A Sociological Exploration of Men’s Experiences of Hegemonic Masculinity and its role in the 2016 #RUReferenceList at Rhodes University

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ABSTRACT

The intention of this thesis is to explore how 12 men students at Rhodes University experienced spaces and discourse of hegemonic masculinity on the university campus in their time as students prior to the #RUReferenceList, a movement that took place at Rhodes University as a call to end the scourge of sexual violence on campus. The #RUReferenceList raised certain issues and phenomena around hegemonic masculinist discourse and practices, from historical traditions of the university to the interference of sexist norms and values in relations of casual sex that negates the consent of women and contributes to patriarchal understandings of gender and power. This thesis foregrounds these issues as not necessarily causal to the #RUReferenceList but pivotal factors nonetheless in the culmination of the anti-rape protests on campus in 2016. The research goes on to address the #RUReferenceList itself, and how the movement tackled the hegemonic institutional culture of Rhodes University at the time. The research is qualitative in nature and employs Connell's theory of masculinities as its primary theoretical framework. Data generated in 2022 was collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted mainly through social media. The #RUReferenceList was perceived by some as persecution against the men of Rhodes University, and the research was undertaken to heed and examine the voices of a demographic that, while certainly not silenced by the movement, was in an unusual position of having been ideologically defenestrated, however temporarily. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to scholarship that centres this interesting and complex perspective .

Chapter One

Introduction to the Research

1.1 Context of the Thesis[1]

In the week of April 11 2016, Rhodes University woke up to posters placed outside the library with quotes and statements of various kinds, ranging from, "Are you sure you want to go through with this? You'll ruin his reputation", to "You're more likely to get expelled for plagiarism than for rape". This initiative was to raise awareness around the policies regarding sexual assault on campus, and how the Rhodes University management treated victims of sexual violence who came forward to report their assault. This was part of Chapter 2.12, a campaign that had begun at Stellenbosch University the previous night, in reference to Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution, of which Section 12 promotes "Freedom and Security of the Person". These posters were taken down twice, and that Sunday, the protests on the Rhodes University campus began (DISRUPT, 2016).

On April 17 2016, a list of eleven names was posted on the RU Queer Confessions, Questions and Crushes Facebook page. Though it was not explicitly stated what these names stood for, it was implied via knowledge of these same names having made the rounds through campus that these were the names of alleged rapists who were students at Rhodes University. Upon the publishing of these names, a number of students mobilised to go to the residences of the alleged perpetrators in order to elicit personal responses from them in the face of their accusations (*Activate Online*, 2016; DISRUPT, 2016).

Initial police presence did not deter the protestors, and a list of demands was given to the university management. In the wake of management's refusal to adhere to some of these demands, protesting students began to disrupt the academic programme as the Rhodes University Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sizwe Mabizela, was questioned about the apparent refusal of the university to stand with protestors (Interview with Mitchell Parker, 2022). Subsequent

[1] The particulars of the #RUReferenceList detailed here are drawn primarily from four sources - the "Contesting sexual violence policies in higher education: the case of Rhodes University", a journal article by Macleod *et al* (2018); articles written by *Activate Online*, Rhodes University's independent student newspaper, at the time of the protest; past coverage of the movement from the short film DISRUPT; and my 2022 interview with *Activate's* 2016 Chief Editor, Mitchell Parker.

police presence was armed, and students were met with rubber bullets and teargas while others were arrested. An interdict was then put in place to prohibit students from disrupting the academic programme and entering residences in protest. An interim task team of staff members was put together by the university management to address Rhodes University's responses to cases of sexual violence (*Activate Online*, 2016)

The Vice-Chancellor responded to the list of demands proposed by students, which included, but was not limited to, the following: that investigations should begin immediately; that students accused of rape should be removed from residences and suspended from class during investigations made by the university when a charge has been filed; that prosecutors within the university should recuse themselves should there be a conflict of interest regarding a case; that the university should not recognise societies and organisations within the university that do not have sexual assault policies; and that the task team formed to address the university's response to cases of sexual violence should include professionals outside of the university, members of the National Education, Health, and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU), and students. Furthermore, the task team should be elected by the student body; and the student body must receive a public apology from the Vice Chancellor and university management for the severe ways in which protestors were treated (*Activate Online*, 2016).

The Sexual Violence Task Team that was assembled was "open, public, and participatory…[thus] not only an information gathering and recommendation function, but also operated, in many respects, as a systemic intervention" (Macleod *et al*, 2018: 84) to the campus environment of rape culture. A paraphrased summary of the Task Team's responsibilities are as follows:

1. Recommend ways in which the testimonies of survivors/victims of sexual violence "can be heard in a safe, confidential, supportive space" (Sexual Violence Task Team, 2016: 111); and how people can be trained to facilitate these spaces;
2. Review the policies and procedures that relate to sexual offences committed at Rhodes University through "input from all stakeholders and interested parties through open invitation" (Sexual Violence Task Team, 2016: 111), and ensure that these policies and procedures prioritise the safety of complainant;

3. Put forward how education regarding sexual violence, rape culture, and hetero-patriarchal gendered norms can be part of the curriculum and extra-curricula of Rhodes University;
4. Consolidate the "systemic issues…that promote or undermine rape/sexual violence culture at Rhodes University" (Sexual Violence Task Team, 2016: 112), such as relations between staff and students, institutional and residence culture, the approach of management toward sexual assault, etc, and how these can be mitigated;
5. Scrutinise how Rhodes University engages with the Grahamstown community and facets of the nation at large, such as legislation and education regarding rape culture and sexual violence;
6. Propose how academic staff can become meaningfully involved and stand in solidarity with student anti-rape movements;
7. Propose how these recommendations can be monitored and evaluated.

(Sexual Violence Task Team, 2016: pp. 111 - 112)

Pivotal moments of the #RUReferenceList were captured by one of the university's media platforms, *Activate Online*. *Activate* also produced *DISRUPT* (2016), a short film narrating the period of demonstrations, and other projects were carried out - such as a die-in protest, a vigil, and a theatre production - in attempts to keep alive conversations around rape culture and sexual violence at the institution. Demonstrations of the #RUReferenceList also included students barricading access to campus, and naked protests (see *Section 2.4.2*) (Macleod *et al*, 2018).

Though protests comprised a diverse population of students pushing the movement forward in support - including men - it was indeed a majority of black women students that led the #RUReferenceList demonstrations[2] (Parker, 2022; Pilane, 2016, Mohane, 2016) reflecting the demographic that experiences the greatest number of incidents of sexual violence in South Africa. TEARS Foundation, a local non-profit against sexual violence, reports that Interpol has labelled South Africa as the rape capital of the world while existing crime statistics do not

[2] This was confirmed by Mitchell Parker, the Editor of *Activate* - a student newspaper on campus - whose colleagues - journalists and photojournalists alike - captured the week of protests.

report the true extent of how many citizens are affected by sexual violence (Maphanga, 2021). This affects not just women in a quest for justice against sexual violence, but men who, whether victims or not, are noticeably less present and are far less likely to speak about the violence they have experienced.

Following the publishing of the names of the alleged offenders was a spew of online activity that took conversations of rape culture into the virtual space. The hashtag #MenAreTrash was an especially controversial conversation that saw some communities defend masculinity, that called out issues of "toxic masculinity", and that engaged in debate with women over the appropriateness of what some communities felt was a generalisation, and a vitriolic one at that, of masculinity's role in the spread of sexual violence. Therein appeared what seemed a great dichotomy, where urgency was placed on the victim's voice, and there was either support of the victim, support of the #RUReferenceList, and support of the movement surrounding that; or a total opposition against it (Orth *et al*, 2020). This idea was further supported as legal action took place against four key leaders of the #RUReferenceList, and opposition was mirrored in the behaviour of university management subsequent to the protests that took place (Author's interview with Mitchell Parker, 2022).

The opposition that took place during the #RUReferenceList against demands made to address the severity of rape culture and toxic masculinity on the Rhodes University campus was witnessed most poignantly and violently in the police presence that took place and the arrests made on April 20th, 2016. The lack of state solidarity with victims of sexual assault, however, is not unique to the #RUReferenceList. Rather, as a microcosmic site of South Africa, how sexual violence is treated in the university space mirrors how it is treated in the society in which the university space exists. Gqola (2015) writes about how the state, if not outwardly and actively culpable in violence committed in South Africa, is at the very least complicit in its prevalence.

The higher education space in recent years, has stepped forth to call out the institutional violence enacted against them by the state on their campuses, with the likes of the 2015 movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall. These movements called for more than just a name change to the institution, and the passing of the promise of free education, but protested, therein, several experiences of struggle and violence. In particular,

these movements addressed:

1) the barring of higher education experienced by black South African students in particular (DISRUPT, 2016; Mpedi, 2023);
2) the struggle for curriculum transformation in which institutions of higher education strive for decolonisation - specifically, as Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) explains, the "end to sexism, patriarchy and racism; decommissioning of all offensive colonial/apartheid iconographies; [and] restoration of use of indigenous African languages…in universities" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018) - and addressing challenges faced by the country at large (which include the scourge of violence confronted by black bodies in South Africa) (Ngidi *et al*, 2016).

#RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall were, in the words of Rhodes University students, "the rejection of the colony", a space catering to the minority sect of the South African demographic and oppressing the needs of the majority black population (Shutting Down the Rainbow Nation, 2015). These movements foregrounded ideological struggles as anti-poor and decolonial protests challenging the capitalist mode of production and South Africa's lingering colonial history that silences and disenfranchises the masses (Ngidi *et al*, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). With regards to #FeesMustFall, the state ultimately responded to these nationwide movements with police brutality, and the lukewarm decision for a 0% increase in fees for the following year, addressing neither the demand for free education nor the outsourcing that takes place at universities that disempowers the support staff (Shutting Down the Rainbow Nation, 2015).

#RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall - precursors to the #RUReferenceList - are discussed here to place the #RUReferenceList into the context of the status quo of the nature of protest at institutions of higher education: peaceful mobilisation of students to bring issues of injustice to the attention of university management, and being met with indifference at best, and armed pushback at worst. By 2016, the Rhodes University student body had become accustomed to organising itself and challenging Rhodes University management with lists of demands to transform the landscape of the institution, from its curricula to its most vulnerable students. However, an important distinction made with the #RUReferenceList is that Rhodes University was one institution that had not experienced armed violence on campus during the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests (Disrupt, 2016). The #RUReferenceList was

different, witnessing teargas, rubber bullets, and police detention of protesting students. The state enacted violence and silencing against those demonstrating against it, the state's complicity thus apparent in the microcosmic space of the university campus as it is in wider South Africa - in solidarity with the perpetrator and in opposition to the victim. The state's show of brutality in this manner can only imply that the status quo, as Gqola (2015) suggests, of South African society is that of violence, and the spaces of violence on South Africa's university campuses must be interrogated - as the #RUReferenceList expressed - by its common people, no matter the opposition against it. In this thesis, I address certain conceptual issues raised by the #RUReferenceList and subsequent discourse deserving of critical exploration, such as the idea of "toxic masculinity", perceptions of women's bodies on the frontlines of protest, online activism and the counterpublic, and the ways in which men are initiated into and conceptualise particular expressions of masculinity at Rhodes University.

1.2 Purpose of the Research and Objectives

As a cis-gendered woman who was actively engaged in conversations around rape culture with other women, I felt, along with many other women, a general absence of the input, participation, and the concern of men. In the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList, I became interested in how men had experienced the movement - not only interested in their opinions, but how they had lived it. As the academic programme on campus resumed and students faced the potential for a "new normal", my interest gave way to the experience of masculinity on the Rhodes University campus as discussion regarding "toxic masculinity" continued, and only became more polarising.

Admittedly, at the beginning of my research, my assumption of the experience of masculinity at Rhodes University was that men on campus had fairly common beliefs regarding masculinity, and experienced discourse regarding masculinity, sexuality, and gender almost as a monolith. Despite my curiosity, the dearth of male participation and genuine support for the #RUReferenceList had not done much to completely dissuade me from the suspicion that most men were alike regarding these issues. Still, however, I knew, of course, that - as with anything else - there is nuance to masculinity, and I did not want to hold the men on campus to a damning picture of homogeneity. I wanted to understand and explore their

experiences of a movement that seemed to isolate what participants have presented to have certainly been a complex for men.

The #RUReferenceList was a momentous rupture in the ignorance, passivity, and complicity of Rhodes University as an institution and a student body, and I acknowledge that existing scholarship on the movement, on gender, and on sexual violence on university campuses in South Africa is aplenty. The research that I present in this thesis is an attempt to capture how men on campus made sense of the university's spaces and practices that had lent themselves to hegemony, and how they navigated the volatile social climate of a movement largely oriented toward the victimhood of women and the culpability of men.

The primary objective of this research, then, is to explore how men at Rhodes University experienced hegemonic masculinity and the 2016 #RUReferenceList - notwithstanding the diversity and complexity of masculinities that exist among the participants. The #RUReferenceList raised certain issues and highlighted phenomena related to hegemonic masculinity on campus that contributed toward rape culture within the institution. The #RUReferenceList sought to address these issues and combat these phenomena of hegemony. The sub-goals include:

1. Interrogating how hegemonic masculinities are inculcated and manifest on campus, such as the homosocialisation of hypersexed and aggressive masculinities, and the customs and discourse of "toxic masculinity" at Rhodes University;
2. And how, in protesting rape culture, the #RUReferenceList addressed hegemonic masculinity within the establishment.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

Beginning with Chapter Two, the thesis reviews literature relating to Connell's (1993) theory of masculinity, and attempts to contextualise these concepts in South Africa among local masculinities, hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity on South African campuses, and rape culture and contemporary movements against sexual violence in South Africa and in our online space. The literature review introduces the four notable concepts that form the theoretical starting point of the thesis and are used to analyse and discuss the findings of the research. These are, namely, compulsory heterosexuality, the coital or heterosexual imperative,

normative sexual scripts, and gender scrutiny, which will be discussed in greater detail throughout the literature review chapter.

The theory and methodology chapters follow - the former of which details the qualitative aspects of the research, and how the research employs hegemonic masculinity particularly as the primary theoretical framework, backed by basic tenets of gender constructionism as a secondary theoretical framing. The methodology chapter, Chapter Four, details the qualitative data collection process of semi-structured interviews and the sampling criteria of the participants. Chapter Five goes on to introduce the participants and their socialisation into hegemonic masculinity as children and young men. I wish to make it clear here that Chapter Five is not intended to act as a causal link between the participants' childhoods and early socialisation, and how they behaved as men on the Rhodes University campus and experienced hegemonic masculinity and the #RUReferenceList. Rather, Chapter Five serves to provide greater context to the participants and introduce the discussion of hegemonic masculinity and its homosociality that is analysed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Six, this homosociality is expounded upon, specifically as a means of initiation and an opportunity for modified moral orders in the expression of masculinity and men's sexuality. Chapter Seven then takes the concept of hegemonic masculinity and relates it to the idea of "toxic masculinity" - the hot button of a social climate challenging the privilege, dominance, and power of hegemonic masculinities at Rhodes University - in interrogating the traditions and institutional culture of the establishment through which "toxic masculinity" has been allowed to prevail on campus.

Finally, Chapter Eight addresses the #RUReferenceList and its role in raising awareness around not just sexual violence and rape culture, but hegemonic masculinity as a formidable demonstration of ideological dominance, institutional power, and cultural privilege embedded within communities of men across campus, and the institutional culture of Rhodes University.

The thesis then concludes with a discussion of the data analysis chapters as a whole, and the overall argument of the research.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Section 1. Establishing Masculinity Studies in South Africa

2.1.1 Introduction

The first section of the literature review will explore the conceptualisation of masculinity studies that gained popularity in the late 1980s with the work of Raewyn Connell, who popularised the term hegemonic masculinity. The literature review details how, in the South African context, racialised and ethnic hegemony has played an important role in hegemonic masculinities of different indigenous communities in the country.

While this literature review engages with Connell's typifications and definitions, this thesis does not shy away from contending with some of Connell's ideas - mainly, the theorist's definition and criteria of hegemony - based on the findings of the research discussed in the data analysis chapters.

2.1.2 Principles of African Masculinities

The intention of this chapter to investigate the historical processes that have informed how South African masculinities are framed and understood necessitates discussion around Mfecane's (2018) paper regarding some of the ways African masculinities can be theorised based on traditionally African concepts of personhood.

Mfecane (2018) argues that while the west supports theories of gender that conceptualises the man as little more than a configuration of norms and values, African scholars recognise that in many African communities, personhood possesses an immaterial aspect that exists outside of social norms and constructions (Mfecane, 2018: 2).

Mfecane (2018) gives an example of an instance of a man's violence against his wife, and how discourse around the issue in company he frequented and circles of the Xhosa people framed the violence as an act of sorcery - that the offender's soul had been overtaken by a

malevolent spirit. This is certainly a departure from common understandings that an outsider community may have regarding the incident (Mfecane, 2018: 2). Mfecane (2018) gives insight into the politics at play within the realm of the Western conceptualisations of gender: that the West has largely theorised gender as outside of oneself, as a series of interactions between the physical body and the physical world, and not necessarily as a reality within oneself. Furthermore, each individual is understood as just that - an individual ultimately acting from autonomy within social structures that can be accepted or rejected to achieve (whether this is understood consciously or unconsciously) the formation of their own world.

Mfecane (2018: 4) argues that this assumes that humans act in rational, calculated ways to pursue gender, and that, while social structures can impose gender norms and values upon us, it is through our actions to either support or undermine these structures - and subsequently, gender itself. While this may indeed be true in the West, the experience of gender for men in many African communities is that one does not act with such consideration and purpose for himself alone, in the social structures of this world alone. Rather, an African man meets with other men, with forces outside of his seen environment.

Mfecane (2018) uses instances of practices, communities, and beliefs spanning across the continent, from Kenya and Uganda, to Côte d'Ivoire, to South Africa. The three features he discusses are cohesive and interwoven principles, following on closely from one another.

The first feature of conceptualising personhood to consider in the theorising of masculinities in Africa that Mfecane raises for discussion is that man is made up of physical matter and an immaterial spirit, the latter which may work with the body or as a force outside of it (Mfecane, 2018). This "twin self" inhabits the physical body (sometimes this spirit is a man's ancestors; other times, an "other consciousness"), and, in some circles, is considered responsible for the more deviant, violent, or aggressive temperaments and actions within a man or a boy-child (Mfecane, 2018: 296).

The second feature involves seeing masculinity as, first and foremost, embedded in community: fundamentally relational, and inevitably performed in the context of one's social interactions with others (Mfecane, 2018). The aforementioned spirit or "other consciousness" cannot be the entirety of a man - a man's personhood is always in communication with his environment and others. The third and final feature that Mfecane (2018) discusses is that of personhood needing community, the contributions of others, and shared ritual in order to

manifest in a boy-child; certain communities across Africa find it imperative that the cultural societies to which they belong are intimately involved in naming the boy-child and initiating him into social life, and thus, into his personhood. The boy-child becomes a man, and in many traditions, identifies himself to others not solely by name or last name, but by clan name or place of birth (Mfecane 2014).

These features highlight the profoundly spiritual aspects of black African masculinity, and how, as Mfecane (2018) rightly argues, concepts such as "toxic masculinity" or studying "hegemonic masculinities" - terms and concepts that originated in the West - encounter challenge and pushback when placed in certain African contexts.

Within the liberal framework of the South African Constitution, the spiritual nature of these principles of manhood cannot justify behaviours that are viewed in law and policy as criminal for their infringement on the rights and dignity of others. This is where necessary discussion regarding hegemony over knowledge production on the part of the Global North warrants inquiry.

2.1.3 Interrogating Connell and Masculinity Studies

Morrell's 2019 article examines the hegemony of knowledge production in the West, and how, subsequently, concepts and perspectives from the Global South are often rather marginalised in comparison to the prominence and legitimacy of the West (Morrell, 2019). While Connell's theory of masculinity is my chosen framework, I do not necessarily and invariably agree with Connell on all counts, based on my research. I cannot argue that this is because this research is based on the Global South, but departure from certain arguments that Connell makes are certainly affected by research I conducted in the context of the Global South. As such, irrespective of my use of Connell's theory of masculinities as the primary theoretical framework, it is a framework that deserves interrogation in applying masculinity studies to contexts within the Global South.

