly) No!
Scott: (laughing) Yes they are.
DB: Vikal, do you have girl friends?
Vikal: No (dragging tone) … Because girls don't exist.

In this discussion the boys heterosexualise relationships often accompanied by constant teasing, giggles and laughter. Humour and teasing have been identified as an instance of a stylised form of heterosexual masculinity (Frosh et al. 2002). For young the eight-year-old boys above, the contradictions are evident in the ambivalence expressed in relation to girls. Vikal associates Shaun with Jess, Mary Anne and Sarah in the heterosexual link. Yet girls are then made non-existent. The heterosexual association is both masculinity confirming and simultaneously polluting. Being associated with a girl at age eight questions boys' power and gives rise to feminine association and thus being teased and mocked, leading to "girls don't exist".

John: I'm a friend of a girl but an older girl. I know one day I was playing with Scott and I showed a girl my hat. I don't know why. Her name's Monique.
Scott: Why are you talking about me like that?
Shaun: *Ja*, why?
Jessica: (interrupting) Boys don't exist. Boys don't exist.
Vikal: No, girls don't exist …
DB: Why do you say that?
Vikal: 'Cos girls don't exist.
DB: Don't you like girls, Vikal?
Vikal: No.
DB: Why not?
Vikal: I don't know.
DB: Do other boys play with girls?
The boys giggle
Vikal: Polly likes Jess. Polly likes Jess.
DB: So girls do exist?
Vikal: Okay, *ja* sometimes.

Renold (2005) argues boys are made subject to the pressures of hegemonic masculinity, which renders proximity to girls an ambiguous experience. John declares his association with girls, but he says this is an "older girl". He justifies this strategically because he assumes his masculinity will not be subject to scrutiny and teasing. The older girl can be his friend but presumably not in the heterosexual way.

Association with girls can be seen as a mark against masculinity as Scott's reaction against being named in John's friendship with Monique suggests. To have a girl as a friend is not deemed to be part of hegemonic masculinity even as they contradictorily express delight and tease each other about romantic relationships. Mocking and denigration of girls happens at the same time as boys express heterosexuality and break the myth of sexual innocence.

Vikal's ridicule and teasing is an attempt to police the boundaries of acceptable forms of masculinity whilst breaking down discourses of childhood innocence. To have a girl as a friend could bring the ideal masculinity crumbling down. Heterosexual desirability is thus the means through which girls are included, but overall they are belittled by boys who seek recourse to misogynistic mockery. In this case boys' contradictions lie in their ambivalent attitude towards their proximity to girls that at any given time could give rise to teasing associated with misogyny and/or an expression of boys' heterosexual masculinity (Renold 2005).

DB: Who are your friends Shaun?
Shaun: Oh well there are quite a few …
DB: And girls?
Michael: mmmm … Naa. A few, *ja*, but they're not girl friends exactly.
Shaun: Just a friend. You can't get married at this age.
DB: So you would only have a girlfriend if you're wanting to get married?
Michael: Yes, *ja*
Shaun: You only start getting a girlfriend when you're 17 or 20.
Michael: No. My dad had a girlfriend when he was only 15. That was my mom. He married her. Her friend had an older sister who was beautiful, and my mom told my dad, and then the girl, who had a zillion boyfriends, she was the beautiful one, was going to go out with my dad, and she asked her sister if my mom could go out with my dad instead. Okay, eventually my mom and my dad got married.
DB: I can't understand why you can't have girls that are friends as well.
Michael: I used to. I used to have five.
DB: And now?
Michael: nay, nay, nay.
DB: Why?
Michael: Not anymore. I'm still too young …

Heterosexual desire is mobilised around developmental discourses of maturity to account for changes in the ways that boys learn to relate to girls, which the boys in the above exchange argue occurs at ages 15–17. The boys position themselves currently as non-sexual and "too young" or "you get a girlfriend when you're 17 or 20". They are increasingly subject to the pressures of hegemonic masculinity, which involves the abiding projection of a boy whose proximity to girls is a tenuous experience. The boys constructed themselves as non-sexual but their masculinity is constructed around misogyny and heterosexuality.

Michael provides this illustration by placing himself and others in advance of their ages. By referring to his parents' teen romance, Michael positions himself and others (both boys and girls) as preliminaries in the compulsory heterosexual matrix. This happens through the love and marriage discourse. Michael knows how to make the narrative work: love-and-then-marriage. But the romantic plot also needs villains and, in this case, "the girl who had a zillion boyfriends" is pitted against the romance of his parents. The binary order of good (his mother) and bad provides Michael with a discourse that disapproves of the girl with a zillion boyfriends. The sexual objectification of women is a means through which Michael asserts his heterosexual dominance as he and the others claim sexual innocence. In this way, a girl as a friend is further inhibited by the imputations of a sexual basis to a friendship (Thorne 1993). The power of heterosexuality is very strong preventing the coming together of boys and girls as friends with age relations structured in this complexity.

At *KwaDabeka Primary* as noted in Chap. 7, misogyny took the form of abrasive sexual derogation:

Simphiwe: Girls smell. They give us diseases. Their armpits smell. Girls tease boys. The boys don't sleep with the girls because the girls stink.

Simphiwe's ability to talk about sexuality challenged dominant discourses on childhood, and in doing so he blurred relations with me as adult female. In my presence, the introduction of taboo or adult subjects provided a successful strategy for challenging presumptive innocence. Simphiwe learns how to be an adult male in advance of his age as he performs adult ways of being, showing unequal gender power relations. In this process girls are objectified in advance of their ages as passive sexual objects of male desire. At the same time the sex talk works to validate masculinity publicly to his male friends in the group (Frosh et al. 2002) Misogyny and the sexual objectification of girls thus work to subordinate women in general, confirming a hegemonic heterosexual masculinity for boys by making them act like men and enabling them to try out adult patterns of conduct, which is crucial for the reproduction of sex/gender relations reinforcing boys' heterosexual dominance.

At *Umhlatuzana School* I sat with a group of boys and girls and Ricky said: "Tristan says the he's got a *bakkie* [van] key and he takes his girlfriend for a ride". This works as a public validation of heterosexual masculinity for the boys and for girls, which serves to reinforce dominant heterosexual masculinity while sexually objectifying girlfriends. Taking a "*bakkie* key" for an eight-year-old boy is a way of asserting a dominant masculinity and is evidence of risk taking. Ricky confirms Tristan's risk-taking and is approved. By confirming the "*bakkie* key" which Tristan presumably has, Ricky is able to establish Tristan's credentials within the social organisation of masculinity and one of which he approves (Connell 2005). Mills (2001: 55) claims that the extent to which a boy can demonstrate his willingness to engage in risky business is significant in placing him within a hierarchy.

Heterosexual activities in the early years involve a range of practices and include writing of love letters, kissing and playing 'kiss and catch'. The prevalence of such activities has been widely reported in other research in the west with Thorne (1993) and others noting how even seven year-olds date, play heterosexual games, kiss and invest in heterosexuality (Blaise 2010). This study too points to these activities amongst young children in South Africa and challenges our assumptions about childhood innocence as it raises questions about the ways in which gender and sexual relations are patterned in the very early years of life.

Ricky and Zo talk about girlfriends and marriage below:

DB: Ricky, Zo tells me that you have many girlfriends.
Ricky: No, except for one.
DB: Who?
Ricky: Angel, and Zo is going to marry her.
DB And who are you going to marry?
Ricky: Angel.
DB: So both of you want to marry Angel?
Ricky: *Ja*.
DB: And what did you say to her?
Ricky: The same thing that Zo said.
DB: And what was that?
Ricky: I love you.
DB: Do you really love her?
Ricky: *Ja* and Zo.
DB: So who will she choose?.
Ricky: I don't know, but I sent her a letter.
DB: A love letter?
Ricky: *Ja*.
DB: What did you say?
Ricky: I love you.

Love is pervasive and connected to gender and sexuality. Ricky is learning how masculinity and heterosexuality are linked. Ricky is able to assert his heterosexuality by positioning himself with Zo, and this serves as a confirmation of boys' heterosexual masculinity. Unlike the other examples so far, Ricky and Zo did not tease each other about Angel. In fact, the love letter serves to instantiate heterosexual practice. It is easy to see how Angel became the passive object of their love. with Ricky and Zo who are in 'friendly' competition for Angel. Heterosexuality was not simply about the object of love but the competition between the boys. Ricky positioned himself with power and asserted his heterosexual masculinity, but he was rendered less powerful because he was confronted with the knowledge that Angel makes the choice, while using the love letter as an important resource to claim love and power.

DB: Do you really write the love letters?
Catherine: I do, but don't tell Mrs D …
DB: I promise I won't. What did you write?
Catherine: (giggling) I love Michael. I hate Shaun. He swears.

Catherine took pleasure in talking about the love letter and projecting her heterosexual desirability but her agency occurs within the web of sexual silence, "don't tell". "Don't tell" was not reported or observed by boys in this study and supports the contention that it is girls who feel the pressure surrounding sexual innocence (Renold 2005). Catherine's power and agency were produced through the love letter contradicting the discourse of innocence whilst being 'coerced' by the love letter representing the hard copy of the heterosexual male gaze. The love letter functions as the instantiation of the boyfriend-girlfriend subject position. The writing of the letter invests her with a proper heterosexual femininity and through which the pressure to be seen as desiring is evident. The writing of the love letter suggests Catherine's availability as heterosexually desirable and the power she has in exceeding the boundaries of the discourse of classroom innocence—though guarded by it—as she says, "don't tell". Sexuality she knows is the domain of the secret, to be made invisible at certain times and with certain adults.

The next section explores how girls challenge, contest and maintain sex/gender identities.

Girls: Boys and Boyfriends

When I first arrived and took my place in Mrs D's classroom, Samantha came to me and said, "I like your nail polish". This simple statement struck me because my nails were not polished; yet Samantha thought they were [*Westridge Primary*]

From the very early days of my research, I was increasingly aware of the ways in which girls invested in the production of heterosexuality. Samantha, a white girl, recognised some of the feminine and heterosexual links between herself and me. Another reading of Samantha was that she was looking at women through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl: wearing nail polish and making herself attractive for heterosexual relationships: a future scenario for herself perhaps? I became the validation of the desirable heterosexual "nail varnished" image. I could not avoid from the very start of my study, the heterosexual matrix through which children were fashioning their gendered selves (as I myself was performing heterosexuality). The girls in this study took pleasure in the projection of their desirability. At *Westridge School* I heard the following comment from Angelique: "I'm going to wear my Barbie outfit. It is purple with stars." On another occasion Stacy told me that she was going to her uncle's wedding in Nelspruit [a town in South Africa]: "I'm wearing a beautiful white dress for my uncle's wedding." While femininities were produced and regulated within the normative heterosexual standards of desirability, many girls achieved a sense of agency and power as they spoke about

clothing. The significant referents were their mothers and boys. It could be argued that girls learn adult female ways of being in looking heterosexually desirable. This deconstructs earlier teaching discourses of childhood innocence. At *Westridge School*, Angelique had brought glitter and as I sat with Angelique and Mary Ann they 'secretly' opened it and tried it out on their palms. By break time and through gossip most of the girls in the classroom had come to know about the glitter and Angelique had a sense of power as she showed it to the girls. Bringing objects to school was strictly prohibited at *Westridge School* and at *Umhlatuzana School* unless it was for "Show and Tell" activities. The glitter projected heterosexual desirability. I noticed how all the girls at *Westridge Primary* cooed over Angelique, trying to get a feel of the body glitter, and her power to choose who could be allowed to try it. The real sense of agency and power were achieved in contradicting discourses of childhood innocence, breaking the "rules" by bringing prohibited objects to school. Moreover, the disruption of adult-child relations was clear, as I sat observing the glitter with full knowledge that these objects were prohibited in school.

The girls (and boys) in this study are not generally sexually active or aware, as older children in primary school often are, but their sexuality is suffused within the ordinary everydayness of school life (Epstein 1999), which is pleasurable but also caught up and naturalised in the processes of heterosexuality. Here is an illustration of the ordinary constructions of everyday sexuality:

Keith: Girls are just chatterboxes.
Angel: I don't have girlfriends or boyfriends.
Keith: How can you have a girlfriend? Girls can't kiss girls.
Angel I won't kiss a girl, silly.

In this vignette, dominant notions of heterosexuality involve the projection of an abiding heterosexual self, involving the denigration of alternative sexuality. As the boys and girls live out the gendered categories of boys and girls, sexuality underscores the conversation. Keith's power within the wider discourses of patriarchy is made visible as he marginalises girls as "chatterboxes". But his power is fragile. The ambivalence is created the moment heterosexuality appears to be undermined. Keith resorts to policing Angelique to validate his heterosexuality through her. In the pursuit of his own masculinity, heterosexual identification was crucial which is why he resorts to "girls can't kiss girls"– a fear and contempt of homosexuality. Girls kissing girls (lesbianism) threatens patriarchy. His heterosexual desirability can only be validated through heterosexualised others such as Angel. Even at this age the pressure for heteronormativity is present, which also prevents boy/girl friendships (Renold 2000). Renold claims that girls whose femininity rests on "heterosexual desirability and the securing of boyfriends" suffer from "age-old sexual inequalities" and "feelings of anxiety and despair" (323). "I won't kiss a girl, silly" is Angel's production of femininity through the heterosexual regulation. In this way Angelique learns to be a "girl" through the naturalised

process of heterosexuality. Her response that you have to kiss a boy invests her with a proper heterosexual femininity. Are these not the manifestations of age-old sexual inequalities? The girls, as young children, are not as yet subject to the despair and the anxiety that accompanies the heterosexual gaze of being dumped and used, as Renold (ibid) notes. But school sites are active in the (re)production of these heterosexual identities. Angel's sense of power is achieved as she is not repulsed by kissing (but homophobic kissing). Competent heterosexual performances are necessary to be seen as getting gender right. It could be argued that by implication heterosexual kissing is less taboo, even for eight-year-olds. This contradicts earlier discourses of childhood innocence.

Girls' sexual agency was expressed delightfully as they discussed the salience of boyfriend and girlfriend relationships. They spoke about who they liked/loved, gossiping about who others fancied and in doing so produced a 'heterosexual hub'. Through these narratives of "who liked who", they were able to validate their own heterosexual desires, as they broke down childhood innocence. At the same time they legitimated girls' and boys' experience of heterosexuality in the early years. The discursive performance of heterosexuality, as discussed below, involved "who liked who":

Lisa: Rory likes me. He likes me. I look at everyone in the class when I'm finished and I see him staring at me. Then he looks at me and then he writes something down and then he looks at me and then he writes something down …
DB: Did he ever tell you that he likes you?
Lisa: He told his friend. He is the only shy boy that told his friends and his friends told me and my friends began to tease me … 'O la la, he likes you!' Paul Heath, he likes Monique …

Expressing delight in breaking down the myth of innocence, Lisa provides a striking example of the heterosexual gaze operating in the classroom, "I see him staring at me, then he looks at me … then he looks at me". Looking at each other in heterosexual ways, despite being under the surveillance of the powerful discourse of innocence, provides profound evidence of contradiction. Heterosexuality underpins interactions between boys and girls in the early years and girls like Lisa have come to understand and interpret the "look and stare" in heterosexual ways. Holland et al. (1998) argue that girls often internalise the male gaze, producing and regulating their femininities within heterosexual norms. The early years' classroom too becomes a space through which the heterosexual gaze is made visible and girls' investment in romantic cultures is produced and realised. Rejecting the discourse of innocence, the discussion also illustrates how teasing both embeds and regulates childhood sexualities. Earlier, for example, boys' relationships with girls as girlfriends were accompanied by mocking and teasing which both produces sexuality and regulates boys association with girls. Even as the discussion above is accompanied by teasing, the pressure to resist and reject boys was not apparent with girls. Of importance here is that girls do not have the same pressure to perform

femininities that involve the rejection of boys. An investment in heterosexuality was indeed legitimating femininity as indicated below as well:

Lisa: The boys they don't want their friends to know'cos their friends tease them, 'there's your girlfriend, there's your girlfriend'. In front of you, the boys will say 'girls stink'…

Unlike boys' accounts of distancing premised upon the pressure to perform masculinity, girls fashioned their femininity around discussions around what constitutes 'cool' boys:

DB: What looks cool about him [Grant]?
Amy: Well, I like his face and his hair and …
Beth: I like his blue eyes …
Kyla: I also like his eyes'cos it's like the prettiest eyes …
DB: …what else is cool about Grant?
Sara: … and he is shy all the time …
DB: Shy?
Amy: And he is like always so shy when we are together and he always used to like cry in grade 1.
Kyla: 'cos Ms Baylie, she's left our school,'cos she went to England and he's [Grant] got a soft heart and Ms Baylie used to like always shout at him a little bit.
Amy: Because Grant never finishes his work.

In the above scene, Grant's heterosexual desirability is framed around being 'cool', his facial features idealised, blond hair and blue eyes made attractive as femininity invested in heterosexuality is legitimated. At the same time the girls uphold a version of white middle-class masculinity and are complicit in its power. Beyond the body and race are Grant's softer and gentler masculinity which is framed as 'shy' and 'soft heart', someone who cries and oppositional to dominant hegemonic masculinity. This was in stark contrast to the negative framing of other boys who were framed as bullies and who swear:

Lisa: Ross and Oliver like Stacy but Stacy likes Oliver better'cos Ross swears. He said the 'f' word to Elizabeth. He also said the 'f' ball …

Whilst discussions about sexuality were pleasurable and significant to the construction of a young heterosexual femininity, the charge was often made that boys were bullies and girls rejected boys who verbally harassed them or swore. The girls were beginning to situate their understandings of sexuality and masculinity, and their vulnerability within the pervasiveness of women and girls' subordination more broadly. Already girls are developing understandings of abusive boys (Ross) and gentleness (Oliver and Grant). They are learning their place in gender relations, the ways in which power and verbal abuse are connected and their distancing and critique of such negative patterns.

Gender and sexuality are foregrounded in classroom talk, as the next vignette illustrates. Here is data from a conversation between Mariella and myself:

Mariella: Miss Bhana do you know what a ting-a-ling is?
DB: No.
Mariella: (whispering) It's that down there. It's a willy.
DB: Oh!
Mariella: Do you have a boyfriend? … Do you do the French kiss with him? …
DB mmm … No.

Children know and live gender through the intersection and intimacy with sexuality whether teachers intend this or not. My response to Mariella suggests my own complicity in the discourse of childhood innocence, as I sat there not knowing what to say, as power relations were subverted. Mariella's femininity is invested with heterosexual desire. This involved heterosexual ideals: having a boyfriend, doing the French kiss and her knowledge of the penis. Of course, Mariella knows that sexual activity is supposedly adult and I become the representation of something in advance of her age. Like Samantha, there are links between me and her and femininity. These are (hetero) pleasurable moments for Mariella. But they are also powerful moments through which she is able to transgress the frameworks of innocence and her relations with me as adult. She had the freedom in the classroom to position herself (and me) as appropriate to heterosexual desires. All of this operates within a discourse of childhood innocence where excessive sexual knowledge is dangerous. However it also suggests the passion for ignorance in the education of children (Tobin 1997; Epstein 1999). "Ignorance in children is equated with innocence, then precocious sexual knowledge suggests defilement and culpability" (Tobin 1997: 138). The children are aware of this as the following extract illustrates:

DB: Do you really write the love letters?
Catherine: I do, but don't tell Mrs D.
DB: I promise I won't. What did you write?
Catherine: (giggling) I love Michael. I hate Shaun. He swears.

Catherine took pleasure in talking about the love letter and projecting her heterosexual desirability but her agency occurs with the knowledge that love-talk is taboo. Her power and agency were produced through the love letter and love talk. It can be argued that Catherine being "in love" contradicted the "innocent kids" discourse. However, Catherine's power is contradictory. While she was able to contradict the official discourse, her femininity is produced precisely through the love letter, which came to represent the hard copy of the heterosexual male gaze. I illustrate these issues further:

Warren: Amy writes love letters. She says she loves me. I love girls.
DB: What does love mean?
Warren: Marriage and caring.
Amy: (laughing) It means kissing… (whispering), sex.
Warren: Shh Amy! That's the f-word.

DB: What is?
Warren: (quietly) Not so loud. Shhh… Don't tell Mrs A … it's "fuck".
DB: What does that mean?
Warren: Kissing and stuff …

What I want to emphasise here is not only the heterosexual construction of femininity but also the point that talk about marriage, caring, kissing and fucking are not rare and unexceptional moments in the lives of children, but part of the mundane complexity through which they live their everyday lives. But they whisper and they are afraid of the teacher. They know that school is not a safe place to talk about sex, yet they do. Their power is enabled within a condition of constraint. Sexual knowledge and young children are together seen to be unthinkable, unsayable and inaudible (Tobin 1997). But they know it, as they are produced amongst other places in the family, at home and here at school. The early years of primary schooling is one site in the colliding (re)production of sexual identities. Sexuality becomes a private matter in the public domain of schooling (Epstein and Johnson 1998) and rendered inaudible. The extract, though, suggests the salience of sexual knowledge in their lives.