The volume of work on masculinities developed in South Africa since the 1990s demands inquiry into whether the ideas and objectives of research being developed were originating within the Global South, or whether they were simply an imitation of scholarship already established in the West (Morrell, 2019). Connell (2007) does not shy from addressing how the masculinity studies of the Global South are on the margins of scholarship in the field as

whole. Furthermore, given that many prominent journals of masculinity are situated in the Global North, masculinity studies as conceptualised by the West may thus carry a degree of gatekeeping - however unintentional - regarding how easily concepts are received and accepted into the canon and ensuing discourse (Morrell, 2019).

However, I believe that masculinity studies have indeed been developed and recontextualised in South Africa since the 1997 Colloquium on Masculinities in Southern Africa. This was one of the country's earliest colloquiums on masculinity in the late 1990s that featured masculinity scholars from both the West and the Global South, which arguably demonstrates how masculinity need not be a discipline in which cultural contexts, and the concepts conceived or reconceptualised therein, are divorced from one another.

If the argument of masculinity scholars in the Global South is that terms and ideas conceived in the West are adopted into discourse in the Global South without critical evaluation regarding whether they are appropriate to the community, society, or ethnic community in question, this is indeed problematic. However, scholarship in the Global South that uses concepts and ideas of the West because they are already understood and accepted among the general public - within popular discourse and academia alike - and are malleable enough to refer to perspectives and experiences in the Global South without compromising local context, does not invariably mean that the scholarship is exogenous and thus illegitimate in the Global South (Morrell, 2019).

I argue that this is suggested by the growing number of South African journal articles since the end of apartheid that have been published in *Men and Masculinities*, a journal in the West; articles which entail a host of issues (such as conscription and white masculinity; gendered power relations in South African higher education; and hegemonic masculinity under the political rule of former president Jacob Zuma[3]) impacting the lives of South African men and how South African masculinities can be framed and examined.

To conclude, while I recognise that there is a valid argument to be made regarding the hegemonic position of the West over terminology and ideas that pervade discourse relating to masculinity studies, this is not an issue that I believe delegitimises the use of Connell's typologies of masculinity in the thesis (see *Sections 2.1.4* and *3.4*). In this thesis, I have departed from Connell's ideas in ways that do not accurately reflect the experiences of the

[3] See, respectively, Vincent, L. (2006), and and Morrell *et al* (2012).

participants and the subsequent analyses of the themes deduced from their testimonies, while crediting other ideas as useful and suitably phrased.

2.1.4 Understanding Hegemony and Complicity

The term 'hegemonic masculinity' was popularised by Connell, a foundational scholar of masculinity studies, as part of her gender order theory in her book, *Masculinities* (1993), and was revisited by the author in her 2005 edition of the book. Connell's ideas have not gone unchallenged, and she herself admits to the limitations of the concepts she presented in her groundbreaking 1993 publication. Still, I have chosen to foreground Connell's gender order theory of masculinity in my study because of its cornerstone impact on the scholarship of masculinity that has developed since.

Connell classified four masculinities; namely, hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalised. Using Connell as a starting point, then, in the context of social hierarchy, hegemony refers to the status and acceptance given to a community and its ideology that prevail as the standard and culturally legitimate experience over a society or group of people (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 838). For Connell, hegemonic masculinity is the embodiment of the legitimation of patriarchy, "which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 2005: 77). Regardless of how Connell's theorising around hegemonic masculinity has been challenged, this definition can stand as a reasonable starting point for the thesis's discussion on hegemonic masculinity - that, as it stands in this point of our discussion, the communities of hegemonic masculinities that exist in South Africa today support ideologies of gender that prioritise the economic, social, and political power of men over women (Wood and Jewkes, 2001; Bozzoli, 1983). This idea or definition is fleshed out in *Sections 2.1.5* and *2.1.6.*

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) go on to explain how hegemony prevails through action - it is not simply a set of expectations stuck to a label of 'being a man', but an assumption of norms and behaviours that *enact* the positioning of men over women - dominance "through culture, institutions, and persuasions" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). One imperative of Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity I wish to point out is that it is subject to cultural shifts. There is no one way of "doing hegemony" that persists throughout the ages; rather, an ideology deemed as hegemonic can prevail at any given time, changing from era to era

regardless of how a society regards progress or a lack thereof in popular social norms and values. In theory, all of Connell's typifications of masculinity must therefore exist at any given time, as fluid, shifting from one position into the next (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Jewkes *et al*, 2015)[4].

With hegemonic masculinity being generally attributed to white, middle-class, heterosexual Anglo-Saxon masculinity (according to Connell), we then have another important idea of Connell's that takes place in relation to hegemony: complicity. Complicit masculinity is, in essence, the phenomenon whereby, even when not necessarily inhabiting positions of dominance in culture and institutions, men "benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women" (Connell, 2005: 79). Complicit masculinity comes without the challenges of being seen as a direct proponent of the subordination of women, without, in turn, losing the gains of being part of the systematic oppression of women (Connell, 2005: 79; Masenya, 2019).

It is important to note that, often, communities of complicit masculinities regard themselves as victims of hegemonic masculinity while still striving for hegemonic ideals (Matthew *et al,* 2011). For Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), hegemonic masculinities delegitimise the masculinity of others, and garners perpetual support as certain norms and ideals of masculinity prevail. As such, the argument is made that complicit masculinity is birthed from environments of adversity that still hold up hegemonic masculinity as an idealised form of masculinity and its value systems as aspirational (Jewkes *et al*, 2015; Matthews *et al,* 2011). Complicity among men who grow up in communities of class disadvantage, racial or cultural conflict, or homophobia and transphobia is often a means of socially and psychologically distancing themselves from a primarily marginalised or subordinate masculinity.

In South Africa - a part of the Global South and its complex history of being subordinate to Western ideology, a country of scores of cultures and eleven official languages - hegemonic masculinity strictly defined as the structural and ideological subordination of women takes on a far more nuanced nature. Having very briefly touched on the foundations of the scholarship of masculinity in the West through Connell's contributions, I turn to how this scholarship has been

[4] Greater attention will be given to hegemony and multiple masculinities as a theoretical framework in Chapter Three (see *Section 3.4)*.

shaped in the Global South through criticisms and evolving interpretations of Connell's original ideas.

Mfecane (2014) responds to the idea made by Segal (1993) that posits hegemonic masculinity as an expression of masculinity whose status comes from that which it is able to subordinate. Mfecane (2014) disagrees with this sentiment on the basis that, while African men do indeed subordinate women, they find it difficult to achieve personal and social status as a result of the stunting of development in Africa, measured by things like poverty, unemployment, and rampant violence in their communities. In a world in which success is ranked by and attained through capitalist success, patriarchy, and whiteness, black African youth find themselves in the predicament of supporting certain ideological structures that one might understand as hegemonic, while being subjugated by these very structures in the first place (Mfecane, 2014). Mfecane (2020) writes about the existence of "multiple masculinities" that exist in South Africa, and how therein lies the challenge of identifying what expression of masculinity is the expression of oppression in the country.

Though I do not entirely disagree with Mfecane, I argue for, firstly, the presence of a multitude of nuanced masculinities in South Africa, and secondly, the history and the legacy behind black masculinities in South Africa have allowed black South African masculinities to stand as hegemonic in their own right[5].

One can indeed make the following argument: that Connell's second typology of masculinity - complicity - addresses the aforementioned instance of the black African youth: complicity understood as assimilation and proximity to hegemony (Jewkes *et al*, 2015). If hegemonic masculinity is regarded as the ideal state, the "taken-for-granted norm…corresponding with institutional power" (Connell and Messerchmidt, 2005), rooted in whiteness, heterosexuality, and middle-class, behaviours of complicit masculinity are those performed by men who do not necessarily fit the ideal of the hegemonic man, yet uphold hegemonic attitudes. Men who lack the resources, ability, and opportunity to take up the status and regard of hegemonic masculinity might well be regarded as men engaging in complicity should they desire and pursue masculine hegemonic expressions and expectations (Jewkes *et al*, 2015; Matthews *et al* 2011). Thus, even in Mfecane's instance of a black African youth who cannot necessarily inhabit the hegemonic class, despite his subordination over women, moves

[5] See *Sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.5.*

through his community and the broader society of Western influence "without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance" (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 832). By "strong", note that the authors do not simply or necessarily mean violence or physical force, but potency or degree of ideological dominance.

However, one can also make the following counterargument: that there exist practices and ideas of masculinity within black South African communities that have little to do with Western or white Anglo-Saxon ideals of masculinity. *Section 2.1.5* explains how political leadership in post-apartheid South Africa came to reflect and instil in South African men values of masculinity in the South African context (Morrell *et al,* 2012; Jewkes *et al,* 2012). To position black South African men totally within the context of white masculinist ideals is to assume that black masculinity holds none of its own contemporary African masculinist ideals - as though the desire for power over women, upward class mobility, social capital, and ideological dominance exist totally and exclusively within the realm of whiteness. One has to inquire as to whether it is not possible for black African men to possess a legitimate hegemony of their own making, and on their own accord - whether black African youth are always inevitably aspiring toward the gains of white masculinity, or whether black South African masculinities have created, through the legacy of apartheid and in the post-apartheid era, hegemonies of their own (Morrell *et al,* 2012; Jewkes *et al,* 2012). Within the context of South Africa, then, black South African masculinities can be hegemonic in their own right.

*2.1.5 The Seeds of Ethnic Divisions: A Brief Account of South Africa's Historical Black Divid*e

In their publication on hegemonic masculinities in contemporary South Africa, Morrell *et al* (2012) discuss how these masculinities have their origins in the country's colonial and segregated past, starting with violent struggles over land that displaced many indigenous people[6]. Once the apartheid government took hold in 1948, it implemented various policies that saw indigenous communities further classified from one another, encouraging distinctions

[6] Although scholars have dated the history of South African masculinities to centuries back, my discussion here only dates as far back as the 1950 Group Areas Act that catalysed the institutionalisation and "tribalisation" of races and indigenous communities under the apartheid government. This stands as a reasonable starting point for discussion over how the ideological division between South Africa's racial and indigenous communities was fostered by material and legislative-led divisions enforced by local (as opposed to British colonial) forces.

between indigenous communities (Morrell *et al*, 2012). This took place amongst black Africans who had been funnelled into an exploitative system of migrant labour in the gold and mining industry while white Africans, particularly Afrikaners, experienced political and economic power. Bozzoli (1983) expressed the phenomenon as a "patchwork quilt of patriarchies", in referring to the separation between races as well as indigenous communities that had been taking place since the abolishment of slavery in South Africa, in which "poverty and wealth were in broad terms patterned by race, [featuring] traditional[7] authority in rural areas exercised by chiefs as well as [Afrikaner nationalist] patriarchal authority exercised through extended and nuclear families in urban areas" (Morrell *et al*, 2012: 15).

In 1950, the apartheid government passed the Group Areas Act stipulating where different demographics of the country's population could work, reside, and own property. Former colonialist forces in South Africa had already emphasised differences and deepened the ideological and physical divides between various ethnic groups in the country, and the apartheid government reinforced such differences and division through the Group Areas Act - and subsequently, the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act (Khunou, 2009). This legislation served to further alienate black South Africans from not just South Africa through the formation of bantustans, but to alienate black South Africans from one another and a solidarity and harmonious whole therein (Khunou, 2009; Masuku and Mlambo, 2023). With bantustans characterised by poverty and underdevelopment, divorced from economic activity, life in these areas became a matter of survival - dependence on what one knew, and subsequent mistrust toward that which was unfamiliar and lay beyond the confines of one's "territory" (Masuku and Mlambo, 2023: 132). These strained relations between South Africa's indigenous communities - made to recognise their differences in palpable, substantial ways - feed the remnants of ethnophobia and tribalism that South Africans still experience 30 years post-apartheid (Khunou, 2009; Masuku and Mlambo, 2023).

The 1950 Group Areas Act is the starting point of my discussion surrounding local masculinities because of its significance in how indigenous communities were made to internalise their differences. The "patchwork quilt of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983) historically maintained in South Africa over communities of women may have been tightly established by

[7] See *Section 3.3* for critical discussion regarding the use of the term "tradition/traditional" in the thesis.

the time the Group Areas Act was passed, stretching back to colonial times (Bozzoli, 1980; Khunou, 2009). Still, this particular legislation only served to fortify these indigenous patriarchies through the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951, the creation of the subsequent local leadership taken up in the Bantustans in the form of chiefs who exercised leadership over Bantustans as eventual sovereign states (Masuku and Mlambo, 2023). The loss of South African citizenship that inhabitants of these homelands experienced, especially exacerbated by the Bantu Homelands Citizens Act of 1970, further reinforced the separation between the indigenous communities of South Africa (Khunou, 2009). They were not one South African people, but Black populations divided by place and governance.

2.1.6 Contextualising South Africa: A History Behind Local Masculinities

In 1961, the African National Congress, an apartheid resistance organisation that was first formed in 1912, adopted greater militarism in its paramilitary wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, as a resistance strategy, mobilising especially black Africans in poor urban areas. This mobilisation was seen, thus, through violence and militant action in the sabotage of apartheid structures. Though once in protest of an oppressive government, the ANC has carried expressions of hegemonic masculinity since, and despite its inclusion of women from 1943, the organisation's use of violence and aggression created a legacy of potent and destructive protest culture, especially in these poor urban areas or townships (Morrell *et al*, 2012).

Connell (1993) defines a form of hegemonic masculinity as protest masculinity - a masculinity birthed from the working class that strives for ideals of ruling-class masculinity. Protest masculinity alongside the Afrikaaner nationalist government that set a precedent for white and idealised masculinity in South Africa also predicated on dedication to militarism. The fight to reproduce hegemony was not only rooted in ideologies endorsed by the country's prevailing social structures, but in literal combat that saw the white Afrikaaner community impose violence upon black African communities that fought back (Rueedi, 2015; Jewkes *et al*, 2015).

The apartheid government subjected South Africans to a framework of masculinity associated with dominance, control, and state-led violence against opposition. submission to the *volk*[8] was the highest priority of the white civilian, who was governed by strict,

[8] Afrikaans term for *nation.*

unwavering, and forceful principles. In contemporary South Africa, the Afrikaans man is often seen as an enduring symbol of nationalist, militant machismo (Falkof, 2016).

Termed WESSA, white English-speaking South Africans are defined as identity-in-opposition: neither black nor Afrikaans (Falkof, 2016). In this space of neither/nor, white English-speaking South Africans are often treated by the Afrikaans as a masculinity of absence. It is a masculinity regarded as non-compliant of hegemonic norms that inform hegemonic Afrikaans masculinity and gender norms, and thus, lacking the "common sense" sensibilities of the Afrikaans, the once hegemonic class[9] (Falkof, 2016).

Together with the tribalist and racially segregated cultures that emanated from policies like the Group Areas Act of 1950, and the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970, these divisions that saw white and black pitted against each other - as well as tensions between whites in English-Afrikaaner conflict, and tribalist tensions between black communities (Morrell *et al*, 2012; Masuku and Mlambo, 2023; Khunou, 2009) - created a multitude of patriarchies and hegemonic masculinities within South Africa's various communities. Morrell *et al* (2012) discuss the consequential oppression of women under the gendered and raced history of South Africa, even when the new dispensation of 1994 created policies that supported gender equality.

While the late former President Nelson Mandela introduced a masculinity that was far more egalitarian than his predecessors of the National Party, subsequent heads of state and political leaders reflected combative and black hegemonic attitudes birthed under the apartheid era. Former head of state Jacob Zuma marked a dramatic departure from the late Mandela in his lifestyle of polygamy and ideals of heterosexism that, as Jewkes *et al* (2012: 18) claim, was a "familiar masculinity in a social order that African women and men understand and own as [their own]". Furthermore, Zuma seemed not to cede to Mandela's order of new liberal, egalitarian democracy - or, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu called it on the advent thereof, the "Rainbow Nation". Instead, Zuma was often witnessed in animal skins for Zulu ceremonies and unapologetic about his sexual success with multiple women. Hunter (2011) argues that during Zuma's reign and even under that of Mbeki's, black South Africans had experienced

[9] The tensions between the Afrikaans and the white English-speaking communities of South African can, of course, be traced back in South African history to further than the late 17th century through division of conflict over land and resources. However, given that my literature review only discusses South African masculinities under apartheid rule - and from 1950, at that - I believe it is appropriate to limit this particular discussion to this particular context.

growing apathy since the promises of 1994 as they continued to endure economic hardship and exclusion under a predominantly white-owned economy.

This “racialised economy” (Hunter, 2011: 1105) meant that the majority of black South Africans were still subject to blue-collar work in industries in which white South Africans continued to enjoy gains that had been exclusive to them under apartheid. Furthermore, post-apartheid South Africa experienced a greater migration of black South Africans from the former outlier Bantustans to urban areas, these areas in turn experiencing greater population density but fewer opportunities for work. As such, black South Africans have bore the brunt of the rise in unemployment subsequent to the 2008 recession, and Zuma’s presence in the presidency reflected a nostalgia for certain traditional values of African masculinity - such as chieftainship and polygamy - that post-apartheid governance in 1994 seemed to trade in for cosmopolitan ideals of gender equality and western democracy (Hunter, 2011; Morrell *et al*, 2012).

Zuma’s embodiment of these values was supported by other political leaders, most notably former ANC Youth League leader Julius Malema, whose presence went further to exemplify wealth and popularity with the masses predicated on violence and entitlement “favouring land seizures, forced nationalisation, and attacks on white farmers” (Morrell *et al*, 2012: 18). Both Zuma and Malema were outspoken against gender equality during the former’s reign, hailing it as the antithesis to black male economic advancement. It is important to note that the ANC (to which both individuals belonged) was a militant resistance organisation before it became a political party whose responsibility it was to bring together all factions of South Africa under a single mandate. That mandate was brought forward by Mandela as one of nonviolent egalitarianism (Morrell, 2012), a contrast to the party’s former directive of brute force, sabotage, and black African traditions. Zuma and Malema reflected to the people times prior to a democracy that had not lived up to its promises of the post-apartheid agenda.

> You have mandated us to change South Africa from a country in which the majority lived with little hope to one in which they can live and work with dignity, with a sense of self-esteem and confidence in the future

were the words spoken at Mandela's 1994 inauguration by the late former president (*France24*, 2019). Between 2011 and 2015, the World Bank estimated, approximately 3 million people in South Africa fell below the poverty line, with only 2% of white households falling in this category (*France24*, 2019). Hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, as Morrell *et al* (2012) and Hunter (2011) surmised, can be seen as a consequence of a country that has yet to achieve economic equality amongst all its people, with black South Africans leaning on narratives on a time gone by in which they were before they were subject to extreme poverty and economic marginalisation within their own country, by their own government.

This "patchwork of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983) impacted gender relations across South Africa's communities, as black men sought power over women within the dominant white male narrative in the country (Wood and Jewkes, 2001). The legacy of Afrikaner nationalist masculinity subordinated and marginalised black masculinities, and in turn, as black men pursued power and legitimacy, black women were subordinated and women's issues largely marginalised by the men in their communities (Sideris, 1998). Campbell (1992) and Wood and Jewkes (2001) note that violence and aggression played a major role in the subordination of black masculinities and furthermore, played a significant role in the collapse of the apartheid government through violent protests, acts of sabotage, and the exertion of masculine aggression amongst the black population (Rueedi, 2015). This is not to suggest that acts of sabotage and violent protests are inherently masculine, but to highlight the role they have historically played in expressions of hypermasculinity in South Africa.

Morrell's (1998) concerns were with three overarching masculinities in South Africa; namely, the rural black, the urban black, and the white hegemonies[10]. All three masculinities took on different gendered practices and ideologies both under the apartheid regime, and have done so throughout post-apartheid South Africa. Within the rural black and the urban black in

[10] Two matters for the reader to note: Firstly, differences in hegemonies between black South African, coloured, and Indian masculinities need not be discussed as the research at hand deals solely with white masculinities and black South African masculinities, as per the races identified of the participants who came forward for this research. Secondly, detailing hegemonies according to each indigenous group is beyond the scope of this research. While some participants bring up specific indigenous communities, this thesis cannot possibly address the entirety and complexity of communities of white and black South African men. However, in no way does the absence thereof intend to imply that the thesis considers white or black South African men a monolith.

particular, Wood and Jewkes (2001) found that control over women was a defining feature of how black men viewed success, an ideal traced back to customs of polygamy but also a side effect of an oppressed masculinity in which, in their pursuit of recognition in a culture that devalues them, black men find power in the control over women, women ranking last in a social hierarchy fueled by raced segregation and gendered repression. The authors explain that, when masculinity is exemplified by heterosexist ideals, men inflict violence upon women to achieve control and demonstrate their masculinity, especially in times of limited resources, such as during apartheid (Wood and Jewkes, 2001).

If one accepts Connell's hegemonic masculinity to mean, at its essence, prevailing norms of what makes a man or boy acceptable, hegemonic masculinity then *implies* a "successful masculinity" (Morell *et al,* 2012: 24), and this will, in turn, have a multitude of implications across South Africa's cultural and racial communities. Morrell (1998: 608) admitted that the schema of rural black, urban black, and the white hegemony may be too simplistic, and indeed, South Africa's history makes the matter of masculinities and patriarchies a complex matter. Nevertheless, it allows the reader to note that the research at hand considers hegemonic masculinity, and subsequent complicit, subordinated and marginalised masculinity in South Africa as highly nuanced. That is to say that, within South Africa, masculinities cannot be said to be entirely subordinated amidst the presence of a multitude of expressions and norms of masculinity that, even when subordinated by a white hegemony, still exerts violence and marginalises the women in its communities. This will be discussed in greater detail in the thesis's theoretical chapter[11].

2.1.7 Conclusion

Connell's (1993) conceptions of masculinity may apply to the context of western masculinities, but her audiences have been far-reaching, impacting how the Global South perceives and conceptualises groups of masculinities. Despite its Western origins, I do believe that the idea of hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalised masculinities have relevance, and are capable of being adjusted, for this thesis for the South African context.

Hegemonic masculinity, in particular, stands out as a means to understand the tapestries of South African masculinities as a narrative and set of beliefs that communities use to

[11] See Section 3.4.

legitimise and privilege one expression of masculinity over the reality and legitimacy of other masculinities. It is imperative to note, as Bozzoli (1983) states, that hegemonic masculinities in South Africa are multitudinous and subject to the legacy of South Africa's segregated history, and that more than one kind of hegemonic masculinity is present within our society. While the term hegemony in the Global South has often been used to describe middle-class white Anglo-Saxon masculinity and its gendered, classed, and racial privilege, the nuances that apartheid left as its legacy lends themselves to the creation and recognition of privilege and respective hegemonies within communities of South African men.

Section 2. Masculinity and Sex in the University Space

2.2.1 Introduction

This subsection of the literature review explores gender, gender performance, and sexuality as experienced by men across university campuses, interrogating the relationships that men in the university space have with heterosex and their respective expressions of sexuality. If one imagines the university space as a model of society, one can - without assuming casual links - identify how discourse around sex amongst men and their peers birthed from their communities outside of campus infiltrates campus and the kind of discourse exchanged therein.

In the same way, issues raised around sexual violence against women in wider South African society are mirrored in the university space, and the way men on campus approach these issues is significant, for it denotes their attitudes toward sex, consent, and the sexual agency of each individual no matter their gender. Performance of masculinity is prominent in the university space, and often revolves around how a man expresses and engages in his sexuality and emotionality. Homosexuality, not engaging in heterosex, and expression of certain emotions considered to be normatively feminine, like vulnerability - as opposed to other, more acceptable normatively masculine emotions such as aggression and control (Mshweshwe, 2020)[12] can bring about social sanctions from one's peers, hence the potential desire for a man to embody hegemonic masculinity.

However, the inherent patriarchy of hegemonic masculinity, coerced heterosex, and

[12] See *Sections 3.5.2* and *5.3.3.*

aggression highlights issues of violence perpetrated by men (especially against women), particularly when reinforced by hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive and the pressures to participate in demonstrations of aggressive masculine sexuality.

2.2.2 Perceptions and Experiences of Masculinity in South African Campuses

Universities are microcosms of the society around them (Struppa, 2021), and it is with this understanding that this thesis takes Connell's theory on masculinities and local scholarship on masculinity in the global south[13] and place it in the context of Rhodes University.

August 2017 marked ten years since Rhodes University held its first Silent Protest, a demonstration in which students and staff of the university and residents of the town volunteer to commemorate the survivors of sexual violence in South Africa. Many who take part consent to having their mouths duct taped to signify, firstly, the reality that many victims do not feel they can report or speak out about their attacks (Kelland, 2017). Secondly, this silence serves to demonstrate the broader impact of how rape culture, albeit a popular discourse in our times, remains pervasive for the norms and values that implicitly foster sexual violence and support its perpetrators (Artz, 2017; Kelland, 2017). Since its inception, institutions like the University of Cape Town, Durban University of Technology, and Nelson Mandela University have activated the protest on their own campuses as greater awareness around increasing numbers of sexual violence on South African university campuses.

Though the Silent Protest aims to prioritize the experiences of those individuals who have survived sexual trauma, there is criticism for the lack of greater and ongoing discourse around the ways in which rape culture is maintained on university campuses (Kelland, 2017; *Mail and Guardian*, 2017). Testimonials and anecdotes concerned with the presence of alleged perpetrators at these protests call for a closer look into the presence of hegemonic masculinities and institutional cultures on campuses that allow those who commit acts of sexual violence to continue to be on campus even as the institution claims to support and stand in solidarity with its victims (*Mail and Guardian*, 2017).

Van Der Walt's thesis (2007), written in the same year that the Silent Protest was initiated at Rhodes University, addresses men on the issue of homosexuality and the

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[13] See Jewkes *et al*, 2015; Hearn, 2004; Wood and Jewkes, 2001; Matthews *et al*, 2011; Ratele, 2013; Mfecane, 2019; Morrell *et al,* 2015.

construction of hegemonic masculinities at the University of Cape Town. The experiences of men students both queer and heterosexual echo narratives and concerns of the present day. The pressure of heteromasculinity - the expectation that one performs a particular kind of masculinity pressed upon individuals and communities of men, usually a masculinity conceived as "traditional"[14] in the context of one's upbringing or cultural background - is a phenomenon all too present on university campuses in South Africa (Van Der Walt, 2007; Oxlund, 2008; Theodore and Basow, 2000). Oxlund (2008) writes that the men of the University of Limpopo felt the need to perform masculinity through their sexuality, aggression, and acts and rhetoric of violence. There was also a distancing of men from emotions and displays of vulnerability, which were seen as feminine behaviours. *Monna ke nku, o llela teng* is a saying in Pedi that was often used on campus: that men should be like sheep, animals that only weep on the inside when they are slaughtered (Oxlund, 2008: 69).

Oxlund conducted his research during the university's Student Representative Council (SRC) elections, when there was rampant discourse among men and women students about how women were not fit to be in positions of leadership because "they cry in the boardrooms" (Oxlund, 2008: 69). This distinction between men and women - with the former as the more rational and self-possessed group - had implications for the student body's perceptions on SRC candidates, judging them on their aggression and ability to reason, while latter students were strictly relegated to the realm of support (Oxlund, 2008: 69).

For the men of the University of Cape Town (van der Walt, 2007), challenging compulsory heterosexuality as a man to engage in discourse and behaviours that are hypersexed and aggressive is an act of personal power as university spaces and their student body demonstrate a slowly increasing capacity to meet non-hegemonic masculinities with greater tolerance (van Der Walt, 2007; Theodore and Basow, 2000). Still, this discourse largely prevails as a consequence of the university space being a microcosm of a greater society in which hegemonic expressions of masculinity are found in South Africa's political sphere (*see Chapter 2.1.6*).

In the 2000s and 2010s, the phrase "No Homo" became popular among a few communities of South African teenage boys and university students, a phrase used as "a discourse interjection to negate supposed sexual and gender transgressions" (van Der Walt,

[14] Greater discussion regarding the concept of "tradition" is provided in *Sections 3.2* and *7.4.*

2007: 20-21; Brown, 2020). It quickly became a blanket statement rejecting any claim of homosexuality on the part of the speaker when any display or sentiment evoking femininity or homoeroticism that had been uttered or demonstrated (Weiner, 2009).

"No Homo" was taken up by the male students at the University of Cape Town in van Der Walt's study (2007) wherein men students did not feel as though displays of emotion, vulnerability and intimacy were either acceptable from themselves or from one another, or would be accepted by their respective peer-groups (van Der Walt, 2007: 20-21). One student identified contact sports as the only acceptable means of evoking or releasing emotion within the confines of aggression (van Der Walt, 2007: 22). Many participants shared the sentiment that while gay men were seen as emotionally liberated, they were also Othered to the realm of normative femininity and separate from the normalised and accepted realities of straight men's emotional repression (van der Walt, 2007: 21). Van der Walt's findings reveal that a shared experience amongst these students was that masculinity was linked to and largely equated with heterosexuality (2007: 27). Whether the participants believed this, they each seemed to possess an internal compass, so to speak, that regulated and confined their behaviours to a performative or standardised masculinity (2007); and with the retention of hegemonic norms and values within the university space.

2.2.3 Violence and Heteronormativity Among Men Students

Everitt-Penhale's thesis (2013) is a look at how masculinity is constructed and performed amidst subject matters of sexual violence and heterosex. Everitt-Penhale (2013) frames masculinity - in particular, university-bound masculinity - as an ongoing process of gender performativity underpinned by the desire to privilege male sexuality. Everitt-Penhale's observations demonstrate relevance to my study in providing a look into how students understand their masculinity, both within and despite the institution in which they are situated. The frankness with which these participants comment upon sexuality, rape, and discourse around rape culture while inhabiting the academic space speaks to the idea that the campus space is one that fosters a sense of male privilege and maintains rape culture over fundamental safety and protection of femininity and women students.

Furthermore, it is reinforced that, within the university space, young men are

encouraged by one another to understand their sexuality as dominant, aggressive, and informed by primal instinctive urges (Oxlund, 2008; van der Walt, 2007; Everitt-Penhale, 2013). Sexual activity is dichotomized between being physical, forceful, and an expression of power; and being emotional, submissive or repressed, and a demonstration of weakness. The latter is discourse loosely constructed around normative femininity as the Other, in both women and queer men (Hoskin, 2020). Everitt-Penhale's (2013) participants discuss accounts of being confronted by their peers regarding intimate encounters with women, many reporting that their friends expect them to engage with a female companion in a sexual manner with a certain immediacy, and that this expectation is purely based on the narrative that men's sexuality is a simple impulse that must be heeded, often irrespective of whether the female party expressed consent.

> As guys, we give each other pressure. Like if you didn't go for someone. And everything is fine, the girl is okay but [she's] just not ready to have sex with you at that particular point, but 'cause your boys [keep asking if you have had sex with her], you just wanna [have sex with her and boast about it]. You push the whole thing (participant quoted in Everitt-Penhale, 2013: 67).

All participants involved in this discussion appear to have agreed with this participant's assertion; following which, rape was framed as a means to alleviate feelings of rejection of group membership, and being Othered from the popular discourse of male sexuality as the dominant will and impulse of a heterosexual relationship. "The heterosexual imperative, whereby men are seen as needing to demonstrate heterosexual activity in order to be socially accepted and/or live up to masculine ideals" (Everitt-Penhale, 2013: 69), is not limited to the explicit act of heterosex but includes the broader presentation of masculinity amongst their peers. Hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive has only further contributed to this phenomenon - discourse encouraging ideals around masculinity that include the desire to attain status through sexual exploits. The idea that men are unable or experience greater difficulty in inhibiting their sexual urges has been used to, if not condone then, excuse acts of sexual violence; a narrative that prevails through wider society into the microcosm that is university

campuses (Khumalo *et al*, 2021; Anderson and Doherty, 2008)[15]. Everitt-Penhale (2013) discusses the role that hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive plays in the context of sexual violence, exploring how the idea that the nature of masculinity gives men a greater inclination to act upon sexual aggression in non-consensual relations.

The perceived normalcy of hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive is observed in compulsory heterosexuality in how men are taught to and subsequently enact their masculinity - through the performance of their sexuality, and through how they discuss their sexuality with others (Rich, 1980)[16]. This discourse surrounding male virility has implications for how men experience their sexuality themselves, and how they experience responses regarding their sexuality from others. While there is a stigma attached to women's sexuality, men are met with approval and popularity for their sexual exploits, and are further socialised into believing that not only is their sexuality a means of gaining respect, but that their sexuality is integral to their masculinity (Van der Walt, 2007; Flood, 2008). Everitt-Penhale (2013) mentions that, while for some men, heterosex is a means of engaging in emotional intimacy with a woman, her study found that, at least in company with their peers, sex is primarily an issue of gaining respect as a man on campus and finding validation in an aggressive virility. This dynamic serves as a means of homosociality for men, socialising men into prevailing narratives about what it means to be a man, with heterosex as a core feature of masculinity (Flood, 2008)[17].

Flood (2008: 341) notes that, in his study of a young group of men, this homosociality solidifies solidarity among heterosexual men. The phenomenon of ostracising femininity and homosexuality within all-male spaces is to reject all that which is non-hegemonic and, naturally, to embrace and collectively embody traits of hegemony[18]. This kind of male bonding is seen throughout history and society; spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding in which heterosex and hegemony are used to validate men and cement alliances between men. Flood (2008: 342) discusses how, furthermore, these spaces serve to perpetuate homophobia and attitudes of violence against women, and push prevailing norms of gender inequality and hegemonic masculinities.

[15] See *Section 6.2.*
[16] For a more detailed discussion on compulsory heterosexuality and its role in hegemonic masculinity, see *Section 3.5.1.*
[17] See Section 6.2 and 6.3 for greater discussion of homosociality in this regard.
[18] See *Section 3.4* and subsequent sections.

2.2.4 Conclusion

The annual Silent Protest of Rhodes University reveals the deeply embedded norms and values around masculine sexual aggression on campus and how it often manifests in sexual and gender- based violence. Rape culture is a prevalent theme here, and this section discussed how beliefs and practices of men's sexual aggression are used to excuse the means to an end: domination over and subordination of women's bodies.

Masculine sexual aggression persists in the university space as men are initiated into institutional cultural practices in which hegemonic masculinity is present. A widespread sentiment across the male student body of university campuses is that there is an expectation to behave in certain ways to construct and exhibit an acceptable expression of masculinity, and this expectation is also felt by queer men students, whether they choose to adopt expressions of masculinity that are condoned and encouraged by others, or not. Dominant expectations of acceptable masculinity are distant from vulnerability, and engaging - widely - in heterosex.

Despite attempts by universities and some members of the student body to dismantle narratives of hegemonic masculinity, narratives of hegemony prevail among male students who believe that their legitimacy is found when they are recognised by these narratives.

The phrase 'No Homo', originally a Western term that was adopted by students in South Africa and became localised illustrates how men pardoned expressions of vulnerability among each other by explicitly stating their heterosexuality, and the implied distance that exists between a man whose masculinity is legitimised by narratives of hegemonic masculinity, and demonstrations of normative femininity or homosexuality. The phrase was also used to demonstrate how men students tried to bolster the impressions that their peers might have had regarding their heterosexuality, as students in this chapter understood - however consciously - heterosexuality as a core characteristic of masculinity.

The performativity of masculinity as an ongoing process of receiving validation from other men is heavily placed on engaging in heterosex and responding to compulsory heterosexuality, even when it is at the expense of the agency and dignity of a woman's body. The affirmation and endorsement of masculinity, as per Everitt-Penhale's (2013) thesis, is sought readily, and great emphasis is placed on aggressive sexuality. This sexuality often takes

the form of physical force. The place that sexual violence inhabits in the context of masculine sexual aggression seems largely unconscious to Everitt-Penhale's (2013) participants, not consciously recognised as the manifestation of masculine sexual aggression during heterosex. Same-sex group membership is deemed as invaluable, and forceful heterosex is understood as an expression of virility and the accomplishment of masculinity.

This is to the extent that masculine sexual aggression is often used to justify sexual violence and distance men from sexual violence. That is to say that if a group condones and celebrates a man's virility and ongoing engagement in heterosex as a response to compulsory heterosexuality, a man is less likely to feel guilty about any sexual encounter he may have had that was non-consensual. This acts as a bonding mechanism between men, groups of men identifying with their fraternity over the implications that their masculine sexual aggression may have over a woman's body.

The spaces wherein men discuss their sexuality and perform their maleness is what this thesis simply refers to as spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding, and the following chapter will contextualise and explore these spaces.

Section 3. Hierarchical Homosociality

2.3.1 Hierarchical Homosocial Bonding ("Locker Room Talk")

The term "locker room talk" grew prevalent in popular discourse when the former President of the United States, Donald Trump, used the term to defend lewd conversation about women shared with a TV host in private that was leaked to the public in 2016. The leaked audio gave way to discussion in the public sphere around whether that kind of discourse could be considered to be endorsing sexual assault or whether it was indeed simply "banter" between men in a private space. This "private space" and "banter" is conceptualised in the West as "the locker room" and "locker room talk", respectively, spaces and casual conversation in which men share discourse around the male sex drive. Given that the these terms are of Western origin and are not recognised ubiquitously across communities of men in South Africa (though indeed recognised and fully understood by some), this thesis will make use of the concept of hierarchical homosocial bonding to convey the same kind of attitudes, discourse, and masculinities embodied by "the locker room".

Having endeavoured to find an African term that might serve as an appropriate and adequate label for locker room talk in the South African context, I was confronted with two main drawbacks: firstly, that there is seemingly no concrete or ubiquitous term that South African men use specifically to refer to exchanges they have regarding women and sexuality recognised in the familiar way that "locker room talk" is recognised in the West. There are certain phrases that men in some spaces on campus use - phrases like "common room talk" and "dining hall talk" are recognised to pertain to such conversations that take place in the university boarding space; and there are indigenous terms - to speak of just a couple - like *ukuncokola* and e*mbonga mpisi*, isiZulu and Swati terms respectively that can be broadly interpreted as spaces in which men gather to brag, banter, joke, and tease.

However, the same way "locker room talk" can be problematised for originating in the West and thus removed from the indigenous men of South Africa, so can the aforementioned expressions. For students who do not reside in the university space and live off-campus, or for those who do not speak isiZulu, Swati, or any other indigenous African languages, the aforementioned terms and phrases might hold no significance for spaces that may be just as relevant and commonplace in their lives. As such, I opted for a term likely absent from popular discourse or expressions somewhat adjacent to "common room talk", "dining hall talk", or "the locker room", but, at the very least, holds academic legitimacy as an approach to the scholarship of masculinity[19].

Hierarchical homosocial bonding refers to how "men, through their relations to other men, uphold and maintain patriarchy…defending their privileges and positions" (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014). It is a concept that has been used to explain the dynamics within male same-sex spaces and relationships that serve to reinforce hegemonic masculinity, and is cited as a phenomenon from as far back as the 1970s, popularised by Kosofksy Sedgewick's scholarship on the social construction of sexuality (Sedgewick, 1985). With the use of this term - as opposed to locker rooms, common rooms, or dining halls - the exchange and internalisation of the principles and behaviours of hegemonic masculinities around hegemonic masculinities among men are not confined to one particular place, but is a phenomenon that

[19] Please note that this thesis still mentions the term "locker room talk" when referring directly to scholarship of the West that uses this term, when quoting or referring to discussions with participants, or when the term assists in meaning or clarity. Both the terms "locker room talk" and hierarchical homosocial bonding carry the same purpose and implications for this thesis and its research.

materialises anywhere, given the right intention: to discuss women and sex; to foster compulsory heterosexuality; and to embody power, dominance, and privilege[20].