Part of the heterosexual activity is the writing of love letters: Amy loves Warren. The love letter functions as the instantiation of the boyfriend-girlfriend subject position. The writing of the love letter suggests Amy's availability as heterosexually desirable and the power she has in exceeding the boundaries of classroom discourse. At the same time the writing of the letter invests her with a proper heterosexual femininity.

Breaking the myth of innocence, the children show in this vignette the practice of heterosexuality. They "know" that talk about sex and love is forbidden but this does not prevent them from love talk. The children are learning that sexual knowledge is something to be hidden and "somehow taboo" (Epstein and Johnson 1998: 164) and through which their sexuality is forged, as they cloak their desires and pleasures in constraint. For Warren, love, marriage and caring are seen to be integral with each other. Amy, though, conflates love with heterosexual activity: kissing and sex. As agentic subjects, both Amy and Warren position themselves with power. However, "fuck" is on Warren's side, not Amy's. It is Warren who says: "sex is fuck". Fucking rather than kissing implies the possible construction of masculinity based on hard aggressive objectification of women (Holland et al. 1998). Could it also be the reason why Catherine prefers Michael and not Shaun who swears?

Is this the cycle of men's sexual domination over women? Amy's power in producing herself for heterosexual desire enables at the same time the construction of power over her. Within the discourses that compete for meaning about love, both Amy and Warren produce and negotiate meaning through the heterosexual matrix. Warren, like Amy, is in a contradictory position: love is caring but love can also be

fucking, which is the dominant and powerful but dangerous subject position associated with the wider discourses of patriarchy. Sex as fuck discourse is a defence against any form of vulnerability or effeminacy and a means to demonstrate acceptable masculinity.

Conclusion

Challenging the relentless domination of childhood innocence identified in earlier chapters of the book, this chapter has demonstrated boys and girls active participation in the process of constructing gender and sexuality. It contributes to 21st century conceptualisations of the child that contests the longstanding pretence of sexual innocence. By paying attention and taking seriously the social and sexual worlds of children, often trivialised by adults, the shape and form of sexual practices and activities in the early makings of masculinities and femininities comes more fully into view. By addressing children, gender and sexuality, the chapter breaks with the tendency to put sexuality on the agenda (even as it remains critical), only when it concerns rape, sexual violence and massive structural dislocation. It is necessary to attend to both the calamitous effects of sexual violence and structural inequalities that limit children's agency as it is to focus on how children negotiate and construct meanings of sexualities as pleasurable investments, breaking the myth of sexual innocence, without simplifying attention to the complex ways in which early formations of sexuality drives boys and girls into relations of inequalities.

Given that young boys and girls have already begun positioning themselves in the lifelong project of gender and sexual identity, this chapter highlights the need for examining the ways in which masculinities and femininities are forged within relations of domination, subordination and the compulsion of heterosexuality through which boy and girl relationships are made and constrained. In redefining the image of the child, feminist-oriented theorisings—firmly rooted in sociological understanding of the child as active makers of gender and sexuality—need to be foregrounded in working against models of children presuming sexual innocence and which are deeply implicated in the normalisation of gender inequalities. Building and designing localised interventions in all South African early years primary schooling based on gender equitable relationships has much to offer in addressing the crucible of gender violence and gender inequalities. For political and public health agendas in the country, it must be recognised that starting early in dealing with gender and sexuality has potential to influence and advance the work of changing gender identities. There is great value in developing interventions that are contextually specific and socially relevant across the childhood landscape in South Africa that include a gender transformative agenda tasked to build the foundations for equitable relations in the early years. In order to do so it is important to focus on children as capable of creating sexual meanings in their own right and what this can tell us about gender relations and power.

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Chapter 11
"Emma and Dave Sitting on a Tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G" Boys and Girls at Play

Emma and Dave [names are always changed]
Sitting on a tree,
K-I-S-S-I-N-G [letters are recited]
First comes love then comes marriage,
Then comes the baby in the golden carriage.
That's not all, that's not all,
Then comes the baby drinking alcohol [can be changed to 'playing basketball'].

Against dominant conceptions of childhood innocence, this chapter makes visible the obligatory construction of gender and heterosexuality in a site that is not usually associated with it—play (Ryan 2016; Rönnlund 2015; Paechter 2007; Epstein and Johnson 1998; Martin 2011; Blaise 2013; Ribeiro 2003; Thorne 1993; Bhana 2007; Opie and Opie 1984). It continues the leitmotif from the previous chapter that portrays children as actively engaged in the dynamic process of producing gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling. Providing a counter-narrative to childhood innocence, this chapter opens up yet again the paradox between teaching discourses which attempt to secure the myth of the non-gendered, non-sexual developing child and boys' and girls' active investment in and production of gender and sexuality. As noted in Chap. 10, the salience of boyfriend-girlfriend cultures, heterosexualised performance and activities such as kissing and love letters, point to the sophisticated ways in which children insert within dominant constructions of heterosexuality mediated by the appropriate ways on being boys and girls (Swain 2006). As Best (1983: 116–17) notes of grade 2 boys and girls who were actively engaged in boyfriend-girlfriend cultures and heterosexual practices: "Boys/men were expected to be attractive, even irresistible, to girls/women, and second grade boys adopted this aspect of the male role with considerable zest". As Connell (2005: 15) suggests: "Heterosexuality is learnt, and the learning, for boys, is an important site of the construction of masculinity." This chapter will show as other researchers too have noted that this is the same for femininity and girls. Girls like boys are not a monolithic group and the ways they give meaning to gender and sexuality is contextually located. Play is a significant

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arena through which gender and sexuality are both produced and reinforced and critical to the play of gender relations of power.

The chapter begins with a rhyme that pervades the playtime experience in many primary school settings (Blaise 2005, 2010; Tobin 1997; Robinson 2013; Kane 2013; Epstein et al. 2001). Rhythmic clapping and games, as illustrated in the opening quotes of this chapter, are important resources in "practicing heterosexuality" (Epstein 1993). Play is crucial to production of and investment in the "heterosexual matrix" through which gender relations of power are manifest (Butler 1990). Despite this recognition, children's play is often rendered as a frivolous activity. Sexual innocence as I have argued in this book remains an unyielding representation of childhood and the continued emphasis on children's sexual innocence reflects the discomfort of adult society in recognising children's sexual agency through any kind of activity including play (Mellor and Epstein 2006; James et al. 1998). This chapter is particularly interested in children's sexual/gendered play cultures and the ways in which gender is routinely spoken through a hegemonic heterosexual matrix (Butler 1990, 1993; Blaise 2005; Renold 2005). Butler (1990) describes a 'heterosexual matrix' in which gender is systematically spoken through heterosexuality, and that is assumed in expressions of 'real' forms of masculinity and femininity. It is argued in this chapter that the investments in normative versions of heterosexuality essentialises and polarises gender and sexual difference that sustain gender and sexual inequalities.

As many other studies have noted, girls are key protagonists in the production of and maintenance of gender and sexual identities (Renold 2005; Martin 2011; Thorne 1993). Thorne (1993: 71) finds that "sexual meanings, highlighted by games like 'chase-and-kiss' and 'kissers-and-chasers', infuse cross gender [heterosexual] chasing at every age." Thorne (1993) adds that girls often fantasise about "boyfriends", love and marriage and the games girls played provide the avenue in which to realise these fantasies. For most girls across the school sites, I found that rhymes and clapping was a significant means to negotiate, contest and construct their heterosexual identities. By exploring the social domain of play, I suggest that gender and heterosexual identity is complexly organised and contested through play (Davies 1993). Whilst I draw attention to the ways in which boys both participated and resisted games such as kiss-kiss-chase, I emphasise girls' participation in these heterosexual play activities as it was the chief, albeit unofficial, means to publicly register their investment in sexuality.

In *Gender Play*, Thorne (1993) argued that when boys and girls come together in the playground they do so with investments in a heterosexual matrix and where gender relations of power are played out. The focus on children's construction of gendered and sexual identities during the break in South Africa is uncommon. In 2014, media reports of game in the school playground received heightened attention (Osborne 2014):

South Africa: Parents Shocked as 10-Year-Olds Play 'Rape Rape' Game in School Playground

Primary school children in Cape Town, South Africa, have been found playing a new playground game called 'Rape Rape', where boys chase girls then simulate a sexual attack. Parents and teachers raised the alarm after children were discovered playing the game. The Western Cape Department of Education said it was outraged and has launched an investigation. A principal at one of the primary schools where children were playing the game said boys and girls as young as 10 were participating … In the game, girls are given the chance to run away before boys start to chase them. Once caught, the girl would be pinned to the ground and the boy would simulate rape for up to 20 s. Once she had been 'raped', the girl would be eliminated from the game. The game would end once the last girl had been 'raped'. The principal said: "Rules of the game differ from school to school. Children do not understand the implications. The game desensitises them to rape, which can have dire consequences for society in the long run."

Despite the construction of children's play as a frivolous activity which seeks to silence sexual and gender relations of power in the school playground (Martin 2011), play is not only fun but could involve violent sexualised practices as reported above. Through play, children learn to take up their places in the complex web of power. Play is both a public display of young sexualities as well as a display of children's active agency. In the next section of this chapter I draw attention to the active dynamics in relation to sexualised play. I focus on kiss-kiss-chase, rhymes and clapping before turning attention to kissing and farting and *show me the panties* as specific to *KwaDabeka School.* As in the previous chapter I do not present data from each of the schools to make the point of children's active agency. Rather my intention is to show the overall discourses through which boys and girls enact their gender and sexual identities with specific attention to the strategic ways in which girls use play at *KwaDabeka School* when their agency is under pressure.

Playing (Heterosexual) Games

Kiss-Kiss-Chase

Kiss-kiss-chase was a particularly pleasurable experience for young girls at all schools, embedding them in the power relations of heterosexuality. Both boys and girls played the game together. It was sexually suggestive and involved running, catching and kissing. In this game one girl was chosen or opted to be a queen. The other girls had to catch a boy for the queen. The girls ran after the boys and once a boy was caught, the queen kissed him.

Westridge School

Brett: … he [Jason] always plays kiss and catches with the girls.
Jason: … and that's what we are going to do today.
DB: Kiss and catches?

Brett: And girls are like always like aaahhh … aaahhh … to him [Jason].
DB: Why do they do that to him?
Anne: … 'cos he kisses everyone.