2.3.2 Discourse, Power and Assimilation in Spaces of Hierarchical Homosocial Bonding

In essence, Connell's typifications of masculinity speak to dynamics of power and subordination, embedded in ideology and the institutionalisation of cultural ideas and practices that belong to particular communities, societies, and civilisations (Connell, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). This is not just a dynamic that takes place between men and women, men holding the position of the former in patriarchal sites and societies, but one that is exchanged and recognised between groups of men. Hence, the typologies of masculinity offered by Connell in not merely classifying groups of men, but understanding the interactions that take place between them. This can be observed most prevalently in hierarchical homosocial bonding.

The heterosexual imperative, and the pardon and/or exploration of ambiguous, confusing, and deviant sexual experiences are the primary foci of my discussion of the hierarchical homosocial bonding space (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014; Vaynman *et al*, 2020; Leone and Parrott, 2019). With hierarchical homosocial bonding being a space that upholds values of hegemonic masculinity, I argue that the aforementioned objectives in the discourse and gestures that take place tend in these spaces lend themselves to homophobia, the objectification of women, and the endorsement of rape culture, given, especially, the presence of compulsory heterosexuality in South African society and its university campuses as discussed in *Section 2.2.3.*

To bond with one's "brothers" is the underlying intent in homosocial spaces, and in instances in which the nature and content of this bonding goes unquestioned and by critique of the privilege and institutional power men hold, the bonding process is inevitably distorted by

[20] See *Section 3.4* and subsequent sections. Alos, please note that in many black ethnic communities in South Africa, traditional circumcision and initiation - *ulwaluko* - can arguably be considered spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding. I discuss *ulwaluko or traditional initiation and circumcision* in greater detail in *Sections 3.4* and *6.4.1* to better discuss what is a powerfully significant and valued space among many South African communities.

the desire to be considered by other men as a significant figure in that space and to avoid being regarded as an outsider to this process (Leone and Parrott, 2019). What distinguishes hierarchical homosocial bonding from other ways in which men gather and relate to one another is its intent, and how the environment in which discourse exclusively between men takes place is organised (Vaynman *et al,* 2020). For instance, demonstrations of hypermasculinity, the exchange of sexist and homophobic jokes and banter, or the heavy consumption of substances between men can act as a signal for a potential segue in - and measure of - conversation about women and sex, deviant sexual practices, unconsciously-driven support for compulsory heterosexuality, and the internalisation of rape culture (Vaynman *et al*, 2020; Orth *et al*, 2020; Francis, 2021). For Vaynman *et al* (2020) and Everitt-Penhale (2013), environments like parties and drinking circles are environments that do not make it difficult for same-sex members to challenge the moral order governing everyday society and to empower deviant discourse and behaviours of masculine sexual aggression, ultimately working to reinforce hegemonic masculinities.

Of course, men can gather in the absence of women in a way that promotes homosociality without embodying hegemony. This thesis does not wish to essentialise the nature of fraternal bonding, reducing it to something crude, absolute, and without nuance. Fraternal bonding can have a positive and powerful effect on men's self-esteem and experience of the world through which men feel they can be vulnerable and wholly themselves without fear of judgement. This kind of bonding between men is what Hammaren and Johansson (2014) refer to as vertical homosociality. Hierarchical homosociality, however, is fraternal bonding that precludes vulnerability between men on the premise that only certain expressions of masculinity are legitimate, and thus, should be embodied and performed at the expense and the subordination of other expressions of masculinity.

Spaces of homosociality can lend themselves to the celebration or standardisation of a particular expression of masculinity - Vaynman *et al* (2020: 1238) specifically raise hegemonic masculinity as the masculinity that these spaces coordinate themselves around. The authors write that narratives around sexual exploits and masculine aggression that take place in these spaces serve an important purpose in male bonding, and explore the impact that these stories have on their storytellers and their listeners. They locate locker room talk in spaces or under

circumstances of modified moral orders: in which transgressions regarding sex and aggression are not only condoned, but expected from and valued by other men (Fjaer and Pederson, 2015). Discourse otherwise considered deviant or endorsing masculine sexual aggression is considered normative in locker room spaces, and even prioritised. Simeone and Jeglic (2019: 1588) write how this kind of talk can encourage, if not sexual assault itself, then at least the promotion of rape myths: perceived false 'truths' about sexual assault that lends themselves to victim-blaming and excusing masculine sexual aggression.

Hierarchical homosocial bonding operates as a mechanism to organise and maintain existing gendered relations, and to govern surveillance over collective gendered and sexed behaviours, organised around hegemonic masculinities. (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014; Vaynman *et al*, 2020). Even so, Simeone and Jeglic (2019) found that, in their study of what men found to be normative and deviant discourse, men generally underestimate the discomfort of their peers when it came to deviant discourse around sex - that is, talk around sex that is non-consensual or aggressive in nature; and certain men are made to fear, abstain from, or assimilate into "the locker room" to whatever degree to keep themselves from ridicule, from being perceived as effeminate - "weak" and "sensitive"; vulnerable to contempt.

In this regard, then, men who find themselves in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding who feel discomfited by the nature of conversation often do not confront their peers for opinions and judgements expressed that condone masculine sexual aggression and the modified moral order, unwilling to intervene as bystanders (Leone and Parrott, 2019: 48). In a space in which social norms are modified to conform to discourse around masculine sexual aggression, intervention to challenge the ongoing discourse inciting demonstrations of hegemony is not just unlikely, but likely unwelcome without the support of one's peers, which would sideline a bystander from a process meant to socialise and bond them with other men (Leone and Parrott, 2019; Hammaren and Johansson, 2014). For bystanders, intervention is pitted against acceptance among their peers, and tolerating discourse of performative masculinity is a means of embedding oneself in the fraternity (Vaynman *et al*, 2020; Leone and Parrott, 2019).

2.3.3 Conclusion

Hierarchical homosocial bonds are characterised by ideals and demonstrations of hegemonic masculinities and modified moral orders, particularly regarding sex and masculine aggression. It encourages the opposition and provocation of acceptable norms around sexuality, challenging members to engage in sexual behaviours in risky or aggressive ways.

Still, as much as there are men who partake in these discussions and act on their desires in the context of modified moral orders, there are men who consider themselves simply bystanders to these discussions and exploits. Their silence or apathy, or ambiguous participation, however, can be viewed as an act of assimilation within spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding, as they do not counter or oppose the views and behaviours of active participants. This assimilation makes it difficult to disrupt demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity.

The next section looks at how disruptions to hegemonic masculinity are possible when there is a rise of social norms and values that prioritise consensual sex and women's bodily agency, and how hegemonic masculinity can indeed be challenged when met with a counter-public that opposes it.

Section 4. Contemporary Movements Against Sexual Violence and the Role of Social Media

2.4.1 Rape Culture and South Africa's "Rape Crisis"

The world has been inundated with discourse from digital platforms led by communities of different colours and creeds exploring and taking a critical look at their individual and collective experiences. Since the international sweep of #MeToo, ongoing dialogue and debate regarding rape culture has gone beyond scholarship and the academy, and has embedded itself into popular discourse where important ideas around rape culture have been made accessible to the wider public. As my research is an attempt to investigate masculinity through themes of gender and sexual violence, it would be remiss for me to omit discussion of rape culture and contemporary protest action against it that has unfolded in South Africa.

The term 'rape culture' became an effective and controversial means of sociologically conveying the ways in which sexual violence is normalised in our beliefs and behaviours about gender and sexuality in the 1970s (Merril, 2004). The eponymous documentary by Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich (1975) provided insight around rape in the critical analysis of

social norms with the contributions of the admissions of convicted rapists, the testimonies of rape victims, and the thoughts and efforts of activists and organisations involved in the anti-rape movement. So began the proliferation of the term not only in public discourse, but in the media more widely.

In 1970s South Africa, sexual violence became a key matter under discussion among South Africa's public figures and general public alike with an unprecedented widespread urgency (Bridger, 2003). Between the 1970s and the 1990s, factors such as feminist activism, the liberation struggle against apartheid, increasing public panic regarding crime, and shifts in gender power dynamics affected how South Africans in power and at grassroots levels were thinking about gender and reacting to gender-based violence (Bridger, 2023; Falkof *et al*, 2022). With gender and racial oppression the law of the land that plagued South Africa's complicated cultural climate, the blame for seemingly heightened sexual violence was placed on patriarchy, apartheid, and the urges of men. Even so, the recognition that rape was a problem that deserved to be treated seriously was shared between few. Most South African women - specifically, black women - lived with "intersecting class, racial, and gendered inequalities that produced their victimisation" (Bridger, 2023: 266.) Their victimisation was carried further by discourse that did little to address women's health and safety, but were used instead to political ends, like reinforcing sexist and misogynist narratives, many of which were racial in nature so as to denigrate black women in particular (Bridger, 2023: 268). Domestic relationships of apartheid's black population took strain under the transient nature of the lives they lived - "labour migration, forced removals, and mass imprisonment separated and harmed families, leading to an increase in infidelity, jealousy, and domestic violence, and new masculinities predicated on controlling women" (Bridger, 2023: 268).

During this time, domestic violence was not considered a crime. This was fostered by the privileging of masculinity in institutions that could wield great force, such as the police, and in the instance of black masculinity, the media's role in parodying black men as an embodiment of animalistic hypersexuality (Maitse, 1998). The private sphere was where men were able to inhibit women's freedom's and brandish violence in a manner that they saw fit, in a manner that was not bound by law, but further, was not privy to the judgements of outsiders. Outside the home, black women lived under the violence of white masculinity, and within the confines of the home, under the violence of black masculinity (Briddger, 2023: 266; Maitse, 1998).

During such an era of the myriad of issues that plagued South Africa's socio-political climate, the anti-rape movement of the 1970s in the United States helped to spread local resistance to patriarchal control. It rejected the widely-accepted idea that gender-based violence and sexual assault were atypical incidents isolated from the shared norms and values of western society (Brownmiller, 1975; Rutherford, 2011). North America was embroiled in a culture that did not heed consent as integral to sex and many cases of sexual harassment in the work place were reported - a phenomenon which ultimately engendered the understanding that rape is not a random and deviant act, but the outcome of everyday social practices (Bevacqua, 2000; O'Dowd, 2017).

Meanwhile, moral panic in South Africa over the country's "rape crisis" encouraged resistance to sexual violence to take off in the country following the establishment of South Africa's first Rape Crisis Centre in 1976. The organisation began to host educational talks about rape and gender-based violence across the country, many of which began to feature in the press (Bridger, 2023: 270). Subsequent discussion in the media started to call into question the violent patriarchal hold over the country, and through this, the distinction between sexual violence and other violent crimes was made, fostering the genesis of country-wide rape activism in South Africa's townships.

2.4.2 The Counterpublic of the #RUReferenceList

When the 2016 Rhodes University #RUReferenceList began, it caught the attention of and fed major news outlets like *Al Jazeera, The Mail and Guardian,* and *Daily Maverick,* covering the movement's frontlines, the demands of its leaders, and the institution's swift and heavy-handed response. South Africa has since the 1970s been regarded as the 'Rape Capital' of the world in the media, both locally and abroad, and regardless of the debates that go back and forth regarding the veracity of this statement (Bridger, 2023; Wilkinson, 2016), statistics given for counts of rape, as well as estimates made for assaults that go unreported, are consistently and alarmingly high, indicating a flawed justice system and lax law enforcement (Machisa *et al*, 2017; Nagtegaal, 2018).

The #RUReferenceList highlighted the country's disregard for perpetrators of sexual violence when it used its platform to call attention to then-president Jacob Zuma and how South Africa had allowed a man accused of sexual assault to be appointed as the country's

head of state. During a speech he gave at the Independent Electoral Commission on election results, a group of women protesters silently approached the stage to #RememberKhwezi, citing the One-in-Nine campaign orchestrated during the Zuma rape trial – that, due to the way rape is dealt with by our country's justice system, only one out of nine women report their attack (oneinnine.org.za).

Orth *et al's* (2020) paper on online activism in protesting sexual assault in both the offline and online realm discussed how the naked protest (a demonstration of the #RUReferenceList movement) in particular was met with a divided reception - with one group of support, and another of dissent that proliferated norms and values of sexual violence online. Orth *et al* (2020) raise the issue of how and why social media activism and the online space play a pivotal role in subverting popular discourse that reinforces the oppression of minority groups. The public sphere is not "a space of equal access and participation…[but] of privilege and legitimacy" (Orth *et al*, 2020: 3). If an individual does not hold the social or cultural capital that aligns them with hegemonic views on issues of sexuality, race or gender, their lived experiences are illegitimate (Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015). Social media, therefore, provides the counterpublic: an opposition to a white (and often male) bourgeois or middle-class state.

With hegemonic masculinity in South Africa a nuanced matter, consisting of a "patchwork quilt of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983)[21], the counterpublic in the South African context can stand as a space of resistance to the number of hegemonies that can be attributed to the country's colonial and particularly misogynoir past (Bridger, 2023: 266). The counterpublic - the opposition to the public sphere - allows the intersection of experiences to disseminate across and infiltrate a range of audiences in order to dismantle widely-held misconceptions about oppressed communities. Social media as a counterpublic has been recognised as a channel through which experiences and perspectives previously undermined and unexplored now have the power and opportunity to raise awareness regarding the injustices and injuries they face. Moreover, it has become invaluable in holding individuals and institutions and their practices accountable for values and behaviours complicit in violence against women. As Orth *et al* (2020: 4) contend, social media has become a formidable tool of pedagogy as more audiences are exposed to privilege, the nature of power, and hegemonic

[21] See *Sections 2.1.5* and *2.1.6.*

masculinity functioning within their own lives and within the lives of others.

The counterpublic began in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a space and discourse of opposition to the exclusion of women, people of colour, and other minorities from "the public spaces": spaces in which white men of the upper class hegemony gathered to make decisions regarding their communities (Orth *et al*, 2020). Understanding that their communities had issues of their own that deserved to be addressed and remedies, and that the public space did not see these minority communities as significant components of the society, the counterpublic was ultimately a resistance to assimilating into the values or tenets of white male hegemony (Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015). Minority communities would find their own solutions, their own principles to their own realities. In the twenty-first century, specifically in cultural climates that see competing factions on either side of a social justice issue, social media is a platform of two faces: one, of the public sphere in which both privileged and minority communities battle for space for and acknowledgement of their norms, views, and values regarding sex, sexuality, and women's bodies (Orth *et al*, 2020).

2.4.3 Social Media and Masculinity

South African university students were using social media as a counterpublic space to combat rape culture before the #MeToo Movement gained international traction and led to the downfall of a number of high-profile men in the United States with allegations of sexual misconduct against them. *Section 2.4.2* addressed how the conversation of rape culture was shared online and how the experiences of women and victims of sexual assault were given a platform to dismantle norms and attitudes around a culture that supports sexual violence. In an attempt to analyse how engagement with the online landscape reflected the norms and values of men audiences in particular in response to discourse around sexual violence and masculinity, this section discusses how men of hegemonic masculinities engaged with social media under the volatile anti-rape social climate at the time.

The internationally viral phrase #MenAreTrash preceded the #RUReferenceList in South Africa, the former a hashtag that began trending on Twitter in early 2016. #MenAreTrash became a way for primarily women to speak about the experiences of sexual violence, and create an online counterpublic against sexism and gender-based violence. Its genesis saw other hashtags and movements begin to grow in popularity on South Africa's

online spaces, encouraging the public to pay attention to what South African women faced under the patriarchal hold of South Africa's hegemonic masculinities (Orth *et al*, 2020; Bridger, 2023)[22].

Prior to the #RUReferenceList, #MenAreTrash provided important precursory conversations around sexism and misogyny, and debates were held between the public spheres and counterpublics regarding gender norms, feminism, equality, and masculinity. A significant opposition to #MenAreTrash was how #NotAllMen should be regarded as villains or men whose intentions against women were violent in nature. The hashtag #NotAllMen was a reaction to what some regarded as the vitriol of #MenAreTrash, a resistance against perceived generalisations of men's behaviours toward women and sex (Aguera Reneses, 2021). The rationale for #NotAllMen was that rape and sexual violence were only ever committed by a handful of men, and that, by and large, men respected, wished to protect, and desired healthy relationships with women.

Some men insisted that #MenAreTrash should be replaced with #RapistsAndMurderersAreTrash, and that hashtags should focus on the names of specific men who commit such acts (Aguera Reneses, 2021: 76). A primary argument in response was that #MenAreTrash is not a condemnation of all men and all masculinities, but of wider systemic issues of hegemonic masculinities that serve to normalise patriarchy and maintain rape culture through spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding and other instances of every day sexism that reinforce the subordination of women. To focus exclusively on men who committed acts of sexual violence and happened to wind up getting caught, their names published in the media, was to present rape as outside of the norm, as something exceptional, and ignore the well-founded theory of rape culture: that rape is a single phenomenon embedded in social norms and values, in other phenomena that implicitly endorse rape (Aguera Reneses, 2021).

By resisting the significance of #MenAreTrash and asserting "Not All Men", the focal point of many discussions that took place online, some audiences unfortunately missed opportunities to engage critically with rape culture and the idea of hegemonic masculinity. I argue that this is reflected in how audiences of men engaged with the online counterpublic by the time the #RUReferenceList had begun to go viral and the #Endrapeculture protests began to unfold. Orth *et al's* (2020) empirical study on the online reception garnered by #Endrapeculture

[22] See *Section 2.4.1.*

protests highlights how the opposition of some male audiences - or the hegemonic masculinist public sphere - went further than questioning merely the notion of rape culture, and outrightly engaged in some of its most common hegemonic discourse in response to anti-rape demonstrations.

The #nakedprotest saw women students of South Africa's universities march topless in support of the growing movement, and numerous comments (all of which are attributed to men in Orth *et al's* 2020 study)[23] chose to mock, criticise, and express their displeasure at the sight of women protesting half-naked in public. Many comments seemed to be either genuine or sardonic attempts to "educate" these women. While some were projections of the commenter's personal principles regarding women's modesty, others were uninformed opinions spouted as fact regarding how protesters were only encouraging sexual deviance. This is discourse that can be easily recognised as victim-blaming: finding fault in the behaviours or the character of a victim of sexual assault, and legitimating the violence enacted against them on the bases of these perceived faults.

Both #NotAllMen and its denial of rape as an expression of widespread systemic violence, and the discourse of victim-blaming identified in some of the comments mentioned by Orth *et al* (2020) act as the means through which audiences of men were able to excuse themselves from the responsibilities of having to engage meaningfully in conversations around sexual violence in the online space and potentially question their own culpability in maintaining rape culture. Offline, this translates into behaviours that promote and excuse homosocial bonding, and how norms and values regarding sex and male sexuality that implicitly play into rape culture and perpetuate rape myths are condoned and go unchallenged.

2.4.4 Conclusion

The recognition of rape culture in the 1970s has aided modern-day understanding of how sexual violence is propagated: through social norms and values that standardise beliefs and behaviours that condone masculine sexual aggression and blame against sexual assault

[23] This is not to suggest that comments of the nature of #NotAllMen were made exclusively by men. There were audiences of men who engaged positively with these online conversations and desired to learn; in the same vein, there were audiences of women who took the offence and defended men and masculinity, and criticised the #nakedprotest and #MenAreTrash with vehemence. However, my research is concerned specifically with masculinity in the university space and men's responses to the #RUReferenceList and the #nakedprotest as anti-rape demonstrations on the university space.

victims. As the idea of rape culture came to the forefront of collective consciousness, measures were taken to dismantle these beliefs and behaviours deeply embedded in narratives of hegemonic masculinity. One prevalent idea of sexual assault that rape culture proliferates is that sexual violence is an atypical incident that takes place between strangers, at the hands of an individual who is considered deviant from societal norms and values. What the conceptualization of and measures taken against rape culture states, instead, is that sexual violence is so rife because it is at the hands of individuals who are, on the contrary, seen as moral, contributing citizens who hold beliefs that support masculine sexual aggression and undermine the agency and claims of victims. As such, the idea of rape culture is that rape is an outcome of everyday practices and values around sex held by communities and large groups of people, and not a singular act performed by a deviant individual.