Children's play is complexly gendered and sexualised (Thorne 1993; Robinson 2005a, b). Under the guise of frivolous and innocent play, kiss and catches involved sexualised running within the open space of the school grounds breaking publicly the discourse of childhood innocence. Kiss and catches was discussed by children as pleasurable although it was girls mainly who brought up the discussion of the game. In the above example however Jason's declaration and interests in kiss-kiss-chase, breaks the hold that distances boys from girls. It happens through the power invested in Jason who determines "that's what they are going to do" and the fact that Jason is charged with kissing the girls. As Myers and Raymond (2010: 185) suggest, children "reinforced the gender binary in which girls are measured—and measure themselves—by their relationship to boys". Heterosexual desirability is secured for boys and girls but heterosexuality is still firmly rooted in the sexually 'acting' male whilst girls anticipate both the game and the kiss—as older girls who wait to be asked to go out and girls and women who wait and anticipate 'a (male) hand in marriage'. As Brett says above, "girls are like always like aaahhh … to him" feeding into Jason's and boys' assumed power in heterosexual relations. Jackson (2009: 152) notes, "What confirms masculinity is being (hetero)sexually active; what confirms femininity is being sexually attractive to men."

(1)
DB: Which pre-school did you go to?
Mariella: *Westridge Pre-primary*.
DB: And you, Keith?
Keith: *Westridge Pre-primary*.
DB: So you two should be friends?
Mariella: No.
Keith: Yuck.
DB: Why?
Mariella: Yes, but just in class I talk to him, but I don't have any boy who is my friend. No … my friends are girls.
Angelique: No, Miss Bhana, Mariella does play with boys. We play kiss-kiss catches. Mariella runs after them.
DB: Do you Mariella?
Mariella: er … *Ja* sometimes.
DB: What's this kiss-kiss catches?
Angelique: It's a kiss-kiss catching game. Mariella kissed Alex (laughing).
Mariella: Angelique you're rotten.
DB: So what is this game?
Mariella: It's when girls are on, and boys are on.
DB: Do you enjoy it?
Mariella: Yes I do …

(2)

DB: Do any of you play kissing catches?
Nguleko: Yes we do.
Sarah: But, Mrs B doesn't know 'cos she said that it's not allowed.
Nguleko: All the boys say, "can I play? Can I play?" and I say, "yes" because it's a fun game.
DB: So what's this game?
Angelique: The girls run and catch the boys and they catch the boy for me if I'm the queen and then we swap. The boys catch us.
Nicholas: Oh, and then we kiss them on the lips.
Angelique: But Leo is the roughest. He is like a rugby player …

In both vignettes as they are played out at *Westridge School*, *kiss-kiss-chase* are described as pleasurable moments in children's lives. A major contradiction surrounding the production of gender identities is the ambivalence regarding sexual knowledge and childhood innocence (Hughes and MacNaughton 2001). But *kiss-kiss-chase* and other games are part of the stuff of everyday culture in primary schooling. Girls actively challenge the rules, they seek out pleasure and playing heterosexual games is a pleasurable performance. As in the other heterosexual games, gender difference in *kiss-kiss-chase* was marked as a heterosexual binary. *Kiss-kiss-chase* produced heterosexual desirability and was part of the complex network of heterosexual activities. Mariella kissed Alex, and Nicholas claims that boys kiss the girls on the lips, though sometimes the girls told me that the boys kissed their hands. For both boys and girls, kissing and kissing on the lips was an ordinary everyday experience, but it happened within a discourse which tried to bring it under siege; "… 'cos she [Mrs B] said it was not allowed …"—perhaps another strategy not to deal with sexuality.

For the girls *kiss-kiss-chase* provided the opportunity to perform heterosexuality. Within this matrix one girl was to be queen while the other girls were worker bees who had to do the hard work and catch the prey (boy) that the queen had chosen. Engaging in kiss-kiss catches did empower girls but it did so within the boundaries through which girls' heterosexually was regulated. It was double-edged. For example, kissing a boy meant facing the danger of being identified as less than innocent (Heinze 2000; Piper 2000). This is clearly evident as Angelique lets the secret out and mocks Mariella for kissing Alex. Thus, the girls operated in contradictory discourses: constructing heterosexual femininities while guarding against overt heterosexuality. Angelique is wary of Leo who she constructs as a rugby player: wild and rough. I illustrate this with another cameo:

Megan: Yes, except for the big boys. They [boys] are bullies. My big brother bullies me all the time. Girls aren't bullies.
Bryce: Yes, except that they have long hair.
DB: Do you play with girls, Bryce?
Bryce: We play kissing catches.
DB: What's that?

Bryce: (embarrassed) No, just catches.
Megan: Don't lie Bryce. He always wants to play kissing catches. He always runs and doesn't give us a chance to eat our lunches …

Sexualised running occurs with knowledge of the "more general relation of gendered power" (Epstein 1999: 33). While learning that kiss-kiss catches is an enjoyable and pleasurable moment entwined with power positions, the girls are also learning that its enjoyment happens within unequal relations of power where boys are stronger and chiefly involved in bullying. At the same time, "just catches", suggests Bryce's knowledge that *kiss-kiss-chase* is inappropriate behaviour for a boy. While there is great enjoyment in playing the game with girls there are also regulatory reminders about what is gender appropriate.

Rhymes and Clapping

At all schools, it was the girls who were keen to talk to me during the break and often offered me their snacks. Generally, the girls clapped hands to rhythmic tunes about being girls and women, love and marriage, and boys. It involved small-scale turn-taking kinds of play (Thorne and Luria 1996):

My boyfriend gave me peaches,
My boyfriend gave me pears,
My boyfriend gave me 50c,
And threw me down the stairs.
I gave him back his peaches,
I gave him back his pears,
I gave him back his 50c,
I made him wash the dishes,
I made him scrub the floors,
I made him kiss a pretty girl behind the kitchen door.

Girls take turns performing and watching others perform in stylised bodily movements and at other times their play rituals are highly choreographed involving groups of girls (Thorne 1993; Grugeon 1993; Epstein 1999). Girls' play is a public performance of their gender and sexual identities (Thorne 1993). In fact, it was the pervasive and public nature of games in the playground that led to a serious consideration of how girls use play as a strategy to construct and negotiate their gender. It was through this 'unseen' form of communication (Nayak and Kehily 2001: 111) that girls were able to contest, reject and appropriate dominant meanings of what it means to be a young girl. I provide some examples of the extant ways in which girls at the schools performed (sexual) play:

(1)
My mother
Your mother
Walking down the street
Eighteen Nineteen Marble Street
Every time I go there
This is what I hear
itsy bitsie lollipop
itsie bitsie boo
itsie bitsie lollipop
the boys love you

(2)
When Suzie was a baby, a baby, a baby,
When Suzie was a baby, then she used to go like this:
Wa, wa, wa, wa.
When Suzie was a child, a child, a child,
When Suzie was a child, she used to go like this:
I want this, I want that.
When Suzie was a teenager, a teenager, a teenager,
When Suzie was a teenager, she had a boyfriend.
When Suzie had a boyfriend, a boyfriend she used to say this:
I love you, I love you, I love you.
When Suzie got married, married, married,
When Suzie got married, she used go like this:
I don't believe it I don't believe it I don't believe it.
When Suzie was a mother, a mother, a mother,
When Suzie was a mother, she used to say this:
Cook, cook, cook, cook,
When Suzie had a baby, a baby, a baby,
When Suzy had a baby, she used to say like this:
So cute, so cute, so cute.
When Suzie was a grandmother, grandmother, grandmother,
When Suzie was a grandmother she used to say this
I'm sick I'm sick, I'm sick.
When Suzie was a skeleton, a skeleton a skeleton
When Suzie was a skeleton she used to go like this
Rattle, rattle, rattle.
When Suzie was a ghost, a ghost, a ghost, a ghost,
When Suzie was a ghost, She used to go like this:
Boo! Boo! Boo!
When Suzie was nothing, nothing, nothing,
When Suzie was nothing, she used to go like this:
….

As they play at kissing, love, marriage and babies, girls show themselves and others what they think about boys (and men) and what girls (and women) can and should do. What did the girls think the word "sexy" meant in the following rhyme?

(3)
Girls are sexy
Made out Pepsi
Boys are rotten
Made out of cotton

Confronted with these discourses of gender and sexuality and their related implications for femininity the girls can be seen to be reproducing love and marriage discourses without consciously thinking of it as such. Here the girls can be seen as preparing for heterosexual courtship and its associated activities that include marriage. They are also preparing for the kitchen sinks, babies and buckets to come (Rhedding-Jones 1996). Yet, the cacophony of sounds and rhythmic clapping associated with the rhymes are not audible as heterosexual discourses in schools but as natural. Heterosexuality is normalised and childhood innocence is perpetuated. Epstein (1999: 31) suggests that the rhymes "certainly produce part of a culture of heterosexuality in which girls grow up to be women who marry men, go on honeymoon, have babies and otherwise perform their gendered, heterosexual female parts". In other words, through the rhymes they are not simply clapping and singing, they are also exploring their positionings in gendered society. They do this by the narrative constructions of femininity. The rhymes that they sing can be seen as their own but also of other girls' past and present. They sing the rhymes with the support of the other girls. That they sing with the support of friends means that one girl gives another the point of access to a gendered discourse. Thus, the rhymes were heterosexually desirable through the validation of other girls.

As Butler (1990) and others notes (Renold 2000, 2005, 2006; Myers and Raymond 2010), girls are able to get their gender right if they adhere to heteronormative ideals. This means that they are actively involved in policing each other to follow the heterosexual scripts (Rich 1980). Myers and Raymond (2010: 168) argue that the constant pressure to get gender—and thus sexuality—right is a pressure that not only adults manage but even children where "girls' interests" are defined as "boy-centered, and they performed heteronormativity with and for each other". Following this argument, the insertion into the rhyming culture becomes a part of girl's childhood experience through which particular forms of femininity were fashioned and through which other girls became a part of this co-constructed performance of gender and sexuality (Myers and Raymond 2010). The games were also spaces where girls were able to position themselves with power over boys who stood watching and were mocked. The very public spaces of the school fields provided the space through which moments of power could be experienced, thus disrupting adult-child relations, disrupting innocence and subverting unequal gender power relations. In the public space of the school, the girls are able to flaunt

their femininities, break rules about innocence and publicly sing and laugh to the sounds of kissing and love.

Here are examples of the tunes to which their bodies moved at *KwaDabeka* and *Umbumbulu*:

(1)
Ije Ije Ije
1,2,3 helelele
up to 10
ije ije ije
1,2,3, helelele

(2)
a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, I, j, k, l, m, n, o, p,
(name of a boy starting with p)
Petros.
Nomvula, do you love Petros?
Nomvula, will you marry him?
Yes, No, Yes, No,
How many kisses will you give?
1, 2, 3, 4,
How many boyfriends have you got?
1, 2, 3, 4, 5,
How many babies have you got?
1, 2, 3,
plastic, gold, plastic, gold,
van, motorbike, van, motorbike.