Sexism and patriarchy are considered the leading causes and ideologies of rape culture - systems that privilege heterosexual male desire and authority over any other group or community, immersing society into its values and practices of gender discrimination and sexual offence.

The Rhodes University #RUReferenceList of 2016 was a movement against rape culture that called out university management and the student body on behaviours that put predominantly women students at risk for being sexually assaulted, at risk for not being believed when students made claims of sexual assault, and at risk for putting the safety and reputation of alleged accusers over the dignity and welfare of victims. The movement was one of many that stood as a counterpublic to hegemonic masculinity - that is, it created a space for victims and for individuals who challenged rape culture who were not part of the fabric of hegemonic masculinity and the public space that benefitted the entitlement of hypermasculinity.

The idea of the counterpublic is that it is an alternative space to those that privilege majority groups in a particular community. The public space - of course subject to the hierarchy of a given community - often caters to the desires and demands of men and treats others as outliers of particular issues. When a counterpublic arises, it is met with the opposition of the public sphere threatened by the rebellion of its outliers, which is what fueled contention during the #RUReferenceList.

As the #RUReferencelist began online, it was met with the vitriol of those who did not

believe victims and who took issue with what they believed was disproportionate protest action to the issue at hand - the public sphere finding threat in the rise of the counterpublic. The #RUReferenceList privileged voices previously ignored and suppressed on the wide-reaching platforms of social media, where members of the public sphere had previously been free to engage in demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive.

The matter of gender and social media regarding the #RUReferenceList provides insight into how audiences of men may use and view social media as spaces to demonstrate their masculinity and engage in hierarchical homosociality. In this way, sexism and rape culture are reflected in online discourse as they are in the offline world, and the public sphere and the counterpublic stand at opposite ends, protesting against each other's ideologies and principles online just as profoundly as in the waking world.

Chapter Three
Theoretical Framework

31. Introduction

This focus of this thesis on hegemonic masculinities is led by the theoretical framework of Connell's typologies of masculinity. The findings chapters of this thesis are analysed through the construct of masculinities, which is the application of gender constructionism and Connell's typologies. Where the primary concern of Chapter Two's literature review was to contextualise masculinity studies in South Africa, this chapter will contextualise Connell's typologies masculinities to South Africa when it is necessary to argue the relevance and appropriateness of the chosen theoretical paradigm.

The definition of hegemonic masculinity that I use for this thesis is the demonstration of institutional power, ideological dominance, and cultural privileges over women and non-hegemonic masculinities. In unpacking this definition, I use masculinities as a theoretical paradigm for the data in analysing how men engaged with Rhodes University's institutional culture and its spaces and manifestations of hegemonic masculinities; and how men interacted with their masculinity and the masculinity of others in the context of the #RUReferenceList.

In establishing the construction of hegemonic masculinities, the following chapter will first briefly delineate gender constructionism through foundational texts and ideas that have served as cornerstone concepts and points of departure, before discussing masculinities as a theoretical paradigm.

3.2 A Brief Remark on the Idea of "Tradition"

Expressions like "traditions", "traditional values", and "traditional beliefs" have been, and will continue to be, employed as terms throughout the thesis, and it is important to disclose here that I do not intend, at any point, to conflate tradition with hegemonic masculinity in and of itself.

As per Everitt-Penhale and Ratele's (2015: 6) paper, too often is "tradition" used to suggest that cultural doctrine and practices of a particular community are the nefarious contender to contemporary - and presumably, more equitable - attitudes and behaviours. This discussion is set in the South African context, where there is the danger of vilifying how

communities in the Global South navigate gender and sex through the judgments of the West. A crucial point that Everitt-Penhale and Ratele (2015) raise is that the very idea of tradition, the word itself, is not often adequately defined when it is used.

Arguably, however, traditions "rarely remain static amid changing contexts and subjects" (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015: 9), and the idea of "tradition" is arguably just a repository of rites and principles of the past that inform how individuals and communities respond to present-day challenges. However, that being said, the present day plays an active role in what constitutes tradition through collectives of a given society consciously and unconsciously deciding what should be considered tradition and what should not; and how that which is understood to be tradition legitimises how the present day is organised and negotiated (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015; Ben-Amos, 1984). In this way, then, in part, ideas of what is "traditional" and what is "modern" are a socially constructed process of a chronological and a social progression - from "then" to "now" in terms of space and time, as well as in terms of social change (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015).

In using "tradition" to defend prevailing social structures, it is being used to validate the merit of continued customs. Customs of tradition are not always detrimental to the modern age or individuals living in the modern world; they can be useful in helping individuals and entire communities navigate environments and phenomena around them. Thus, while tradition can be used to justify hegemony and patriarchy, it also upholds doctrine and behaviour that are of a positive contribution to moving through the modern world (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015). Therefore, whether something is "tradition" or "traditional", and further, whether it is considered harmful or beneficial depends on how it is construed, and by whom (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015).

> In some ways the undefined use of 'traditionally masculine' or 'traditionally feminine' serves to reproduce an essentialist perspective on gender. Such usage assumes a shared conception of gender, independent of context or cohort. Thus without having to say 'these traits/behaviours are masculine/feminine independent of context' and hence make an essentialist claim, the use of the modifier 'traditional' might inadvertently serve the same function while avoiding such a critique (Everitt-Penhale and Ratele, 2015: 11).

As this chapter goes on to discuss gender constructionism and the typologies of masculinity, then, I wish to highlight the importance of allowing the use of the term "tradition" to stand in the context in which it is used, and to not be mistaken for assumptions of hegemony. To avoid the essentialist implications of the phrases like "traditional masculinity" or "traditional femininity", I will be using the phrases "normative masculinity" and "normative femininity" to refer to how femininity and masculinity are expected to manifest in contemporary times according to norms and values of compulsory heterosexuality, and binary and essentialist understandings of gender[24].

3.3 Gender Constructionism - Foundational Texts and Concepts

West and Zimmerman published *Doing Gender* in 1987, which is a publication that - whether critiqued, revised, or expounded upon - is still cited in contemporary literature as a foundational publication in understanding the construction and performance of gender[25]. The authors begin by stating that gender is an achieved status, one that comes about through psychology, culture, and socialisation methodically and routinely (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 125-126).

> When we view gender as an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct, our attention shifts from matters internal to the individual and focuses on interactional and, ultimately, institutional arenas (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 126).

In studying West and Zimmerman, our focus is on the ways institutions direct and condition individuals as per the manner in which individuals physically present to society. While it is the individual who ultimately carries out gender, the individual is primarily responding to norms and values put forward by social structures. Gender, thus, is an outcome, rationale, and legitimation of the social structures that respective societies have in place. Institutions within

[24] Compulsory heterosexuality and essentialism are discussed later in this chapter, in *Section 3.5.1.*
[25] Scholarship as recent as 2024 cite West and Zimmerman's 1987 publication, irrespective of the nature of contemporary opinion, as a key point of departure for further interrogation regarding gender performance and gender identity. See Davis, S.H (2017); Makamure, G. and Mpofu, P. (2024); Torkild, T. and Wallenburg, L. (2016); Hellum, M. (2018); Jansen van Rensburg, S. (2021); and others as just a handful of publications that engage with West and Zimmerman's (1987) publication in South Africa, the African continent, and elsewhere.

different societies and communities conduct distinctive narratives of gender, and, henceforth, there can exist multiple narratives of masculinity. When individuals socialise with one another, they are responding to the social structures in which they find themselves. Hegemonic masculinity is then context-dependent; a man can be hegemonic in one sense, and subordinate in the other[26].

West and Zimmerman (1987: 126) refer to the responsibility that one takes for their gender performance as gender roles and gender displays. However, individuals are inclined by the institutions that govern their communities to answer to discourse around their prescribed sex, an act that ultimately results in 'doing gender'. "Gender is a "[prototype] of essential expression - something that can be conveyed fleetingly in any social situation and yet something that strikes at the most basic characterization of the individual" (Goffman, 1976 - 75). These social situations serve to prove and validate one's gender display.

Goffman (1976: 69 - 70) speaks of rituals: conventional behaviours that are often paired with task fulfilment and engagement with discourse in ways that reinforce institutional expectations of gender. Goffman (1976) argues that these are optional performances, however; these rituals, while endorsed by institutional values and customs, are not fundamental or indispensable to how an individual may show up in the world. Indeed, individuals will ultimately "conduct themselves to fit their own notions of expressivity" (Goffman, 1976: 75). It is up to the will and cognisance of every individual to adopt gender displays and to reflect institutional norms and values about gender, or to not.

These rituals can be likened to skits that disclose how one chooses to identify with one's gender, and, for Goffman, are more likely than not only carried out in the presence of others. Once the exchange with another or with one's institution is over, individuals retreat to private spaces in which there is no onus to perform gender.

However, West and Zimmerman argue that it is implausible to believe that gender displays are merely a matter of choice that can be disposed of when one is behind closed doors and, rather, that gender performance permeates even into one's private space as "an ongoing activity" (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 130).

Gender accountability (West and Zimmerman, 1987) is founded on the idea that members of society observe and examine each other's actions in line with what they are

[26] See *Section 3.3* for greater discussion in this regard.

classified as. I suggest here that relations of casual sex (or what this thesis later refers to as "hookup culture"[27]) can be regarded as a gatekeeping practice of gender performance and gender accountability. Men are kept accountable to one another through this particular performance that validates their masculinity and reinforces his gender classification through monitoring his sexuality and how he responds to hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive.

Gender accountability has weighty consequences that impact how an individual may be perceived even subsequent to a single act. If a man does not behave in a way that is expected within the context of a particular institution or given cultural event, his actions and the ways in which he is classified as a man will be challenged, and perhaps even punished (Kessler and McKenna, 1978).

However, while institutional frameworks provide the opportunity for gender assessment - and individuals enact subsequent gender performance - institutions do not necessarily demand that individuals perform specific gender displays. Communities influence members into complying with established frameworks, and often, individuals take it upon themselves to behave in ways that are both self-categorising and classifying of others (Goffman, 1977). When institutions and individuals are in alignment regarding gender display, not much question is raised about the veracity of either. However, when out of alignment, this gives way to role conflict in which either the purpose of the institution or the authenticity of the individual is challenged.

3.4 Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony and Connell's Typologies of Masculinity as Theory

Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony is a critical component in engaging with ideas of masculinist hegemony, complicity, subordination, and marginalisation. While Gramsci never gave, neither in any of his pre-prison writings nor in his innumerable prison essays, a straightforward definition of cultural hegemony, it is a concept that he refers to in various ways and subsequently adds to through a myriad of perspectives, offering instead a rich (albeit haphazard) and thoughtful understanding of the concept (Hoare and Sperber, 2015: 16).

Succinctly put, cultural hegemony is the moral and cognitive control and influence that one social group wields over that particular society. This does not happen invariably through

[27] See *Section 6.3.*

coercion or physical force but consensually, obtained through the justification, normalisation, and internalisation of subordination to the social norms and values held by the dominant social class (Verde and Rossi, 2024). “Common sense” or “common sense thinking” is, in essence (though not necessarily without exception) discourse and behaviour that submits to the moral and cognitive control of the dominant social group established in magisterial institutions such as ruling political parties, prevalent religious communities, mass media, and the military. Spontaneous persuasion, another concept of Gramsci’s related to cultural hegemony, is the tool of persuasion applied over time, rationalised and imbued into social life (Verde and Rossi, 2024).

In *Masculinitie*s, Connell (2005) argues that hegemony among a particular group of men is neither static nor independent of its interaction with time, space, and social change (Connell, 2005: 77). In the same way one group of men will not inhabit a space of dominance and influence forever, the men that form part of a culturally hegemonic group are not necessarily hegemonic without exception. For instance, a heterosexual black man can form part of the hegemony insofar as his expression of masculinity is concerned (through norms and values he holds that may be patriarchal or heterosexist), but other social factors and cultural contexts may relegate his blackness, class, or nationality, perhaps, to the status of a subordinated or marginalised masculinity.

I suggest that this take on the relative fluidity or scale of hegemonic masculinity echoes Gramsci’s conceptualising of the complex interactions between members within a cultural hegemony, and members subordinate to it. One cannot possess or exert cultural hegemony without the consensus, consent, and even resistance of those under its influence. The relationship between members emblematic of the social norms and values inculcated into social life, and those antithetical to them, reveal how hegemonic masculinity is neither created nor maintained devoid of any other type, ranking, or expression of masculinity; and, thus, hegemony can take place and be carried out by men irrespective of other factors that otherwise subordinate them or relegate them to the fringes of society.

In this sense, then, one can describe hegemonic masculinity as intersectional (Crenshaw, 1991; Dharani *et al*, 2021). Given South Africa’s history of institutionalised segregation and exclusion, in which identity was categorised by race, the Constitution of South Africa post-apartheid went to great lengths to detail the many ways in which individuals and

communities were identified for the sake of integration and social inclusion. With a plethora of social categories to identify with, every South African became an individual embedded in layers of identity, exposed to the "multiple, intersecting, and concurrent positions of privileges and oppressions"[28].

Dharani *et al* (2021) distinguish between external and internal hegemony, describing external hegemony as men exerting control over women, while internal hegemony is described as "hierarchical classification of masculinities between men" (Dharani *et al*, 2021: 330). As this thesis addresses men in their experience of hegemonic masculinity, our discussion will focus on internal hegemony, and how men perceive and classify other men as well as themselves. In the findings chapters of this thesis, the men who participated in this study did not, at any point, describe themselves or others in the language of Connell's typologies (that is, hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, or marginalised), but rather described themselves or others in phrasing alluding to such terms. In the era of "toxic masculinity"[29], it has become more widely accepted for all genders, including men, to openly fault the behavioural and ideological traits within men or an expression of masculinity that demonstrates institutional power, ideological dominance, and/or cultural privileges over women and subordinated and marginalised expressions of masculinity.

Paradoxically enough, however, the fabric of South Africa's masculinities can still be considered a "patchwork of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983) in which culture and long-standing traditions regarding manhood among different ethnic groups holds great importance to much of the country's youth. This manifests in how many young South African men are perceived - by other men and other genders of different races and ethnic groups - to comprehend and demonstrate gender in "toxic" ways.

As aforementioned, while Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony describes the dominance of one social class over others, hegemony in practice is far less of a monolith. It more closely resembles the confluence of several factors and layers of identity, and the absence of privilege in one sense does not exclude an individual or community from embodying hegemony without exception. While South Africa's previously disadvantaged may not inhabit

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[28] Definition sourced from Patton, L.D., Shahjahan, R.A., & Osei-Kofi, N. (2010),Introduction to the Emergent Approaches to Diversity and Social Justice in Higher Education Special Issue, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, p. 270.

[29] Greater discussion regarding this term is given in *Section 7.1.*

high society or be benefactors of political power, hegemony in these communities can still manifest through gender-based violence, violence against the LGBTQ+ community, and ideology, customs, and claim over cultural privileges that supports this violence.

Connell's (2005) concept of the complicit man is based on her idea that the number of men who practise hegemony is rather small. I disagree with Connell on this point, on the basis that hegemonic masculinity need not be an uninterrupted practice to be considered hegemonic. That is, once again, that a man can be hegemonic in some ways, and not hegemonic in others. Hegemony is, as Connell's (2005: 77) argument goes, not unwavering, and if that is the case, the hegemonic aspects of any given man's behaviour thus need not be without fluctuation and interruption for his masculinity to still be considered hegemonic in some manner. Hegemony is not exclusively a condition of masculinity defined by power relations, but prevails through action, through norms and behaviours that enact a particular positioning of men.

To be clear, the definition of hegemonic masculinity that this thesis employs as the demonstration of institutional power, ideological dominance, and/or cultural privileges over women and non-hegemonic masculinities is to consider that the hegemony is not *exclusively* a condition of masculinity defined by power relations, but a phenomenon that prevails through action, through norms and behaviours that enact a particular positioning of men.

In *Masculinities*, Connell (2005) details how complicity as a typology of masculinity primarily has to do with benefitting from what she calls the patriarchal dividend. While Connell emphasises sexual politics as a numbers game, my only focus is the nature of complicit masculinity - how the defining feature of complicity among men is a covert, rather than "naked domination or an uncontested display" (Connell, 2005: 79) of hegemonic masculinity. If the definition of hegemonic masculinity of this thesis is the demonstration of institutional power, ideological dominance, and/or cultural privileges over women and non-hegemonic masculinities, this framework of this thesis argues that complicit masculinity describes men who do not dissent from or challenge the principle or practise of hegemony for the sake of preserving their patriarchal dividends. That is, the gains that men benefit from patriarchy (Connell, 2005: 79). Connell writes:

> It is tempting to treat them [complicit masculinities] as slacker versions of hegemonic masculinity - the difference between the men who cheer football matches on TV and

> those who run out into the mud and tackle themselves. But there is often something more definite and carefully crafted than that…
>
> A great many men who draw the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists (Connell, 2005: 79 - 81)

Indeed, much like hegemony, complicity is not a straightforward affair. It is one which necessitates, first and foremost, a degree of denial regarding the oppression that women and men who hold marginalised and subordinate positions must confront at the hands of institutional power, ideological dominance, and cultural privileges that men of greater means and standardised masculinities otherwise assume as liberties and birthright. While there may be cognisance regarding the disadvantages, and even abuse, that is faced by communities that occupy positions of a lower caste, complicit masculinities are just as cognisant - arguably even more so - of their status as beneficiaries of this same violent and unjust system.

An illustration of hegemony that may capture this complex arrangement of denial, contradiction, and collusion is, perhaps, the absence of a man from the frontlines of war who is a proponent of the ideology that pushes combat forward. He may join the masses in protest, but, privately, he is selective about matters of peace and equality - he understands that a true ceasefire may strip him of the privileges that an unjust society affords him.

Subordination and marginalisation are defined, respectively, by hegemony and complicity, and by authorisation. That is, that subordination is usually determined by hegemony and complicity, and marginalisation is determined in relation to what Connell (2005) terms as authorisation. Our discussion on subordination begins with compulsory heterosexuality, which privileges heteronormativity and sanctions expressions of sexuality outside of heterosex (Rich, 1980).

If we look at sexualities as symbolic constructs, in keeping in line with gender constructionism as the secondary theoretical paradigm to this thesis, homosexuality stands as the antithesis to heterosexuality within the institutional framework of a heteronormative society. Along the hierarchy of internal hegemony, gay men are subordinated to heterosexual men on the basis that queer men and homosex are defined by an absence of normative masculine traits

(Connell, 2005: 78; Rich, 1980; McHugh, 2007).

However, Connell (2005) writes, while “Gay masculinity is the most conspicuous…it is not the only subordinated masculinity. Some heterosexual men and boys are expelled from the circle of legitimacy” (Connell, 2005: 79). Once again, this is based on an absence of behaviours considered normative of masculinity. This subordination is informed by what hegemonic masculinity views as the misalignment of sex, gender, and desire - and whether a man is gay or heterosexual, their behaviour, appearance, and sexuality are somehow configured in a manner that does not meet the normative expectations of masculinity in their community (Butler, 1990). With that being said, this does not exclude gay men from occupying hegemony or complicity based on their personal configuration of these three factors.

As reported by the Human Research Council, while the Constitution of South Africa prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the South African LGBTQI+ community face violent persecution that is heavily premised on the heterosexist beliefs regarding sexuality - often spouted as tradition - held by various ethnic communities across the country (Sipungu, 2019). However, the degree to which queer men experience hate crimes and discrimination is often dependent on other identity markers, such as race and class. Additionally, some queer men find they are better able to move more easily through heterosexualised spaces because of their proximity to heterosexuality through manner, behaviour, and appearance that is not perceived as effeminate - an inconspicuous queerness that does not openly challenge heterosexual spaces and narratives (Sipungu, 2019).

While the latter do not invariably perform hegemony, one cannot argue that the performance of hegemony is precluded based on their sexuality or expression of masculinity alone. While their sexuality may render them subordinate, their sex and gender need not. In 2024, there exists an array of (often defamatory) descriptors for gay men, such as gay men who most closely resemble or mimic heterosexuality to the best of their ability, or those who take on effeminate behaviours and impressions openly and voluntarily (Connell, 2005).

In the context of South African masculinities, Mfecane (2020) contributes diversity to Connell’s subordinated queer masculinities by introducing the impact that initiation plays in how men are perceived by other men based on whether they have gone through rites of circumcision. While Mfecane speaks to Xhosa masculinity and initiation, many black ethnic communities in South Africa hold this practice as a coming-of-age ritual that makes men out of

boys. Mfecane's (2020) argument is to do with the idea that, under Connell's typologies, gay men are considered subordinate, but that in the amaXhosa context, whether manhood is bestowed upon someone is premised upon whether one has gone through the rites of *ulwaluko*[30] - irrespective of their sexuality. Mfecane (2020: 208) uses the instance of Zakes Mda, a famous South African novelist and poet who has been locally and globally recognised for his achievements - and despite this, understands that, in Xhosa tradition, he is not recognised as *indoda*[31], but rather, as *nkwenkwe*[32] because he did not participate in the rites of *ulwaluko.*

Zakes Mda is a heterosexual man married with kids. He is well-known and respected locally and internationally; a man whose alma mater includes a top-rated university in South Africa and tertiary education abroad. Yet, a gay Xhosa man who has been traditionally circumcised can be considered by his peers more a man than Mda, because cultural customs and beliefs do not regarding being gay as subordinate in and of itself. Rather, it is arguably the manner in which queer men conduct themselves that make them vulnerable to violence and persecution, not their sexual orientation on its own (Mfecane, 2020: 208).

Of course, this is not to say that queer men who have undergone *ulwaluko* do not face subordination. As aforementioned, a man's manner is a primary basis for subordination, and queer men who are not perceived as challenging heterosexist hegemonic spaces can move through these spaces relatively uncontested (Connell, 2005; Sipungu, 2019; Qambela, 20616). However, for those who do not assimilate, the threat of violence from other men is as persistent as it is for women.

Male rape, or men who perpetrate rape against other men, is violence of internal - as opposed to external - hegemony of at play (Dharani *et al*, 2021; Qambela, 2016). In the vein of Connell's argument regarding subordinated masculinity and its exclusion from circles of what makes a man and his expression of masculinity legitimate, sexual violence that takes place between men is arguably a severe demonstration - a hate crime - of how hegemonic masculinity punishes men who do not meet the normative expectations of masculinity (Qambela, 2016: 194). It is a practice that shuns any minor or unintended challenge to the institutional framework of a heteronormative society, subordinating not just queer men, but men who, according to the hegemonic party, are defined by a perceived absence of normative masculinity

[30] A Xhosa term meaning *traditional circumcision and initiation.*
[31] A Xhosa term meaning *man.*
[32] A Xhosa term meaning *uncircumcised boy.*

(Connell, 2005: 78; Rich, 1980).

Qambela (2016:194) discusses the ways in which violent practices of exclusion and subordination are present even in boyhood, as one boy child can hold another to gender accountability in wilfully threatening ways. What is termed corrective rape in South Africa rests on the aforementioned argument that means of subordination is punishment against the individual or community that challenges hegemonic masculinity and compulsory heterosexuality, the echoes of how the apartheid government attempted to remedy homosexuality through electroconvulsive therapy, chemical castration, and criminalisation (Qambela, 2016: 196).

While the thesis does not discuss or analyse in-depth incidents of sexual violence between men, it is important to recognise that such a crime is more prevalent in South Africa than is reported or publicised, but moreover, that hegemonic masculinities practice subordination against other masculinities the same way that hegemonic masculinities subordinate and sexually oppress women - that sexual violence is both a matter of external and internal hegemony (Dharani; Qambela, 2016).

Lastly, Connell discusses marginalised masculinities. Connell (2005) largely attributes marginalised masculinities to masculinities of colour - men consigned to the fringes of society because of racial relations developed by white supremacy, and historically promulgated by slavery and colonialism, particularly in the Global South - but marginalised masculinities can also refer to working-class masculinities, and masculinities of disability.

Authorisation refers to the social sanctioning that hegemonic masculinities grant marginalised masculinities to experience power and privilege without the latter possessing genuine power and privilege (Connell, 2005; 80 - 81). I must emphasise, once again, the *act* of hegemonic power as a definition formulated for this thesis in saying this: hegemonic masculinity as a behaviour is prevalent here as Connell speaks of authorisation as a means by which otherwise marginalised masculinities may experience hegemony. The implication of authorisation is that, by virtue of being marginalised, marginalised masculinities cannot be hegemonic by nature, or hegemonic by their own hand. Although I acknowledge and agree with Connell on this point, communities of marginalised masculinities do not invariably need authorisation - not in order to experience dominance and privilege over women, for instance, or over other marginalised and subordinate communities. In South Africa, an unfortunate number

of violent crimes are attributed to working-class masculinities, especially masculinities of colour living in impoverished conditions (Graaf and Heinecken, 2017; Jewkes and Morrell, 2017; Bhana et *al*, 2021). Albeit within particular limitations, even non-hegemonic masculinities are still able to experience and demonstrate institutional power, ideological dominance, and cultural privileges.

3.5 Characteristics of Ideological Dominance, Institutional Power, and Cultural Privilege

In this chapter, I have defined hegemonic masculinity as an expression of masculinity that demonstrates institutional power, ideological dominance, and/or cultural privileges over women and non-hegemonic masculinities. For this thesis, hegemonic masculinity is considered as an action or a series of actions taken, especially with the assumption of this chapter that gender is performative[33]. While Connell writes that "The number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small" (Connell, 2005: 79), and thus, very few men occupy the position of hegemony, I argue that a man need not need to occupy hegemony in its entirety for him to embody hegemony, even if in just a few instances.

Foucault (1976: 94) describes how power (read: hegemony) is an undertaking that is exchanged from one party to the next as each individual both experiences and wields hegemony. "Power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1976: 33). Under apartheid South Africa, there existed intersecting layers of oppression because there existed intersecting layers of hegemony, demonstrating less of a hard and immovable binary, and more of an unceasing negotiation between experiences of oppression and expressions of hegemony. Power does not just oppress one; it legitimises the other; and this need not be between parties external to each other, but within an individual themselves (Foucault, 1976). The hegemonic expression of masculinity that subjugates a man's blackness, his class, his sexuality, or his manner, etc. is the same hegemonic masculinity that legitimises his opinions, his wealth, how he treats women and other men, and so on.

What the thesis puts forward as hegemony as per the research conducted is the demonstration of ideological dominance, institutional power, and/or cultural privilege; and the

[33] See *Section 3.3.*

coming section details the *characteristics* of this ideological dominance, institutional power, and cultural privilege. Detailing exactly what is considered hegemonic for each race, indigenous community, and other communities of masculinity such as gay men, white Afrikaans versus White English-Speaking South African men, etc. is far beyond the scope of this research[34].

What the next section will attempt to do, however, is briefly delineate certain characteristics that, irrespective of cultural particularities, can be observed as hegemonic across South Africa's "patchwork of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983). The following subsections will address characteristics of hegemonic masculinity brought to the fore of discussion with the participants, and constitute the characteristics of ideological dominance, institutional power, and/or cultural privilege. That is to say that compulsory heterosexuality and gender essentialism; anti-vulnerability, violence, and control; and the modified moral order and patriarchal dividends are what this thesis puts forward as characteristics hegemonic masculinity[35].

3.5.1 Compulsory Heterosexuality and Gender Essentialism

Rich (1980) foregrounds her essay, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and the Lesbian Experience,* with an argument challenging the long-prevailing ideas that women are naturally and invariably sexually oriented toward men, and that lesbianism is an act of rebellion. Compulsory heterosexuality works to undermine the validity of homosexuality, reducing it to the inverse of heterosexuality - a second choice to the otherwise innate predisposition that men have toward women and women have toward men. The absence in popular discourse of the phenomenon taking place the other way around - that is, heterosexuality being the second choice, the inverse lifestyle - highlights the male-centric premise of identity and sexuality in heterosexuality. Moreover, it legitimises the exclusion of women, femininity, and women's agency in the matters of identity and sexuality (Rich, 1980). If, in the vein of compulsory heterosexuality:

a) society assumes heterosexuality as a criterion of gender accountability;

[34] Please note that the previous chapter *(see Sections 2.1.2, 2.1.3, and 2.1.4)* was an attempt to detail South African masculinities as far as is relevant to the findings of the research. It is not the purpose of this theoretical chapter to delve further into South Africa's complex masculinities, but to conceptualise hegemony and masculinities for the findings chapters of this research.

[35] I will not be providing detailed context behind these characteristics. Rather, the following subsections will be focused on positioning them in relation to this thesis's definition of hegemonic masculinity and the findings chapters. Context will be limited to foundational texts and concepts.

b) heterosexuality centres masculinity;
c) and masculinity is no more legitimised and sanctioned than when it embodies its most normative expression,

then the further away a man's expression of masculinity moves from heterosexuality, the likelier it will be considered effeminate. The same is true in reverse - the further away a man's expression of masculinity is from normative masculinity, the likelier a man will be considered gay. I detail this in this manner to account for findings analysed in Chapter Seven, when participants share their experiences of their masculinity being questioned for instances in which they do not express traits and values of normative masculinity[36].

Compulsory heterosexuality and gender essentialism feed into one another through cultural norms of heteronormativity and the institutionalisation of gender norms. Three primary assumptions of gender essentialism are that i) sex determines gender; ii) that there are only two sexes, and, subsequently, only two genders; and iii) that men and women share deeply-rooted and homogenous experiences of the world respectively (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Heyman and Giles: 2006; Wittig, 1980). Hegemonic masculinity uses these assumptions to invalidate expressions of masculinity and a man's relationship with his sexuality that do not fit into heteronormative experiences of gender and sexuality.

3.5.2. Anti-Vulnerability, Violence, and Control

Morrell *et al* (2012) detail the depth of South Africa's masculinities throughout the country's difficult socio-political past[37]. They highlight the threat and use of violence as a primary trait that distinguishes hegemony among South African masculinities - misogyny and gender-based violence as an inverse manifestation of vulnerability, wielded against communities perceived as weaker than (i.e. women, and subordinate and marginalised masculinities) in order to feel some sense of control. Control, thus, is another fundamental component of hegemony alongside violence.

Through the lens of hegemony, men are expected to demonstrate physical strength and toughness, distancing themselves from any suggestion of effeminate behaviour. Given patriarchy's long history of pathologising women's emotions and experiences of being made

[36] See *Sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4.*
[37] See *Sections 2.1.5* and *2.1.6.*

subordinate in a patriarchal society, emotions that demonstrate feelings other than strength and toughness are considered to render a man subordinate in the same social hierarchy that patriarchy privileges masculinity. This combination of toughness and physical strength further lends itself to the regard that violence is an acceptable way to establish dominance and assert control.

Mshweshwe (2020) writes that violence manifests in abusive relationships when an individual perceives themselves to be inferior in the social hierarchy outside of the private sphere. Violence is therefore a means of establishing control over another individual for the sake of the illusion of control over one's subaltern status in the social hierarchy, perceived or otherwise (Mshweshwe, 2020). The legitimation of patriarchy and male supremacy is arguably thus validated through cultural practices that evaluate masculinity based on the degree to which men express emotion and how they impose control over the circumstances that provoke vulnerability (Morrell *et al*, 2012; Mshweshwe, 2020).

3.5.3 The Modified Moral Order and Patriarchal Dividends

The gains that men receive from society simply as existing and moving through the world as men are what Connell describes as "patriarchal dividends" that grant men the "honor [sic], prestige, and right to command" (Connell, 2005: 82). Patriarchal dividends manifest as a myriad of cultural and material privileges that men enjoy at the expense of women; such as the wage gap between men and women, as unpaid domestic labour performed by women in the private sphere, and institutionalised sexism. While violence is certainly wielded by men against women to express dominance in some instances, one can think back to the principles of Gramsci's hegemony and how the moral and cognitive control and influence that the hegemonic group wields over a particular society does not happen invariably through coercion or physical force[38]. Rather, it is more often obtained consensually through the justification, normalisation, and internalisation of subordination to the social norms and values of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity (Hoare and Sperber, 2015). When responding to a woman or non-hegemonic masculinities with patriarchal norms and values - whether by persecuting, undermining, or silencing these communities - a man is exercising these patriarchal dividends that justifies and upholds his position in the gender hierarchy, both in the way of external and internal hegemony.

[38] See *Section 3.4*.

The modified moral order is an expression of patriarchy and how hegemonic masculinity responds to women and non-hegemonic masculinity. The modified moral order has been discussed in detail in Chapter Two with regard to hierarchical homosocial bonding[39]. Briefly, the modified moral order is the transgression of norms and accepted social etiquette regarding masculine aggression and men's engagement with their sexuality. Within the context of the modified moral order, aggression becomes an intrinsic part of how men engage with their sexuality.

Fjaer and Pederson (2015), authors of the concept of the modified moral order, situate the modified moral order in the context of drinking culture specifically. As I have discussed in the literature review - and as confirmed by participants - these transgressions are shared in any given space of hierarchical homosocial bonding, irrespective of alcohol consumption or the consumption of other substances[40]. What is important to note is that these spaces are not necessarily where these transgressions take place, but where such transgressions are disclosed - whether real or fabricated. As discussed, the nature of hierarchical homosocial bonding is that participants, afraid of being subordinated and perceived as effeminate, overestimate the degree of deviance of their peers and can resort to concocting tales of their own transgressions in order to assimilate into the space (Leone and Parrot, 2019).

3.6 Conclusion

I argue that hegemonic masculinity is a demonstration more than it is a classification alone that is based on certain properties, or a condition defined by power relations. Institutional power, ideological dominance, and cultural privilege manifest as principles of gender essentialism and compulsory heterosexuality; as power assumed through anti-vulnerability, violence, and control; and as privileges enjoyed and exploited through patriarchal dividends and the modified moral order. Specifying what this thesis means when it refers to hegemonic masculinity serves to provide greater connection between the paradigm of masculinities and the construct of hegemonic masculinity, and the findings of the research.

While I have not included any concepts of gender constructionism that are necessarily novel to the 21st century, the texts, theorists, and concepts that this theoretical chapter has

[39] See *Section 2.3.2.*
[40] See *Section 2.3.2.*

included provide the necessary groundwork of hegemonic masculinity as a nexus of meanings, ideology, norms and values that strategically work together to form a series of multiple masculinities.

The principles of Gramsci's cultural hegemony are fundamental in defining hegemonic masculinity, and, in particular, how Gramsci's cultural hegemony emphasises the ways in which patriarchal control is obtained and maintained not through invariable force, but through persuasion and rationalisation of the norms and values of the dominant group. Gramsci's cultural hegemony also serves to explain the stance of this thesis that the practice of hegemonic masculinity need not be without interruption - that just as masculinities shift in and out of hegemony through time, space, and social change, so can men as individuals move in and out of hegemony, occupying more than one typology at once, including that of hegemony. This is especially a valid argument in South Africa, where local masculinities have historically taken on several different layers of identity and intersectional oppressions and privileges due to colonialism and the policies of apartheid.

Connell's four typologies are fluid. While there are particular characteristics to hegemonic, complicit, subordinate, and marginalised masculinities, these classifications are easily intersectional if we view these typologies not merely as power relations or conditions of masculinity outside of a man's conduct, but *as* conduct. This is not to completely disregard Connell's view of masculinities as a numbers game, or as a matter of material circumstances - indeed, all four typologies depend on conditions of power relations relatively independent of actual demonstrations of behaviour. However, I refer to demonstrations of behaviour specifically in relation to hegemonic masculinity. While a man may not necessarily act marginalised or subordinated, he may certainly behave in ways that are hegemonic. This theoretical chapter, thus, has served to provide a template or lens for discussions of hegemony - as well as complicity, subordination, and marginalisation - in the findings analyses chapters.

Chapter Four
Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the qualitative methodology employed for this research, which utilised gender constructionism as how the experience of gender - and, specifically, masculinity - is assembled by individuals through their respective experiences and the meanings they glean from their respective communities both within and outside Rhodes University.

This chapter will discuss the participant recruitment and data collection processes, and means of analysis; the qualitative nature of the research and the methodology of constructionism, and, briefly, the profiles of the participants.

4.2 The Data Collection Process

In-depth, semi-structured interviews took place via social media and telephone calls to adhere to the national mandate of social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. Zoom, WhatsApp, and phone calls were the means through which my participants and I spoke, which did not come without its challenges. Zoom video calls were the default, but difficulties with internet access and connectivity on both my part and the part of some participants lent themselves to gathering data through WhatsApp calls, WhatsApp voice notes, and telephone calls. Three interviews were conducted off Zoom: one via a WhatsApp call, and another through a telephone call. In both instances, the participants and I experienced very little difficulty with connectivity and the flow of conversation. However, one interview was conducted through Whatsapp voice notes, which I found difficult in terms of my own ability to find the same organic flow in conversation that accompanied the other interviews.

I gathered data from twelve participants: men who were students at Rhodes University anytime between 2016 and 2018, and experienced either or both the catalysing events and the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList. After being informed that there was a second

#RUReferenceList in 2018, my initial plan was to explore the experiences of men who experienced the events of 2018 either or in addition to those of 2016, only to find that the #RUReferenceList of 2016 carried far more weight, consequences, and relevance amongst my participants.

Overall, the interviews were an interesting and enjoyable process, despite the absence of the face-to-face component. Zoom presented very few challenges, despite brief connectivity issues, and most of the participants were willing and able to speak freely in the capacity of a video call.

4.2.1 Overview of Qualitative Methodology

I employed a qualitative approach for my research, defined by Pathak *et al* (2013: 1) as an inquiry or solution to social issues of a humanistic or idealistic approach. Qualitative research provides the lens through which the world can understand how individuals and communities learn behaviours within and construct symbolic meanings from their respective environments, physical, social, and political (Moser, 2011: 2; Tenny *et al*, 2021). To observe human behaviour from a numeric standpoint via quantitative research is to undermine how significantly human behaviour is shaped by beliefs, ideologies, and both individual and collective experiences (Moser, 2011: 2). This qualitative lens provided me with the freedom and depth to address the unique and deeply personal sentiments with which men regard masculinity.

While it is difficult to capture sentiments, attitudes, and values behind specific behaviours via quantitative methods used to quantify information, qualitative research allows these to be explored through open-ended questions and conversations between researcher and participant (Tenny *et al*, 2021).

Fossey et al (2002) break down qualitative research into three aspects; namely, language, interpretation, and analysis. The first aspect of language is concerned with the patterns of communication among participants - in the instance of this research, the issue of language was in two respects. Firstly, English was the only language medium used in the data collection process, and secondly, particular phrasing was used on my end to communicate certain phenomena.

In response to this, English is the only language in which I am fluent. I hoped from the beginning of my research endeavour that individuals who offered their participation would be able and willing to express themselves in English, and all of them were. When some participants

occasionally expressed themselves in another language during the interview, I asked for clarity, and I have included these original phrases and their translations. This did not present much of a challenge, as these phrases were contextualised by the overall discussion as well as by the individuals themselves offering the English translation. Neither did particular phrases that I used to describe certain phenomena - namely, "locker room talk" and "toxic masculinity" - present significant challenges to the discussion. These phrases, their use in the interview schedule, and the subsequent discussions are discussed in greater detail in the findings chapters[41].

The second aspect of qualitative research according to Fossey *et al* (2002) is interpretation, and has to do with interrogating and exploring the subjective meaning of social phenomena. My decision to employ in-depth, semi-structured interviews stemmed from my research objectives, which were to explore how men at Rhodes University experienced hegemonic masculinity and the 2016 #RUReferenceList, to interrogate how hegemonic masculinities are inculcated and manifest on campus, and how the #RUReferenceList addressed hegemonic masculinity within the establishment. These objectives necessitated a degree of open-ended discussion in allowing the participants to describe these personal and highly unique encounters.

4.2.2 The Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was divided into three major sections: childhood and student life, sex and the media, and initiation and gender performativity. I have used the participants' childhood experiences to provide context to them as individuals; my intention here, thus, is not to suggest causal explanations between their childhood, and their experiences of masculinity and sexuality at Rhodes University.