(3)
There's a party round the corner,
Will you please, please come,
Bring your own cup and saucer,
And your own cherry bun.
And what is your boyfriend's name?
Brutus.
Brutus will be there blowing kisses in the air.
And O-U-T spells out!

Pushing the boundaries and transgressing the norms of everyday school life, the girls laugh hilariously as if in a surge of camaraderie, a spirit of oneness joined by laughter. At *KwaDabeka School*, when confronted with girls' laughter and joy, boys would say "*voetsek*". Some would move away others just continually say "*voetsek*, *voetsek*". For the girls, these moments provided the means through which they could produce their own pleasures on their own terms and in the school

(classroom). The rhymes are one way of establishing their own territory and forming networks of friendships (Tobin 1997; Sedgwick 1990). The next section focuses on games played at *KwaDabeka School.*

Kissing and Farting

The claim that children know a great deal about sexuality does not imply that they know the same things. Their particular context and local cultures strongly influences what they know and believe. Girls are knowledgeable about sexuality, interested in sexuality and derive a great deal of pleasure in performing sexual play but they also perform with knowledge about the dangers. At *KwaDabeka School, Kissing and farting* is a rhyme involving singing and rhythmic clapping. Groups of girls find support from each other as they sing, clap and mock boys who watch, walk past or surround them. Children are frequently fascinated by things that adults consider to be rude and uncouth. The games girls play are important in sustaining particular feminine positions: little girls become tomorrow's women. At the same time the rhymes the girls also validate and making tangible a range of alternative feminine positions.

Ofuna ukungigaxa
Makeze kithi
Hayi umfana
Sifuna intombazana
Ngoba umfana
Ushipa izidwedwe

Translation

The one who wants to hug/kiss me must come to us.
Not a boy.
We want a girl,
Because the boys are farting, filthy rags.

The girls make things happen for themselves (against the backdrop of violence) to their advantage by associating boys with things that adults consider uncouth: farting dirty rags. Dirty words are a focus of rules in primary schools (Thorne and Luria 1996). The girls are able to flaunt the rules and puncture the egos of troublesome boys who try to invade their space. This rhyme can be seen as breaking free from the rigid stereotypes of love and marriage and thus testing out other ways of femininity. The girls mock and resist traditional forms of femininity. The girls do laugh and shout as they perform this rhyme. The rhymes are powerful moments through which femininity is redefined and re-evaluated against the patriarchal investment in heterosexuality. Here normative meanings are defied and schoolgirls can triumph within the rude spaces that they make available for themselves.

Tobin (1997) shows that children's predisposition for poop jokes and farts can open up newer transgressive spaces in schools. The girls in this "farting rhyme" are no different. They open up spaces through which heterosexual patriarchy is challenged and play within the normative boundaries through which children are constructed as innocent and rule abiding. Sexuality pervades the games girls play and girls actively draw on it as a resource for the constructing their gender identities. Within the normative boundaries of gender (and heterosexuality) they are not simply reproducing the schoolgirl culture that makes available a discourse preparing them for marriage, babies and husbands, but they have the potential to recast themselves as powerful. This potentiality is discussed further in the following section as some girls invest in "rudeness".

Show Me the Panties

In this section, I continue the focus on *KwaDabeka School* and show how "*show me the panties*" works to provide girls with a space to contest boys' domination.

I have suggested that the rhymes are contradictory discourses which serve to reproduce schoolgirl's heterosexual culture, but I have also suggested that within constraints the girls position themselves with power, which goes against the patriarchal discourses of the school. This makes it impossible for schooling to ignore sexuality. Through rhymes, girls are able to transgress the normative boundaries under the convenient cover of childhood innocence. Through rude suggestions the girls are able to position their femininities in different ways and resist domination.

Show me the panties worked as girls engaged in rhythmic performances in pairs or groups. Other girls and, sometimes, boys watched. During the performance they would raise their school dresses and reveal their panties to gales of laughter. During this performance they developed a sense of being together through which their collectivity was asserted. This was especially the case as they tried to create a space for themselves away from (the mocking and sometimes violent) boys. Fuelled by their desire to amuse themselves, and others and create a safe space for themselves they raised their panties to the boys. In response the boys would either move away or make misogynistic comments. I illustrate this through different cameos:

(1)

Khanyasile: The girls don't swear at the boys because they are scared of them. We say, "he's mad in the head" and we show them our panties. (giggling).

DB: And what do the boys do?

Khanyasile: They laugh and tease us.

(2)

DB: Do the girls show you their panties?

Siyabonga: Yes. They think that the boys love girls. They say "hey, do you love me?" and they mock us.

Mncedo: The girls say, "He's mad in the head". They say *voetsek*. The girls say "come here and they raise their dresses". [He shows me what he means].

(3)

DB: Do you play with the girls, Sibonelo?

Sibonelo: No.

DB: Who do you play with?

Sibonelo: Mbatha.

DB: Why don't you play with the girls?

Sibonelo: They *show me their panties.* (emphasis added)

"*Show me the panties*" is a position that girls inhabit to make things happen for themselves. The girls deploy heterosexual discourses in their play and forms of abuse. The above cameos suggest the constant struggles between boys and girls to make things happen to their own advantage. "*Show me the panties*" is clearly a powerful moment of female conspiracy against (swearing) boys. Khanyasile suggests the unequal power relations. Girls are scared at *KwaDabeka School* but they are not powerless as I have shown in Chaps. 6, 7 and 8. Girls adopted a strategy of resistance to mocking and violent boys by acting out an aggressive sexuality and investing in rudeness, lifting their dresses in concert to "show their panties". Their moment of power rests in "*show me the panties*," which tries to create a safer place through which their desires can be lived out. The moment of power is enabled through constraint. Within constraint there exists a freer position that pushes the boundaries and transgresses the norms of patriarchy and childhood innocence of everyday school life (Boldt 1997). As they show the boys their panties, the girls laugh hilariously as if in a surge of camaraderie, a spirit of oneness joined by laughter. The boys react by saying, "*voetsek*". "*Show me the panties*" provided the girls with an opportunity to display their own power. The fact that this took place within a discourse through which girls are made to be scared of boys is a paradox. "Hey, do you love me?" is a power moment made to mock and humiliate boys, while paradoxically it happens within the power relations of heterosexuality. The girls are able to use the heterosexual discourse to their advantage while at the same time being positioned in it. "*Show me the panties*" questions the relative passivity and innocence of schoolgirl discourses (Walkerdine 1996).

"*Show me the panties*" is an ambivalent moment, which is shocking both in terms of its explicit sexual reference and the power it asserts over the troublesome boys. The girls who are cast as powerless, scared of boys in general, scared of boys who swear in particular, are able to recast themselves as powerful in the public space of the school as they privately recast boys as powerless objects whom they

humiliate through their performance. There are definite limits to this transgression. Children are neither ignorant nor innocent of sexual knowledge. Childhood innocence is an excuse for keeping children ignorant, denying them access to power and justifying their powerlessness (Epstein et al. 2003). In foregrounding heterosexual games I have argued that young girls draw upon sexuality in the construction of their gender and sexual identities. Young girls are active makers of sex/gender identities through which unequal gender power relations are contested, challenged and maintained as groups of girls stick together.

Not all games are based on sticking together. There were different types of chasing and catching games in which gender is performed which carry explicit sexual meaning. One such game is based on entry into the classroom. Both boys and girls stand at the door. A girl that is selected has to kiss a boy if she wants to enter the classroom. If the girl refuses then the boys run after her. Another game was called *I propose.* In this game a girl starts the play by touching another girl's pinky (small finger) (Girl 2). Girl 1 says: "I propose that you hug and kiss Bongani" (name of a boy). If the girl says "no" then Girl 1 hits Girl 2. Torture was not simply a boy's domain but girls too resorted to inflicting pain, which constructed their femininities with hardness. If Girl 1 says "maybe" then she has to hug the boy. If she says "yes" then Girl 1 hugs and kisses the boy that has been proposed. Another game involved taking a girl's shoe and running. The girl runs after the boy and she has to kiss him in order to get her shoe back. This game in particular also involved running and catching, which become transmuted into arenas of sexualised chasing.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how children regulate and work on their gendered identities within a heteronormative gaze through play. Such work—rarely featuring in South African children's account of schooling—problematises the heterosexual dominance in children's account of doing and becoming boy and girl. Rooted in an analysis that makes visible heterosexual dominance, the chapter demonstrates that subjecting a queer analysis to the sexualisation of gender in children's construction of play can radically alter the taken for granted assumptions of children's school based cultures as innocent and frivolous. The dominant constructions offered boys and girls in this study limited gender/sexual identities and constrained forms of gender/sexual relations.

Contesting earlier depictions of children as innocent without agency, this chapter has shown how children's play—and girls' particular investment in heterosexual games—is a public display of the dynamic ways in which gender and sexuality is produced. Pleasure, excitement and desire are invested in these games as they provide the public route through which heterosexuality is performed. In particular, play is a means by which young girls are able to actively construct their femininities in school. Young girls contribute towards the construction of their heterosexual identity in complex and contradictory ways. Through collective action young girls

are able to find spaces for themselves, break the rules of childhood innocence and publicly assert their power.

Show me the panties and other girl play rituals offered a means of resisting troublesome boys through overt sexualised behaviour (Ribeiro 2003), mockery and gales of laughter that avoided the more physically aggressive play and fighting that was usually the domain of young boys, especially in *KwaDabeka School*. In the light of this analysis, strategies to support young girls who feel the pressure (and the pleasure) to perform their heterosexual femininities in the ways that they do are needed especially when play is boy-centred (Myers and Raymond 2010; Rönnlund 2015) and girls even at age the age of seven have sophisticated understandings of their place within the gendered relations of power. Newer understanding of children's agentic capacity within the school playground and boys and girls insertions into heterosexuality make it important for teachers to recognise the gendering and heterosexual processes which regulate children's lives. This requires that teachers intervene and create possibilities in the classroom to talk about difficult (sexual) issues and to focus on the ways in which boys and girls do gender which reproduce asymmetrical relations of power. How this might begin is the focus in Chap. 12.

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Chapter 12
Refocusing on Boys, Girls and Sexuality in the Primary School

> Childhood … is a time of innocent joy, to be spent in the meadows amid buttercups and bunny-rabbits or at the hearthside absorbed in a storybook (Coetzee 1997: 14).

This book is based on a multi-sited ethnography of grade 1 and grade 2 teachers, boys and girls in four diverse primary school settings located in the greater city of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. It began with the aim of understanding how teachers—and children between the ages of six and nine years old—across rich and elite to poor and impoverished school settings, make meaning of gender and sexuality. Dominant claims of childhood sexual innocence as reported in this book continue to flourish in primary schooling across the globe (Bartholmaeus and Senkevics 2015; Bhana 2016; Robinson 2013; Renold 2005; Egan and Hawkes 2010; Renold et al. 2015). As this book has shown, not only are children regarded as sexually innocent, but also longstanding conventional frameworks including gender essentialist discourses, sex-role socialisation and developmentally appropriate practice, attempt to make children 'gender innocent'. By entering into the everyday world of children and by working with 12 teachers across the school sites demarcated by either poverty or plenty, the book explodes the myth that "childhood is a time of innocent joy". Findings concerning boys' and girls' own gender and sexual conceptualisations, their approaches and actions produce a highly problematic and paradoxical position between teaching discourses and the actual evidence of children's gendered and sexual agency. Childhood innocence and gender innocence in the early years of primary schooling is an adult-teacher perpetuated myth; the underlying reasoning is not one that boys and girls have adhered to. Consequently, dominant discourses that rely on reductionist and essentialist notions of gender and childhood must be part of a broader political project in the early years of primary schooling in order to make available alternative possibilities for envisioning sexuality, gender relations and the construction of masculinities beyond gender as a binary, beyond sexual innocence, whilst vigilant of the heteronormative constraints. An understanding of boys and girls in the struggle to make sense of their gendered and sexual selves (Renold 2005), demands that we abandon familiar, essentialist and stereotypical approaches if we are serious about supporting a progressive gender reform agenda in the early years of primary schooling.

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By providing close-focused analytic insights into teachers' and children's social and cultural worlds and the context in which they functioned, the book throws into sharp 'relief the naivety and essentialist' (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012: 243) discourses about boys, girls and childhood sexuality that are embedded within explanatory frameworks such as "children are children, gender doesn't matter". The argument that the early years of primary schools are critical sites for the production and reproduction of gender and sexuality with active participation by boys and girls is based on an approach of power that does not descend exclusively from above or from the teachers as powerful adults. As Foucault (1980) notes, power is the air we breathe. Boys and girls like teachers produce power and are produced by it. Whilst dominant discourses attempt to block, limit and squeeze children's access to power, boys and girls struggle against the suffocation as they seize opportunities momentarily to defy and go beyond the limits set out for them as young children. Drawing on this surreptitious understanding of power, this book deploys a "theoretical arsenal of powerful concepts" (Anyon 2009: 4), an eclectic assemblage of analytical categories and gender, sexuality and queer theorisings which clearly helped to undermine hegemonic constructions of children's powerlessness, their lack of agency and the outdated notion of the early years of primary schooling as a gender/sexually free political arena. The 'theoretical arsenal' allows for the portrayal of micro and macro processes as the book connected teaching and children's discursive strategies within the broader context – addressing 'structural violence'—and the mediation of agency and structure. In connecting and deploying different theoretical strands underpinned by a productive understanding of power and deeply sensitive to broader social and cultural forces and to 'structural violence', the book provides a fuller picture of gender and childhood sexuality in the early years of primary schooling. By addressing gender power relations, hegemonic masculinity, discourses and practices of childhood sexuality across race, class, cultural contexts, the book generates particularly useful insights that empirically defy the putative limits of gender and sexual innocence.

Situating teachers and children within the wider social context in South Africa and along the fault lines of major structural inequalities, the book draws attention to dominant and contextually rich experiences in the negotiation of gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling. Through the voices and actions of teachers and children the book captures the complexity, contradictions and contextual specificities as it argues against misleading conceptualisations of boys and girls and the critical relevance of addressing the early years of primary schools as key sites for the production of gender and sexuality.

In attending closely to everyday mundane and surprising critical events (Das 1995) across the schools, the book brings attention to the micro mediation of power and the discursive ties that bind and unbind teachers and children. The ties that bind have universal appeal based on common sense, categorical thinking. They function to produce a version of boys and girls as biologically fixed, developmentally immature and dupes of sex-role socialisation. Notwithstanding context, whether teachers were located at *Umhlatuzana, KwaDabeka, Umbumbulu* or *Westridge,* the dominant narrative conceptualised children as innocent, weak, passive, vulnerable

and requiring motherly care. These meanings, as the book has shown, are rarely unequivocal. Teaching discourses whilst powerful and dominant have been shown to be flawed, contradictory, and misleading. Moreover, they produce a version of gender and children as innate with men and boys as powerful and women and girls as the subordinate term.

Against the backdrop of striking structural inequalities, the book draws attention to contextual specificities in teaching discourses pointing to the inextricable link with race, class, sexuality, age and inequalities underwritten by the legacies of apartheid and continuing effects of unemployment and structural violence. Contradicting earlier constructions of innocence and departing from idealised notions of children as asexual and degendered, the specific teaching discourses are grounded in race, class, gender and sexuality. They contradict universal patterns based on childhood innocence, without capabilities in enacting, performing and mediating sexuality. In doing so, and by paying attention to race, class, culture the book shows how teachers embed the experience of gender and sexuality within larger social contexts in which they operate as they are operated upon. The book provides rich evidence for and testimony of the salience and intimacy of the links between teachers' conceptualisations of boys, girls and the larger social forces without insulating approaches and actions from the broader considerations of class, race, culture, sexuality and gender.

Challenging the normative constructions of childhood, the book argues that boys and girls in the early years of primary schooling are active in making meaning of gender and sexuality. They contest, appropriate, accommodate and challenge each other often through the gender binary bringing into serious question the idealised nature of childhood. A compelling finding is the ways in which boys struggle to achieve masculine hegemonic success, often at the expense of other boys and girls, where the feminine is derogated and inferior. By focusing on the ways in which sexuality is played out, the book shows different heterosexual mechanisms through which boys and girls come together in school as they work in the service of the heterosexual matrix. Boys and girls negotiated gender and sexuality through play, through violence and through mundane everyday playground and classroom dynamics under the gaze of adult notions of innocence. Even at age six, seven, eight and nine years old, boys and girls have already embarked upon the lifelong gender and sexual project. The early years of primary schooling are critical in defining and amplifying pleasure through heterosexual games whilst deeply rooted in gender power inequalities and the persistence of girls as subordinate and the feminine as lesser, as other, and inferior. Boys and girls actively participated in gender and sexual cultures as they breach, negotiate and transgress dominant teaching discourses. Schools provide the space for boys and girls to amplify, display, share and negotiate their complex gendered and sexual selves through various heterosexualising processes including kissing, boyfriends and girlfriends, love letters, marriage as well as expanded through variety of heterosexual games (Bhana 2016; Renold 2005). Instead of passivity, docility and innocence as idealised, the book provides rich contextual evidence of agency, expressions of power by both boys and girls but structured by gender relation of inequalities as both boys and girls regulate,

constrain and police themselves and each other within a broader social and cultural context where women and girls are squeezed of agency.

Gender violence, sexual harassment and the overarching subordination of girls—albeit with contestation—remain a great cause of concern that requires attention to a complex set of interactions within and across schools, gender normative patterns of regulation and simultaneous attention to structural violence. Violence takes different forms and includes name-calling, homophobia, as well as the compelling nature of physical violence enacted by boys and girls at *KwaDabeka* amidst structural inequalities. Boys and girls in this context respond and resist—they also hide away from the violence at school, especially those regarded as *yimvus* with gentler forms of masculinity. As Parkes (2015: 197) suggests, "violence can be a coinage, a form of capital, a means to an end. Those living in poverty often live with poverty and violence simultaneously."

Thus instead of childhood constructed as a 'time of innocence', the book draws attention to an understanding of childhood beyond the myth of "buttercups and bunny-rabbits" that is closer to Hatch's (1995) conceptualisation of childhood:

> There is no permanent and essential nature of childhood. The idea of childhood is defined differently in every culture, in every time period, in every political climate, in every economic era, in every social context. Our everyday assumption that the childhood that we 'know' is and always has been the definition of childhood turns out to be false (Hatch 1995:118).

The next section provides a brief account of some of the key findings from the study that expand upon the central claims made regarding the paradoxical ways in which gender and sexuality are produced and negotiated by teachers and children in early primary school settings. In concluding the book, alternative possibilities that require refocusing on boys, girls, sexuality and the primary school are suggested. Findings from this study suggest that it is important to address teaching discourses in order to unsettle the false links and the discredited explanatory frameworks that deny children's agency and between children and sexual and gender innocence. These frameworks lack attention to power and gender equality. Like Renold (2005) developing a progressive gender reform agenda in the early years of primary schooling will need to 'start where children are at' requiring major disruptions of dominant ideologies of children and childhood to reflect more fully the actual realities, suffering, structural violence, struggles, the jockeying for power in children's everyday gender and sexual cultures at school including the pleasurable ways in which sexuality and gender are lived out within heteronormative constraints.

Some Key Findings: Teachers, Boys, Girls and Sexuality

This book focuses on teaching and children's discourses that cut across schools whilst also addressing specific constructions of gender and sexuality in race and class specific contexts. The term 'momentary children's discourses' was used to

explain the rapidly shifting, elusive and episodic moments of power through which children constructed their identities. As explained in Chap. 1, the term discourse brings together the ideas of knowledge, power and identity. Discourses construct particular ways of being as normal and right. These discourses put pressure on us to adopt particular identities. For instance, the particular meanings given to social categories like boy and girl have an implicit sense of what is normal and right (MacNaughton 2000). This sense of what is normal is socially constituted and produced in discourse. Teaching discourses attempted to fix boys and girls as opposites and unequal, naturalised by biological thinking, developmental appropriate practice, childhood innocence, sex-role socialisation. Simply, this meant that teachers constructed their roles as powerful over children with teachers providing care and support whilst endorsing masculine hegemony and making invisible asymmetrical relations of power. Whilst teaching discourses were dominant, they were also specific to locales and threatened dominant discourses universalising and homogenising children as gender innocent and sexually innocent. Specific discourses allow a variety of ways of positioning a person and also permit consideration of the variables such as race, class and ethnicity on identity.

Teaching Discourses

Dominant Discourses: Children Are Children: Gender Doesn't Matter?

The book identifies several interlocking and intersecting teaching discourses which could be understood as a relentless common-sense assault on children's lived experiences which restricted an understanding of children as invested in and able to protest, challenge and make meaning of gender and sexuality. Dominant teaching discourses construct the early years of primary schooling as a gender [sexually]-free political arena. Cannella (1997: 44) comments on the common sense assumption of childhood that has, "disempowered younger human beings by creating them as incompetent and dependent on adults for care, knowledge and even bodily control. The discourses of childhood have fostered regulation of a particular group of human beings by another group (described as adults) and generate multiple sites of power for those adults."