Participants were asked questions that centred their beliefs and experiences around gender, sex, and masculinity. From the outset, I wanted the participant pool to be as diverse as possible regarding race, class, and sexual orientation. The number and diversity of participants were to capture a manifold of experiences, and I am in no way under the impression that my findings can be generalised. My aim in conducting this research in the manner that I did was to explore the inner worlds of a small sample of men who, diverse as they are, are neither held up to be representative of their society nor of Rhodes University. Though I hoped from the outset

[41] See *Chapters Six* and *Seven*, respectively.

of my research that I would be able to speak to men with a wide range of expressions, perspectives, and experiences of masculinity, I knew that it was unlikely that men with conservative or hegemonic expressions and ideas of masculinity, sexuality, and gender would come forward to speak with me[42].

4.2.3 Participant Recruitment, Criteria, and Sampling

A variety of non-probability sampling methods were used to recruit participants. I employed purposive sampling as my overall sampling method, with the following criteria:

1. Participants were male-identifying. This is to say, those participants felt they presented to others and experienced life, and, specifically, campus life, through the socialisation of masculinity;
2. Participants were Rhodes University students anytime between 2016 and 2018, experiencing either or both the catalysing events and the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList.

Participant recruitment began with a group of known contacts through social media platforms. From this point forward, my data collection process as a whole became non-probable: I chose participants based on acquaintanceship, friendship, and convenience (Naderifar *et al*, 2017). From the men closest to me, and those men I approached who indeed took an interest in participating, I engaged in snowball sampling and recruited further participants. This mode of sampling offered up a handful of students, as did voluntary responses to a public notice posted on social media regarding the study. Thematic analysis was used to categorise and analyse the data[43].

The #RUReferenceList was a highly controversial movement on campus, sparking various online debates and creating factions within the student body[44]. I recall from first-hand experience of being a student on campus at the time that, while there were some men who were open to engaging in the subsequent discourse regarding masculinity and men's sexuality, there were many others who did not readily or voluntarily engage in these discussions as openly. This was echoed in my attempts to recruit participants, especially considering that, at the time that I was ready and had been cleared through ethical review by the Rhodes University Human

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[42] See *Section 4.2.3.*
[43] See *Section 4.2.4.*
[44] *Section 1.1.*

Research Ethics Committee to commence data collection, the #RUReferenceList had happened six years prior. Given the contention of the movement, and how many men responded to the backlash against masculinity, I understood that it might be very difficult to recruit participants who were willing to rehash what it meant to be a man on campus during the #RUReferenceList.

I also knew from the outset that being a woman researching the masculine experience of the highly controversial #RUReferenceList would compromise the number of participants who came forward; I was not under the impression that a great deal of men would be eager to speak with me about their lived realities under the tense, gendered social climate of 2016. I therefore began my data collection process with men who knew and trusted me - I wanted to believe that, as their friend, they would understand that I was less likely to make judgements on their experiences as men and their opinions regarding the #RUReferenceList[45].

However, I do recognise that this reveals a major weakness of using interviews as a form of data collection regarding such matters that hold controversy and contention - that is, matters of sexuality and gender in the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList and #MeToo. To ask of someone their potentially unpopular opinions and sensitive experiences about an era and its complexity inevitably requires a degree of vulnerability on the part of participants that will not always elicit honesty. While my research prioritises subjective truths or experiences of an objective phenomenon, even that subjectivity may be impossible to verify.

I believe, though, that what *was* gained from interviews as the data collection process is far greater. What was, by and large, expressed was the appreciation of the opportunity to meditate upon their experiences of the #RUReferenceList and Rhodes University as an institution years later, and have the opportunity to share things that, perhaps, they would not have shared in a space that would have revealed their identity to others.

Doc* and Greenshirt* are two participants who expressed what they appreciated about the interview, the both of them acknowledging that what they shared in their respective interviews are issues and opinions that they had largely not discussed with others, or had articulated even to themselves[46]

[45] While I recognise the 12 participants is a relatively small sample for a Ph.D. thesis, I have tried here to explain why it was difficult even reaching 12 participants. Please see *Sections 1.1* and *1.2 for* further context.
[46] Participants are formally introduced in Chapter Five. *See Section 5.2.*

> It's great to think about this stuff, you know. I haven't spoken about it in a long time. Especially this candidly (Interview with Doc, 2022*).

> I don't think I've actually heard myself saying half the things I've said out loud. I don't think I've really had much of an opportunity to voice these opinions. I usually just have [these] internal monologues. It's fun for me to finally have a way to express all these things that I'm having internally, these conversations that I'm having internally (Interview with Greenshirt, 2022*).

The effects of phenomena as significant and momentous to a society or a community on the human experience - the subjective truths of many, irrespective of the degree to which they can be representative of their larger community or society - is my primary priority as a qualitative researcher. It is this, I believe, that is the greatest strength of the semi-structured interview as a means of data collection: the assemblage of individual experiences and perspectives in the pursuit of individual truths.

Otherwise, I do feel that I reached out rather extensively to strangers - men with whom I had had little to no contact before sampling - to realise my desire to have a truly diverse pool of participants regarding race and culture, but also of opinion and lived experience. Though this means of sampling was hardly successful - most of these strangers did not respond at all to my requests - it is not for my lack of trying to secure a heterogeneous sample.

I did not ask for or desire contacts who all shared the same views; I only did hoped that my research would have nuance and variety in the opinions, values, and experiences brought forward. The richness of the complexity and the controversy of the #RUReferenceList was not lost on me, and I did, admittedly, hope for data that reflected that same intricacy and debate.

My use of snowball sampling was not very extensive, however; only three participants availed themselves through the use of snowball sampling. Though this meant that my data collection process was slower than I would have liked, I did not seek snowball sampling for every occasion that it presented itself. That is, I did not seek to recruit participants through every known contact. I wanted to reduce as far as possible the possibility of landing up with a homogenous group of subjects as, of course, a participant would likely direct me to friends and colleagues with similar experiences and perspectives (Fossey *et al*, 2002: 726). Upon reflection,

however, this may have been short-sighted on my part, for the three participants I managed to recruit through snowball sampling had very different experiences and perspectives from their friends who directed them to me. Perhaps, had I been more confident in my known contacts' respective diverse friend groups or had experienced a far greater need for snowball sampling than I did, I might have found this to be a trend: a variety of responses and attitudes regardless of friendships or alliances through snowball sampling.

4.2.4 The Data Analysis Process

The thesis employs thematic data analysis. The data analysis process can be categorised into two major approaches: discovery-focused and meaning-focused (Fossey *et al*, 2002: 71). A discovery-focused approach seeks to find patterns amongst different groups of data through text that is coded to establish connections through segments of information gathered from the data collection process. Grounded theory or thematic analysis are types of analyses that utilise discovery-focused approaches, and the latter is one of the methodologies that I employed in my research. Defining thematic analysis involves:

> A constant comparative method, meaning a progressive process of classifying, comparing, grouping, and refining groupings of text segments to create and then clarify the definition of categories, or themes, within the data (Fossey *et al*, 2002: 72).

The design of my interview schedule may show that I identified themes from the data segment by segment, making thematic analysis an uncomplicated and obvious choice for part of my data analysis process. The thematic analysis further serves the purpose of having an innate sense of comparison between coded data that is easy to retrieve and create meaning therein.

It is a type of analysis that speaks to rigour and trustworthiness in qualitative research, demanding transparency in how it is accomplished in research. It is a process that demands a researcher to be clear and forthcoming in their actions and assumptions in how they went about utilising this particular analytical approach (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). The danger in a researcher not disclosing the aforementioned is ambiguity around how certain themes came about and whether interpretations of the data were made in the presence of the researcher's unexplored biases. Kiger and Varpio (2020: 2) mention the flexibility of thematic analysis, and indeed, it is

suitable for the range of elements used in my data analysis process as a method that can speak to social, structural, and cultural contexts found in the data. The purpose, therefore, in the use of thematic analysis in this thesis is to identify not just themes that highlight men's experiences, but ways in which these experiences are gendered and how this gendered lens is culturally, socially, and structurally informed.

Tesch's (Fossey *et al*, 2002: 71) second approach, meaning-focused analysis, prioritises individual lived realities and the meanings that participants attribute to their own experiences as opposed to the researcher finding meaning in their experiences on their behalf.

4.3 Conclusion

A clear and extensive analysis of the research question at hand was reliant on the research methodologies discussed here. The emphasis of qualitative research on individuals' experiences and interpretations of their respective realities is what the research is centred upon and is aided by its focus on beliefs and ideologies that make up subjective reality.

Constructionism as a research paradigm frames my methodology process, a framework that more specifically deals with the ways in which individuals make meaning of their respective environments based on symbols and interpretation. Gender constructionism applies to how the men in my research navigate and understand phenomena and their individual experiences therein as per the series of behaviours and norms that govern their environment in relation to the constructs and expectations of gender around them and those which they have internalised.

The interview as a means of data collection is not without flaws, but I believe that it still stands as the most ideal way to have gathered the individual experiences and subjective truths of the participants. The #RUReferenceList was as divisive as it was unifying, and the interviews highlighted the heterogeneous nature - no matter how small the sample size - of the masculinities at Rhodes during this time, and the masculinities that inhabit the institution's hegemonic spaces more generally.

Chapter Five
Boys Don't Cry - The Socialisation of Hegemonic Masculinity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter marks the beginning of the data analysis, and begins with the introduction of the participants, briefly looking at their background. While this chapter is not meant to infer causation between participants' childhoods and how they deal with masculinity as adults or express themselves as men on the Rhodes University campus as addressed in subsequent chapters, it introduces their socialisation into hegemonic gender performance, and its qualities of anti-vulnerability, compulsory heterosexuality and gender essentialism that later feature as spaces, ideology, and models of normative masculinity.

5.2 Participants

12 participants were recruited for this research. While some informants have been given pseudonyms, other informants are named. In discussing the matter of pseudonyms with the participants, some participants specifically asked to be named. They either felt particularly strongly about not having a pseudonym because they wanted to be completely transparent, or they seemed to simply not care to have a pseudonym for reasons that were not articulated to me.

Matters of confidentiality and anonymity with my participants were fully explained to each participant prior to their respective interviews, both in an official document approved through ethical review by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee and immediately prior to the commencement of each interview. I do not believe it would have been fitting of me to impose pseudonyms onto participants who unequivocally expressed their desire to be named, particularly in research that is so vulnerable in nature. The #RUReferenceList honoured the experiences of communities that had for so long been secret and enclosed in shame. The testimonies of the research participants are experiences that deserve to be told in whatever manner the participants see fit, and I believe it right to honour their wishes to be identified by whatever moniker they felt comfortable being identified as.

Regarding those participants with pseudonyms, these were pseudonyms that participants came up with themselves, except in the case of X. He did not want to be named, and insisted that I came up with a pseudonym for him. I chose X in the hopes that it does not insinuate or convey anything about the participant that he has not consented to (e.g. language, culture, personality traits, etc.).

Please note that participants with pseudonyms have been marked with an asterisk (*) at first mention.

5.2.1 Participants - Background and Context

I describe here some context of each of the twelve participants - such as anecdotes and values of being a boy-child, their profession, and what they studied at Rhodes University - that they shared with me during our interviews in 2022.

The primary objective of this thesis is to explore how men at Rhodes University experienced hegemonic masculinity and the 2016 #RUReferenceList. This chapter is in no way meant to imply that the information that I provide here regarding the participants' childhood is causal to how the participants experienced masculinity and their sexuality as adult students on campus, or how they experienced hegemonic spaces and the #RUReferenceList at Rhodes University.

Rather, it is a brief glimpse into how these men were socialised into masculinity in their families and communities as children, in the attempt to contribute greater insight into the men who spoke with me.

*James**

James, unemployed, is a 24-year-old black Kenyan man who was raised in England as a young child before relocating to South Africa as a permanent resident. He was a student at Rhodes University from 2018 to 2019.

His community in England was very accepting, and the family was integrated easily. His neighbourhood felt very accepting, though his experience being one of the very few black children at school was challenging. Though James was a happy child within the home, being at school saw him retreat into a withdrawn, recalcitrant child who felt misplaced.

However, when the family relocated back to Kenya, life became far more peaceful. He

expresses how strange it was to be in an environment full of other black students.

With his father often abroad, his mother was the primary caregiver. She was "no-nonsense" (Author's interview with James, 2022), and instilled in him the need to do the right thing, and to do what was expected of him.

> She just needed me to be a good respectful young man; to be respectful to my elders…and to be thankful [for what I have].
> (Author's interview Interview with James, 2022.)

*Doc**

Doc, a research intern, is a 24-year-old white man who was born and raised in the Free State. He was a student at Rhodes University from 2015 to 2019, who graduated with an MA in Industrial Sociology.

On discussing his childhood, Doc talks about how his mother ran a creche on the property of their home, and he helped with taking care of the young children there. His mother was his and his younger brother's primary caregiver, and his father traveled for work. His mother instilled in him the core value of generosity, of helping others in need.

*Seeker**

Seeker is a 32-year-old black man who was born and raised in the rural Eastern Cape. Before attending Rhodes University for his postgraduate studies, he was an undergrad student at Fort Hare. Before that, he spent three years at Bible school. Seeker was raised by grandparents, whom he called *mama* and *tata*, and subsequently called his parents *sisi* and *buthi*[47].

The communities he grew up in were communal, neighbourly environments. These communities were largely agricultural, and Seeker grew up around farming, and collected water from the river as a child.

His grandmother was his primary caregiver, as his grandfather still worked in Johannesburg at the time. Still, he learned from both of his grandparents the values of discipline and *ubuntu*[48]. Spirituality also played a significant role in the home. His grandparents, once

[47] Xhosa terms for *mother, father, sister,* and *brother,* respectively.
[48] Seeker* describes *ubuntu* here as the condition of "being neighbourly, sharing, loving people, being a people's person" (Author's interview with Seeker, 2022*).

Christian, were also involved in traditional African ceremonies. As a child, Seeker's belief in God broadly reflected the beliefs of his grandparents, but as he grew up, he got to distinguish between the Christian teachings he would learn at school, and the traditional African spirituality of his household.

*Sipho**

Sipho is a 25 year-old black man from Limpopo. He is a trainee insurance broker, and while he has no dependents, he says he pays "Black Tax[49]" (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022). He studied at Rhodes University from 2015 to 2019.

While his family moved around often, he identifies one particular close-knit, middle-class community in Limpopo, as the most significant environment of his childhood. He considers both of his parents to have been his primary caregivers in childhood, and though it was a Christian home, the family did not attend church often. He was given the freedom to make his own decisions, but he was still expected by his parents to identify as a Christian.

The values inculcated in his home during his childhood were to be a good person and do the right thing, taught that bad decisions had bad consequences. These consequences were often in the form of "hidings"[50] (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022).

*Sihle**

Sihle is a 28-year-old black man with one dependent, his daughter. He completed both his undergraduate studies and MA degree at Rhodes University. While undertaking his doctoral studies in Higher Education, he also works for the Department of Higher Education.

He was raised in Ekurhuleni by his single mother, and describes his childhood community as defined by poverty, and not particularly close-knit. However, it was a happy childhood. He grew up with what he describes as "Christian values", (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022) and attended church with his family.

> We used what we had, and we had to be happy with what we had.

[49] A South African term for the practice whereby an earner in a family gives a portion of their income to other members of their family, particularly close family or their guardians out of obligation and/or a feeling of family responsibility.
[50] Corporal punishment.

(Author's interview Interview with Sihle, 2022).

*Gerald**

Gerald* is a 28-year-old white man, and is a lecturer who studied at Rhodes University from 2014 to 2017. Born and raised in Johannesburg's wealthy suburbs on a large plot of land, he describes his childhood as very privileged. His parents divorced in his prepubescent years, and while he was "raised by women", he identifies his grandmother as his primary caregiver.

> She was the rock.
> (Author's interview Interview with Gerald, 2022*).

*Peter**

Peter is a 28-year-old white man, and studied Journalism during his time at Rhodes University from 2013 to 2018.

He was raised in Johannesburg, in a white, middle-class suburban area, and grew up in a single-parent household. He described himself as a "shy kid kid, not particularly sporty" (Author's interview with Peter, 2022) who was instead involved in cultural and non-profit activities. He would not describe his childhood as being defined by a sense of community - even through the school environment, a sense of community was only brought on by fun days and the like, not on the average day.

Peter's mother was a very hands-on mother in his early childhood, and his grandmother was the secondary caregiver. However, Peter encountered abuse and a degree of neglect when his mother remarried in later years. However, his mother remained a very good provider.

*Petros**

Petros is a 28-year-old white man who was a Rhodes University student from 2016 to 2019. He did his Honours Degree in Geography, and, prior to his time as a student, he was in the military abroad for a year of conscription.

Petros was raised in both King Williams' Town and East London. He enjoyed King Williams' Town, where he had a lot of friends, while, in his words, East London felt "hostile and exclusive" (Author's interview with Petros, 2022).

While his father lived at home, he was not always around, and his mother was the primary caregiver. She raised her children with love, but Petros recognises that being the primary caregiver was tough for her.

The family went to church, which had a good community, but otherwise, he describes being raised with basic, Christian values, with the exception of any kind of emphasis on sin or virtue. “Typical, secular values”, he describes it (Author’s interview with Petros, 2022).

*X**

X is a black gay man who did his MA in Sociology at Rhodes University in 2019, and, at the time of this interview, was undertaking his doctoral studies in the Western Cape.

Unfortunately, while every other participant’s interview was recorded from start to finish, I neglected - out of sheer forgetfulness - to record my interview with X until well into his time on campus as a Rhodes University student. I no longer have the written notes that I took downtook regarding his childhood and can no longer reach him via social media; regrettably, thus, I am unable to provide context for X* to the same degree of the other participants.

*Kundai**

Kundai is a black pharmacist in his late twenties who studied at Rhodes University from 2014 to 2020. He was born in Zimbabwe, and was raised in a military camp. When the military camp began to face growing political intimidation in the uprising against the former Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, Kundai and his family spent the next few years moving around in hiding around Zimbabwe and South Africa before Kundai eventually began his tertiary studies.

While he identifies the military camp, his high school outside the military camp, and Rhodes University as significant communities in terms of understanding and relating to his sexuality, it was his childhood in the military camp where he was fully able to be himself, made confident by the acceptance of his community. In his own words, he was “allowed to be feminine” (Author’s interview with Kundai, 2022). While the community embraced him, they did not talk about the implications of his manner and the idea that he might be gay.

The military camp was very close-knit. It was a gated community approximately the size of the Rhodes University campus that had its own schools, clinics, supermarkets, churches, and other such institutions. It was very isolated, and the only environment that Kundai knew

until he left the camp for high school: a boarding school outside of the camp.

He considers his parents to be both his primary caregivers, but as they were very busy, his closest caregiver was his nanny that raised him from childhood into adulthood. He calls her a "deputy parent; even now, she feels like family". She instilled in Kundai the core value of extending yourself to others. She sacrificed herself, and Kundai applies this value in what he does for others as a man.

> If I choose to help someone, I will help them above and beyond.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

However, the values that were enforced in his household by his parents was what he calls *abantu bazothini syndrome*[51], which prioritises the sentiments of the community above how you feel as an individual.

> Some things are allowed to happen in the home, but when guests are around, it is a different story. At home, I can wear small shorts, but when guests come over, I have to wear longer pants. At home, my father consults mother for her opinions and decisions. But when guests come over, he tells her what he has decided. In the Shona culture, you do not consult your wife.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Other values enforced in the household were respect for one's elders, and downplaying one's success and achievements.

*Greenshirt**

Greenshirt is a 26-year-old black man who completed his Honours Degree in Sociology. He was a Rhodes University student from 2013 to 2019, and was raised in a township in East London.

Greenshirt describes his family and childhood environment as "nothing of interest. Normal…nothing strange or strenuous" (Author's interview Interview with Greenshirt, 2022). He was close with his mother, lived with his grandmother, and his father was not a big part of

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[51] Zulu/Xhosa term for *What will people say?*

his life. He had what he terms a "conservative" childhood, raised with values about avoiding vices and bad company.