Whilst this book explains how boys and girls are not simply dupes of adult power, the dominant teaching discourses identified serve to reproduce the idea that children cannot act, feel, think or live out gender and sexuality at the ages of six, seven, eight or nine years old. This does indeed work to generate multiple sites of power for teachers-adults but worse, it allows for the proliferation of unequal relations of power where girls are subordinated. The conventional teaching discourses which extend and naturalise an assumption that 'boys will be boys and 'girls will be girls' prevents us from understanding the complexity of childhood

sexuality and gender power relations. As the book has argued, these dominant discourses open up the paradoxical space between childhood as time of gender and sexual innocence and the vital important of addressing boys and girls active construction of identity in the early years of primary schooling.

Specific Teaching Discourses: Recognising Race, Gender, Class and Culture

Teaching discourses, as the book shows, cannot be insulated from the broader social and cultural processes. Race, class, gender, sexuality, and age are inextricably enmeshed within discourse. This leads to further consideration of the political significance of addressing boys and girls within complex social and cultural networks. It is impossible to understand the makings of gender and sexuality without giving due consideration to contextual issues such as race and class. A central concern raised by teachers beyond children and gender and sexually innocent, was the specific conditions through which masculinities and femininities are positioned. A range of femininities and masculinities were identified within race and class specific contexts. The identification of a range of masculinities and femininities across the school sites suggests the fallibility of essentialist arguments and the shortcoming of gender generalisation and childhood innocence. The specific discourses brought attention to culture, race, and capital accumulation around sporty and mathematically successful boys and the horror of violence, structural inequalities and corporal punishment. The theoretical framing in this book allowed for an understanding of power that is far from static. Power is made and remade in different contexts and different times and it can be made differently. Contradictions, contestations and contextual specificity all sit alongside dominant understandings of children.

The contradictions make it possible to unlock the spaces for the exercise of power relations that are less toxic and predisposed towards gender equality. Chap. 5 for example identified some discourses that seem to hold potential for beginning the work towards gender equality in rural contexts. Schools are complicit in the construction and regulation of gender identities, but they are also sites where questions are raised and fresh thinking can be stimulated. Teachers can and do work in the interests of gender equality despite the contradiction. Alternative gender-friendly discourses do circulate. Teachers can position these discourses and allow them to circulate as power positions. The important point here is that teachers do have potential to stimulate fresh thinking about change and changing practices. Within the discourse that claims gender does not matter, there are moments through which teachers can threaten dominant discourses. Such a pedagogical practice involves creating spaces for children to discuss gender issues in their classrooms. The research has shown that teachers are willing to participate in these kinds of

discussions and, even in contradiction, are prepared to interrogate the limits of existing stereotypes.

On the basis of the research conducted in this study, there is need for dual attention to common universalising discourses about childhood which have global appeal (Robinson 2013) and a commitment to engaging with analytic insights that unravel the dynamics of race, class gender, age sexuality as they relate to theorising about teachers, boys and girls in the early years of primary schooling across heterogeneous settings. This study does point to the need to stimulate fresh discussion with teachers around gender and sexuality. In terms of thinking about a progressive gender reform agenda these findings with teachers indicate the importance of recognising the common-sense homogenising explanatory frameworks which are in contradiction to children's lived realities as well as the specific discourses in context of complex gender relations requiring attention to the dynamic interaction of race, class, culture, age and sexuality.

Momentary Children's Discourses

The study has drawn attention to the complex ways through which gender and sexual identities are forged in early schooling contexts. It shows that children are agentic and powerful, and in doing so they challenge earlier teaching discourses that construct them in a contrary light. Foregrounding power relations at the micro level, the book has shown how gender power relations are made, the investments in sexuality, the battle to position and align to dominant positions, the way they are struggled over and the impact they have on our identities and actions (Kenway and Willis 1997). The embeddedness of masculinity and femininity in the negotiation of heterosexual identities is a key feature of early primary schooling. In considering children's momentary discourses, I have actively challenged the assumptions that children are blank sheets without the ability to make sense and act upon their social (both gendered and sexual) world. Children's lived experiences suggest that biologically innate and essentialist accounts of gender are themselves constructions that can be questioned.

I have interrupted childhood innocence and the teaching discourses that produce and regulate children's gendered and sexual worlds. Foregrounding the subjective (gendered and sexual) worlds of children, I have pushed the idea that children are actively able to appropriate, produce and reproduce discourses on gender and sexuality in complex ways. The book drew attention to a range of sexualising practices including kissing, love letters and the pervasive ways in which games were heterosexualised. While producing and challenging dominant definitions, children also appropriate common sense understandings of gender through heteronormative constraints. Children are active agents and engaged with heterosexual norms, finding pleasure in it but embedded within dominant conceptions of male power. Nonetheless, the book has drawn attention to 'gender benders' and whilst their actions and approaches drew from dominant notions of heterosexuality,

they were able to make sense of non-normative forms of sexuality in ways that suggest the possibilities of active meaning makers. The presumption of childhood innocence fails to capture children as social actors with an active investment in gender and sexuality.

As a consequence of these findings, the book undermines the explanatory frameworks that seek to make children a minor concern in issues about gender and sexuality. The formulation of children in the early years of primary school in this way reveals its flawed assumptions and flawed theorisings about how boys and girls view themselves, how they enact and experience the sexual and gendered worlds at schools. If the early years of primary schooling are to ensure that gender equality is addressed, an understanding of boys and girls requires massive redefinition. If boys and girls are presumed to be innocent dupes of power, products of nature and sex-role socialisation and waiting for development, then children's subjectivity will be silenced, hidden and rendered invisible. In light of the dominant discourse, boys and girls can only be legitimate if they live up to the markers set out for them according to the "boys will be boys" and "girls will be girls" dogma where boys' power is rendered legitimate and inequalities between the genders are naturalised. Conversely, those who fail to get their gender right and fail to adhere to childhood sexual innocence are problematic. Refocusing our ideologies about gender and sexuality in early childhood in ways that are faithful to the actual happenings amongst and between boys and girls, might go some way towards addressing the profound paradox through which children are expected to live out their gendered and sexual selves. Recognising their active participation in gendered and sexual cultures could be the way in which harmful gendered practices can be stopped.

In the book I have used hegemonic masculinity as a useful tool to articulate how boys struggle to accomplish particular patterns of conduct and how understanding masculinity is a key to the production of gender relations. Constructing hegemonic masculinity is a difficult process. Alternative forms of masculinities do exist but always within patterns of hierarchies and exclusion. Masculinity and femininity are not homogenous experiences. Girls and boys exercise power but always according to the specific conditions that prevail. It is important to address the specificities of the gendered experience. This includes understanding why exercising power in some contexts is minimised through the sheer threat of violence and actual violence. However, even in these conditions it is important to understand that power is not possessed but is fluid and runs through different relations. Hegemonic masculinity must be understood as a struggle to align to positions that are seen as ideal and must be constantly striven for. In the struggle to align to hegemonic masculinity, both boys and girls are hurt. Dominant discourses that implicitly subscribe to and endorse hegemonic versions of masculinity are thus complicit in the production of gender inequalities. The findings suggest why it is so important to understand junior masculinities and the quest for domination, which has already begun right at the start of schooling.

Identities are not simply (re)produced by their age but also by their race, gender, class and sexuality. These amalgamate to produce specific versions of children's identity. I argued that children actively contest, challenge and contribute to the

dominant definitions of gender and sexuality. Social conflict is an inevitable part of the children's world. They battle with each other, they bicker, they fight, they scream and shout at each other, they laugh and they tease, they play and they can and do play together, they seek pleasurable and fun-loving moments, and both boys and girls do exercise power, but within limits. They also hit, kick, slap, punch, hurt and make each other cry. Such findings are valuable for a gender transformative agenda. Boys and girls use every opportunity to shore up power inside the classroom, in line-up, outside the classroom during the break, in groups and during play. An agenda that takes heed of these multiple arenas for power plays based on children's own experiences might bring teachers and children into closer proximity about the realities of every day gender and sexuality at school.

The shift from social conflict to violence is an important finding and three chapters of the book (Chaps. 6, 7 and 8) are devoted to an understanding of violence in/through hegemonic *tsotsi* masculinity at *KwaDabeka School*. The school provides the specific context of violent relations through which children's cultural dynamics are (re)produced. I tried to capture the conflicts against the backdrop of social realities; of children living in poverty and how, in the fight to survive, violence is seen as the appropriate response. Here the mimicry of physical violence thus provides the means through which social identities are produced. These are part of the realities within South Africa. The shift to violence occurs against the backdrop of major structural inequalities and the legacy of apartheid that fuels violent gender relations. It is part of the pathos of South African history that race and class overlap so powerfully. This is historical and involves questions of huge inequalities that created a divide in educational experiences for all in this country. The use of structural violence and the close-focused attention to the actual lives and identities of boys and girls at *KwaDabeka School* confirms that violence does not emanate from poverty in an instrumental way. The everyday forms of violence, including the use of corporal punishment at the school, takes places against major structural inequalities where race and class connections mean that the African poor remain most vulnerable to violence both as perpetrators and victims. It follows from this study that the early years of primary schooling are not a nurturing, gender- and sexual-free political arena that reflects natural distinctions, but is one of the places where gender and sexuality is produced, and where violence is engendered.

The book helps to develop and broaden our understanding of children as protesting social agents under various social conditions through which they shape, as they are shaped by, power. In this sense attention has been drawn to the challenge in thinking about how to start early in the efforts to refocus our attention to children as they themselves have indicated in this book. Particularly, I have drawn attention to the need to understand the dominant constructions of masculinity in the experiences of primary schooling. Additionally, the construction of masculinity and femininity takes place within the context of wider structures that create the conditions for power relations.

Start Early: Sexuality and Gender at Six to Nine in Schools

In this book I have made a compelling case for understanding gender and childhood sexuality in the early years of primary schooling, unbound from discourses of children as gender innocent and sexually innocent. The uncritical appropriation of boys and girls as essentialised biological beings and innocent cannot withstand the evidence provided. As Yon (1999: 6) notes in ending the monolithic account of childhood innocence:

> Rather than see these categories as neutral of innocent and somehow guaranteed by nature, the end of innocence asks us to pay attention to how they are socially produced and discursively sustained.

Based on what teachers and children have revealed about gender and sexuality, this book has attempted to provide political impetus for working with boys and girls in the early years of primary schooling by attending not only to common discourses but also to race, gender, class and sexuality in the analysis of teachers and children. The book ends with calls for starting early in addressing children's and teachers' knowledge bases by advocating a refocus, another look at childhood beyond sexual innocence, beyond gender binaries, situating race, class, age and sexuality in their "full complexity in terms that are neither innocent nor guaranteed by nature" (Martino and Rezai-Rashti 2012: 246). The data highlights the need for beginning with where teachers and children are at in any attempt designed to refocus on Life Skills Orientation. Without taking heed of teachers' and children's own versions of gender, sexuality and childhood there remains little hope of ensuring that Life Skills Orientation engages with what is relevant in this sector of schooling.

In South Africa Life Skills Orientation in grades 1 and 2, as indicated by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), comprises Beginning Knowledge, Personal and Social Well-being, Creative Arts and Physical Education (Department of Basic Education 2011: 13). Life Skills Orientation is designed to ensure that children starting school have knowledge of personal health and safety, as well as social relationships—including a focus on abuse, child safety and violence. It integrates gender, inequality, and social and personal development, although the words sex and sexuality are absent (Bhana 2015). It is an important place where possibilities exist and carries a formal authority in South African schools for refocusing on what matters. Such interventions—including the need to address children as young as five on matters of gender and sexuality—are supported by UNESCO (2009). However, if Life Skills Orientation departs from children's own struggles as they negotiate their gendered and sexual selves, the value of Life Skills Orientation in the work towards a progressive gender reform agenda will be short changed. If boys and girls receive messages that they are innocent concerning gender and sexuality, that boys and girls should fit into common sense understandings of gender, that their tender age precludes discussion of matters that they have already engaged in, then Life Skills Orientation will fail to meet its goal in creating and developing personal, health and social relationships based on fairness.

How can we begin the work towards gender equality in the face of hard truths? This is a difficult and hydra-headed question. Gender patterns are not lightly changed. Heterosexual normativity remains profound. Culture, whilst dynamic, shapes—and people shape it with negative effects on gender relations. This study has shown how gender and sexuality are woven through so many areas and form a web of discourses that make change difficult. Potentials do exist. Gender and sexuality are never fixed but dynamic and contested, changing and open to change. Children are not blank canvases on which gender patterns are stamped. Children, like teachers, make and remake meanings that challenge and maintain gender relations. Thus, if gender relations in South African education are going to be improved, which is the intention and thrust of current policy, it has to be negotiated in the classroom. If it has to be negotiated in the classroom, teachers have to begin to be self-conscious gendered actors. This includes offering boys and girls a space in schooling that does not necessarily lock them into misogynist and violent subject positions. Teachers are key to unlocking some of these spaces, despite the restrictive teaching discourses which position boys and girls in familiar ways. They have to be made aware of their power and location within the school. Understanding the micro-politics of power will enable teachers to see how their classrooms are constant battlegrounds for gender power, how subjects struggle for position within the gendering and heterosexualised discourses, which are constructed as the ideal, and how power always shifts, rendering one powerless at one moment and powerful at the next. Starting early to address gender and sexuality in the early years of primary schooling is critical in ways that refocus the current impasse (Robinson 2013).

An understanding of children as social actors with investments in gender and sexuality reveals the need for a major shift in teacher thinking. As Renold (2005: 169) states:

> … it will involve some brave and radical disruptions in what we think children should or shouldn't know, be or do to fully reflect the pleasures, pressures and pains of children's own gender and sexual cultures.

A preliminary strategy might be to reconfigure knowledge power relations and out-dated explanatory frameworks that make it difficult for teacher to see the active construction of identity. Like MacNaughton (2000: 235), I do not create a deficit view of teachers but at "every twist and turn" conventional frameworks mitigate against gender equality. These frameworks are intimately connected to a regime of truth about the developing child. If children's agency is to be legitimated in primary schools, then a major reconstruction is required in all sectors of higher and university teacher education programmes and critical reflection of how dominant discourses have circulated about the child. MacNaughton (2000: 235) argues that if these discourses are to be reformed with feminist underpinnings then progressive forms of theorisings have to take place in relation to teachers' interpretation of the child and childhood, teaching strategies and organisation of the classroom, academia and institutions of higher education, pedagogies and must include families.

Teacher education programmes in South Africa need to be interrogated for how the child is interpreted as well as ensuring that theorisings with feminist/queer intent are addressed. In service and pre-service programmes dedicated to refocusing and legitimating sexuality in a phase and stage of schooling is required as is attention to heteronormative constraints which bring boys and girls together but is also critical in separating boys from girls and key to the pervasive forms of inequalities, sexually harassing cultures and violence reported in this book.

Teachers can and do work against patriarchy in contradictory ways. But creating gender equality with young children is more difficult than simply re-organising classrooms. It is more complex than modelling and presenting non-stereotypical examples, as Mrs K and Mrs J have attempted with cleaning and presenting gender-friendly images (See Chap. 5). The attempts, though, to challenge gender boundaries are crucial to the development of alternative understandings of gender. Re-organising circle formation, challenging sexist comments in the classroom, re-organising cleaning, providing alternative versions of gender can interrupt the dominant gender definitions, but they can never be simple drive-through initiatives. There are no technical solutions to these problems. The teachers in this study recognise this. They need to understand why pleasure and fun must be rehabilitated in their classrooms, so that boys and girls are provided with the context through which they can constantly live as pleasurable human beings in constant battle with each other and through which newer discourses are constantly being formed and reformed.

Sexuality needs to be included that can deal with the everyday realities of boys' and girls' early experiences. This could provide a way of addressing damaging practices of misogyny and the compulsory nature of heterosexuality and open the discussions and reflections on unequal power relations. These spaces need to be opened so that boys and girls can coalesce and resist gendered messages. Through such an understanding, teachers can use their pedagogic power to assess the extent to which particular practices can free up and open spaces for dialogue. Saying 'sex' when children start school at seven might be a small point, but a revolutionary one, considering that the word sex is often avoided and taboo as South African research illustrates (Bhana 2016).

Notwithstanding educational interventions to refocus on gender and sexuality in the primary school, a new version of childhood and sexuality is required beyond schools. As Allen (2005: 170) notes:

> Transforming social perceptions of sexuality is beyond the capabilities of any sexuality education programme and instead requires a sea change in public attitudes. Schools might begin to ignite this change by creating an approach to young people's sexuality in their curricula and through their treatment of students that is sex-positive rather than sex-negative. This entails constructing sexuality and sexual activity as something that is positive rather than only a problem, and young people's experience of these things as valued and accepted elements of their identities.

Against dominant societal concerns about childhood innocence, this kind of transformation is particularly difficult when it concerns children as young as seven. In South Africa, as it is reported in many western contexts, the notion of childhood

sexual innocence remains prominent (Robinson 2013; Kane 2013). However, against the backdrop of major health and social problems including teenage pregnancy, HIV and the overarching democratic Constitution—which protects sexual and reproductive rights of all including children—opportunities do exist to transform what currently precludes an open discussion of sex and sexuality where it concerns young children (Ollis 2014). Families are also key institutions. Children come to school knowing that they are girls and boys with heteronormative underpinnings (Blaise 2005), although they are continually learning the patterns of conduct that are required of them to be considered boys and girls. It is inside families that much learning about gender and sexuality starts. It is also a place where many boys and girls see men's violence against women and girls.

Helping children to become more conscious and reflective about violence and helping with providing alternative forms of resolving conflicts, demand that teachers have to be made aware about these issues. Gender equality must be made an important goal to work towards and should be part of a compulsory re-education plan for all teachers in early schooling. There is an urgent need in South Africa to develop an education system which will work to free females and males and provide them with the spaces to be more fully human in an environment which is safe and challenging where they are encouraged to take some risks with their gender in order to move beyond the negative constraints that gender can impose (MacNaughton 2000). Like Kenway (1996: 447), we in South Africa "want boys and men to change so that they can cause less trouble for girls and women and themselves, so that the sexes can live together alongside each other in a safe, secure, stable, respectful, harmonious way and in relationships of mutual life enhancing respect".

As far as structural inequalities go, South Africa is trying to address the wider structural anomalies. The long-term goals are to reduce unemployment, poverty and general economic hardships (National Development Plan [NDP] 2012). But change is not easy and does not occur with dramatic speed. The NDP is a government plan for South Africa to reduce poverty and inequality by 2030. Despite South Africa's democratic success, the NDP (2012: 1) notes:

> … too many people are trapped in poverty and we remain a highly unequal society. Too few South Africans work, the quality of school education for the majority is of poor quality and our state lacks capacity in critical areas. Despite significant progress, our country remains divided, with opportunity still shaped by the legacy of apartheid. In particular, young people and women are denied the opportunities to lead the lives that they desire. Our Constitution obliges all of us to tackle these challenges … we need to do more to improve our future …. There is a burning need for faster progress, more action and better implementation … . In particular, young people deserve better educational and economic opportunities, and focused efforts are required to eliminate gender inequality. Promoting gender equality and greater opportunities for young people are integrated themes that run throughout this plan.

This book has highlighted the significance of understanding very young children's use of violence within highly charged gendered narratives and against the backdrop of suffering, structural inequalities and poverty. I drew out the complex

relationship between poverty and violence which requires attention to attending to the ending of gender violence in schools including the effective monitoring and policing of teachers' complicity in corporal punishment against educational policy (Department of Education 1996) as well addressing the widespread forms of structural violence. As the NDP plan above suggests, this work has begun and is far from over. Dual attention to school-based interventions alongside the ending of racial inequalities and economic misery are required. As Parkes (2015: 205) suggests

> … we need to address the links between gender violence and economic disadvantage; and we need to focus on masculinity, and the ways in which patriarchy perpetuates violence against young people (as in teacher-pupil violence) and by young people (as in the case of young men enacting violent masculinities as a forms of resistance to their marginalisation). The educational challenge is slowly, painstakingly to support young people's quests to re-stitch the violated fragments, weaving the threads in ways that learn from but try not to repeat past inequities and violations, to struggle towards safer futures.

Starting early to eliminate gender inequalities and violence in the early years of primary schooling will benefit boys and girls as they begin to understand what it means to invest in particular forms of gender identities, masculinities and sexualities. As the NDP (2012: 23) hopes:

> Our future, make it work,
> South Africa belongs to all its peoples.
> We, the people, belong to one another.
> We live the rainbow.
> Our homes, neighbourhoods, villages, towns,
> and cities are safe and filled with laughter.
> Through our institutions, we order our lives.
> The faces of our children tell of the future we have crafted.

If teachers, policy makers, families, boys and girls can take seriously what this book has intended then we can hope, as the NDP does, that the faces of our children will tell of a different future that we have crafted together.

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