Asakhe

Asakhe is a 24 year-old black man doing his MA at Rhodes University. Born in the Transkei, he grew up as the second born among six children. Church was a significant part of family life, and since the children lived with each other in the absence of a guardian or parental figure as teenagers, there was no discrimination regarding chores or expectations based on gender within the home.

In his younger years, Asakhe's primary caregiver was his mother, who taught him and his siblings the importance of land, God, and respect for their elders.

> When you speak to an older person, you say, *we-mama*[52], hi *boetie.* When I came into the Rhodes community, professors were distinguished and prominent people in society. They would say, my name is John, and I would be like, John? *Hayi*[53], you're a professor, I can't be calling you by your first name.
> (Author's interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

Luka

Luka is a 28-year-old black man with one daughter who has been a Rhodes University student since 2013. When his father died, the family moved to Limpopo and young Luka was raised in a rural area, where everyone spoke Sepedi and there lived no white people in the vicinity. Luka describes his childhood environment as working-class, poor, and characterised by an aspect of peasantry. Every year, his grandmother would plough *mabele*[54], and the family would go to the field for agricultural activities.

> School wise, the school was shit. In terms of the quality, the teachers, the things we were given, it was shit. You had to work on your own. In primary school, I thought if I

[52] Transcribing Asakhe's interview after the fact, it is unclear what he was trying to say. Given the context of the quote, I believe he might have meant this phrase as a greeting.
[53] In this context, *hayi* is a Xhosa exclamation meaning *no.*
[54] *Sorghum.*

> didn’t become a scientist, I would become a soccer player. And if that didn’t work, I would do something that would concern art and music and shit like that. So soon enough, I start to realise this football stuff was not going to work. So I started focusing more on my education.
> (Author’s interview with Luka, 2022).

His mother was the family’s primary caregiver until the family moved to Limpopo. From then on, his grandmother raised him throughout his teenage years. Regarding the values he was raised with, he mentions religion as significant. At the University of Cape Town, where he began his tertiary education before he came to Rhodes University, he began to have issues with his faith.

> When I got to Rhodes and started doing philosophy, I started having the boldness inside my spirit to really sort of question my faith.

> So I started to question myself at that level, which philosophy helped me with. Because this thing, the fear of God, is beat inside you so that you never think of ever going against it. It’s a life changing process [to question it].
> (Author’s interview Interview with Luka, 2022.)

5.2.2 Hegemony and the Boy-Child: An Education of Violence and Coercion

In inquiring after the participants’ early childhood, I asked the men I spoke with to share with me the first time they can recall being taught that a behaviour that they had demonstrated was not considered masculine in the normative sense.

Gramscian cultural hegemony is largely defined in the absence of violence. Successful, ongoing hegemony is power wielded through logic and common sense, and established through consent which is ritualised through justifying, normalising, and internalising subordination (Verde and Rossi, 2024).

However, the testimonies of participants suggest that, in childhood, this process is not necessarily without violence, or the threat of violence. Anti-vulnerability as a boy-child was a major feature of being educated in normative masculinity through discourse rooted in gender

essentialism and compulsory heterosexuality - discourse that condoned sensitivity and imposed sexual scripts onto innocuous pastimes and behaviours. The accounts of the participants suggest that learning hegemony and the socialisation of masculinity was embedded with a degree of violence as opposed to non-violence, and compulsion as opposed to consent. I include this section, and the aforementioned argument, only as further historical context to the participants and how they grew up, and not as an objective to or focus of the research, or related in any way to their experiences as adult men at Rhodes University.

> You're always told to stop crying [as a boy]. I don't think the expression 'man up' was ever used. But whether it was used jokingly or not, the expression, 'I'll give you something to cry about' was used if you were to cry. That statement is quite abusive, but when you've done something wrong and you're hit as a child, and you start crying, or you're going to get hit and you start crying, or you do something wrong and you start crying, and it's like, well, I'll give you something to cry about; why're you crying? And that just makes you cry even more. That makes you more scared. Retroactively, it was difficult always being told not to cry. And being stopped from processing these emotions.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022).

Feelings of intimidation and fear in moments of sensitivity for Gerald epitomise the anti-vulnerability expected of masculinity.

> [My grandmother] was a loving and kind and was a very soft woman, but when it came to those times of discipline, it was kind of like, don't show vulnerability, and accept the punishment.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022).

Similarly for Seeker, his grandmother encouraged masculinity that condoned - and to some extent, encouraged - violence if and when necessary.

> Growing up, especially in the Eastern Cape environment, when you're a male, you're

called a *nkwenkwe*, and there are certain things that *amankwenkwe*[55] do. So from about the age of eight, when you're taught small things. Things like *nkwenkwe uyakhala*[56]. [My uncle] would teach me how to box…and he would teach me how to fight. I remember being in the field and having a fight with one of the boys who did beat me up. So I went back home to my granny, and she said *suxele*[57]. Learn to stand up for yourself and fight. (Author's interview with Seeker, 2022)

While hegemonic masculinity is not invariably demonstrated by older men for Gerald and Seeker, the anti-vulnerability and control are communicated by women who hold normative ideas of masculinity that stem from their family's cultural norms, and translated into how boys are supposed to behave.

Seeker's quote about being taught the things that *amankwenkwe* do highlight the educational aspect of hegemonic masculinity. If not an education within the household, then in the school environment. The "common sense" of hegemonic masculinity as norms and values of the dominant caste is actioned as the curricula of an institution of education would be, a tool of persuasion applied through behaviours that were exhibited, and discourse that was shared in everyday life though one's family, friends, or peers.

For Sihle, it was outside the home where the world was gendered through the persistent criticisms of his friends regarding the housework he did in the household.

> I have a sister which (sic) is older than me and there was no difference between me and her [at home] - I would do everything she did, and she did everything I did.
>
> Outside the home, there was peer pressure. You know as guys, we would have those conversations where people would say, no you can't do stuff like that. I would have to rush home and cook and they would say, no, you have a sister, you can't be doing stuff like that.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

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[55] Xhosa word for *boys.*
[56] Xhosa term for *boys don't cry.*
[57] Xhosa word for *don't tell.*

Kundai and Sipho experienced very clear demonstrations, and not just discourse, of hegemonic masculinity. They encountered hegemonic masculinity as not a concept, but an embodiment of anti-vulnerability in the very form of violence, or, at least, cruelty.

> When I was dumped into [high school]...this is when I was like, oh, I'm different. Having such a small voice is not masculine enough, walking a certain way is not for guys. So I realized that in grade eight. That's when it was brought to my attention, when people start mocking you or start talking about it.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

For Kundai and Sipho, the ways in which they expressed themselves as adolescents garnered negative attention through public shaming of self-expression, and, in Sipho's case, subsequent feelings of vulnerability.

> In high school, I did get bullied and I did feel the pain of bullying. Not physical bullying but verbal bullying. People calling you names and all sorts of crappy things, and you'd cry about it and you're not happy. My family couldn't process it as me going through pain and they were like, look at you, you're such a natural actor. Stop acting. They didn't take my pain seriously. My feelings were denied. I wasn't allowed to cry. I cried in private, cried to my dog.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

I wish to highlight that it was not merely the threat of violence, or violence as an expression of one's masculinity - but violence wielded against the participants that played a role in how the participants learned hegemony. This is not intended to imply that learning hegemony necessitates violence, but rather, that violence is certainly not absent from how the boy-child is made to internalise hegemony. This is especially when it is part of a rite of passage, or a collaborative experience meant to demonstrate a unified front.

> But this one thing, *ndoda ya-khali,* was when we went to the initiation school. There, it's painful. A wound, it doesn't matter how small or how big it is - it was very painful.

> And this thing of resilience and *mbekhezele* has always been associated with women and marriage - but men, they *mbekhezele* a lot, in society.
> (Author's interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

In initiation and traditional circumcision, young men are taught a variety of things that are associated with the roles of men and elders in their respective cultures. However, initiation and traditional circumcision in South Africa has come under great scrutiny in the media in the past decade for the reports of violence against initiates that have emerged. The initial wound, unaided by Western medicine, is often heightened by limitations put on food and water, and the consumption of drugs and alcohol, which prolong the healing process and exacerbate the injury through dehydration and fatigue (Makubuya *et al*, 2023). The initial need to *mbekhezele* - to endure and to be strong - from the injury itself is aggravated by the aforementioned environmental factors, and the overall homosocial processes of these spaces that discourage any demonstration of pain or discomfort (Makubuya *et al*, 2023).

This process, as reported by 41 articles that were published by 16 South African newspapers (such as the *Sowetan*, the *Sunday Independent*, the *Daily Dispatch*, and the *Mail & Guardian*, between 2016 and 202), can include abduction, torture, bullying, and sexual abuse between the initiates, and between initiates and elders (with the elders as the perpetrators). The violence is accompanied by significant psychological challenges in dealing with the trauma of the initiation process. Revealing one's grief and suffering is to undermine the ideals of hegemonic masculinity that create and propagate notions of anti-vulnerability, and to break the secrecy around violent fraternities of initiation and traditional homosocial processes (Makubuya *et al*, 2023; Hammaren and Johansson, 2014; Vaynman *et al*, 2020)[58].

While Doc's account below is not an experience of initiation per se, it is one of of homosociality in which same-sex space encounters in spaces commonly associated with masculinity and the act of male-bonding uphold and maintain aspects of hegemonic masculinity (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014)[59].

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[58] While the inclusion here of a participant's experience with initiation school is to call attention to acts of violence that often accompany how young men are taught hegemonic masculinity in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding, the thesis recognises that *ulwaluko* is a practice that carries cultural nuance and cannot be reduced to violence or hegemonic masculinity alone.
[59] See *Section 2.3.1.*

> Let's say you're up all night, drinking, and guys at the bar want to get into a fight…I can remain calm, but a lot of times I have friends who are super aggressive. I'm trying to keep the peace, and I care for the guy who's trying to fight us, the aggressor. Then afterward, your friends say, what the heck, why didn't you back us up?
> (Author's interview with Doc, 2022.)

Questioning how Doc refrains from submitting, unquestioningly, to the violence that his friends partake in highlights how, in spaces of homosociality, there is an expectation that participants identify with a "brotherhood", demonstrating the same values regarding masculinity with their friends or peers as part of the bonding process, or process of socialising and re-socialising men into a particular hegemonic masculinity (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014; Vaynman *et al*, 2020). Furthermore, the subsequent criticism that Doc received shows the nature of gender accountability of the incident, and the scrutiny that he faced for neglecting to meet with violence the men who challenged his friends (West and Zimmerman, 1987)[60].

Greenshirt aptly describes the nature of the behaviours boys often exhibit in homosocial spaces in building relationships with one another, and often, these relationships can be built on hegemonic power dynamics which may exclude and subordinate others to the standards of masculinity that young men have been made to internalise (Qambela, 2016).

> Boys generally are a bit rough with each other, not just physically but emotionally. They make fun of each other, they pick on each other all the time, they point out each other's flaws.
> (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

In describing learning masculinity and being confronted with hegemonic masculinity in their childhoods, many of the participants describe the injurious and corrective behaviours used against them, by family or friends, to avoid or rectify effeminacy. Peter describes himself in childhood as a "very gay boy", and understood from an early age that he was different from other boys, particularly through the homophobia and abuse of his stepfather's attempts to, in

[60] The experiences that participants have had of hierarchical homosociality and gender accountability will be discussed in Chapter Six (see *Section 6.4).*

Peter's words, "butch him up" (Author's interview with Peter, 2022).

> We used to have large family gatherings. When I was 7 years-old, I was crying [at a family gathering] and my mother's side was so disappointed in me crying as a male child. I felt the disdain, and I didn't even know those people. I felt so downtrodden. I could understand certain phrases like *moffie*[61].
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

Many of the participants experienced the Othering of certain aspects of their personalities in boyhood and adolescence. This was sometimes through physical force, though other times, this through discourse - through degrading and slanderous language - that enforced ideals of compulsory heterosexuality and the idea of "misconfigured" masculinities (Butler, 1990; Connell, 2005).

> There was this girl who knew I always had the music that had just popped off over the weekend. And I remember this one time she was in a fight. This guy that she liked, they were in an argument. And he was like, 'no guy listens to any of that shit'. And she was like, 'James listens to it'.
>
> And that guy was like, 'fuck James. He's gay'. Why, just because [the songs are] singing about love? They legit called me gay for, like, years. It really fucked me up mentally. Them calling me gay made me feel less masculine.
> (Author's interview with James, 2022).

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter is titled *Boys Don't Cry* because of the overwhelming responses I received from participants in my question of what behaviour or behaviours they first understood were seen as non-masculine in their childhoods. These behaviours, if not the act of crying, are associated with vulnerability, sensitivity, and, in the lens of hegemonic masculinity, effeminacy.

The qualities of normative masculinity that inhibit vulnerability and sensitivity, and

[61] Afrikaans slur for a gay or effeminate man.

promote aggression are understood by these communities as obligatory and not subject to circumstance, a sexual script of masculinity that is enhanced and agreed to as a contract in ensuing spaces of hegemonic masculinity that the thesis details in coming chapters.

The inclusion, and thus, significance, of *Boys Don't Cry* - of the exploration of anti-vulnerability and the idea of effeminacy - is the sexual script of hegemonic masculinity that:

1) generates exclusionary and discriminatory hierarchical homosocial bonding and initiation;
2) establishes discourse and dogma of compulsory heterosexuality, and;
3) cultivates norms and values that prompt violence against that which challenges hegemonic masculinity.

In the context of this thesis, these are factors that catalysed the #RUReferenceList. Learning hegemony is an education, and, in the context of this thesis, takes place within the spaces of institutions of education, a managerial institution responsible for socialising society into the norms and values of the ruling class through spaces and behaviours of hegemonic masculinity that are tolerated and normalised on campus.

Chapter Six
Initiation and Spaces of Hierarchical Homosocial Bonding

6.1 Introduction

The #RUReferenceList protested hegemonic masculinities and spaces and discourse of hegemonic masculinities on campus that compromised the dignity and safety of women and non-hegemonic masculinities. Chapter Six explores hierarchical homosocial bonding on campus and among men students at Rhodes University, and its discourse of violence, objectification, and victimisation that serves rape culture. This is not to imply that the #RUReferenceList was a direct consequence of spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding, but that if the #RUReferenceList was ultimately a protest against rape culture and "toxic masculinity" at Rhodes University, spaces on campus which validated and condoned violence, victimisation, and communities and discourse of hegemonic masculinity should be interrogated.

In the interviews I held with the participants, I used the terms "locker room" and "locker room talk" to initiate conversation regarding spaces in which men gather to discuss women and sexuality. "Locker room talk" is a distinctly Western term that, as I learned during the interview process, is not a familiar phrase among many communities of South African men.

However, in the instances where I described the "locker room" as I understand it, participants responded positively, acknowledging that, irrespective of whether they had a term for it, what I described was something that they had experienced. Given the fact, then, that these terms are uniquely Western, which problematises them considering this is research conducted in the Global South, this thesis uses the terms "hierarchical homosocial bonding" and "spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding" to refer to the socialisation processes of hegemonic masculinity, and hegemonic discourse of men's sexuality of "locker room talk"[62].

The following chapter establishes the consensus of the existence of "locker room talk" or the otherwise named phenomenon among the participants, before discussing the modified moral order of hierarchical homosocial bonding with regard to men's sexuality. It details the dangers of how these spaces lend themselves to the promotion of sexual violence in encouraging hegemonic

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[62] See *Section 2.3.1* for critical discussion regarding the use of the terms "locker room" and "locker room talk", and how this thesis has reconciled the Western-located term in the context of Rhodes University in the Global South.

ideals of masculine sexuality, and how they further act as spaces of initiation into masculinity where young men are expected to assimilate into normative sexual scripts of compulsory heterosexuality.

6.2 Discourse on the Praxis of Men's Sexuality in Spaces of Hierarchical Homosocial Bonding

> I guess locker room talk in university would be common room talk. Where men congregate. So yeah, guys would be in the common room talking about girls.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

Participants equated the locker room with common room spaces or dining hall spaces where men would gather on campus. Spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding are not exclusive to a singular or particular space, but a term for where men would gather and have certain conversations in the absence of women[63].

> For me, [locker room talk] consists of stuff sexual in nature, probably consisting of a large focus on women and women in terms of their sexuality and how we perceive them sexually, as objects. It consists of bigoted talk and male-fueled, testosterone-fuelled nonsense.
> (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

Greenshirt clearly articulates his disdain for these spaces in which sex is the primary - and perhaps exclusive - subject matter among members, and highlights the nature of these conversations as carrying a degree of sexism and chauvinism.

> As you grow up, you sort of realize that, okay, these are private talks. Even [in] those small corners, when you go look after the cattle, and you start having conversations that you don't normally have when you're at home, so you realise that, okay, you can't have these conversations just anywhere.

[63] See *Section 2.3.1.*

> These…are conversations you cannot have in front of everyone. Conversations like how a girl is. Talking about women. Conversations like, I slept with someone or I like so and so or I don't like so and so because of certain preferences. So sex conversation.
> (Author's interview with Seeker, 2022.)

Seeker points out the covert nature of hierarchical homosocial bonding and the spaces in which they take place, and how they occur at certain times or in certain places. While he does not detail where and with whom he has these conversations, the assumption - given the last two quotes and the quotes from participants to come - is that these discussions are held in the company of others who recognise the covert nature of these conversations as well. This sentiment is echoed by Kundai:

> I first experienced that in high school. We were at a boys' school where there were no girls, so when it's sports day and the girls' schools come, [there was] a lot of objectifying of women's bodies or how they would destroy a woman sexually. Those are words that you can never say in front of girls.

> Even at church. They preach no sex before marriage. But at the boys' and fathers' meeting, the fathers will say that you should never marry a girl that you've never taken for a test drive.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Gerald says this:

> The biggest sign of locker room talk is as soon as [the conversation] moves to women, you can assume that locker room talk has begun. It immediately becomes what they look like, what they've done; an idea of conquering. I'd say, most of the time, it's in a sexual manner, even if it's not very explicit.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

Words and phrases like "conquering", "test drive", "destroy a woman sexually", and "how we perceive [women], as objects" are indicative of how masculine sexuality is framed in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding. Specifically, it calls attention to the modified moral order of spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding in which sexual acts or desires are accompanied by profane lexicon.

The discourse of the hierarchical homosocial bonding process is one which is often framed in violence, or the suggestion of violence. Given the argument that men in these spaces often overestimate the comfortability levels of their peers - which suggests that recollections of transgressive acts may not nearly be as violent or transgressive as what is shared among men in that space[64] - it is not invariable that discourse equals praxis. Still, it is fair to suggest that, at the very least, hierarchical homosocial bonding incentivises violence and transgressive sexuality in these spaces with status and respect. Shared profanities, whether in how men articulate their desires or recall anecdotes of their sexual exploits, normalises violence and transgression in how men relate to and enact their sexuality (Vaynman *et al*, 2020; Orth *et al,* 2020).

The coital or heterosexual imperative - the perceived obligation for one to engage in penetrative heterosex - is a pressing impetus of hegemonic masculinity upon men to demonstrate their hetero-masculinity (Everitt-Penhale, 2013; McPhillips *et al*, 2001; Khumalo *et al*, 2021). This imperative not only means that men are met with greater approval regarding their sexual exploits than women are, but this imperative also means that their sexuality is an innate part of their masculinity (Khumalo *et al,* 2021). Arguably, the modified moral order of these spaces means that, in the presence of the coital imperative as discourse, violent and transgressive sexuality is justifiable - or, at the very least, tolerable - in spaces that invoke and compel hegemonic expressions of masculinity.

Although spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding may be spaces that exist in a man's life intermittently, in the covert corners of a common room or a kraal, the next section argues that a consequence of this discourse are hegemonic ideas around heterosex that privilege men's sexuality and condone aggressive sexual conduct.

6.3 Hookup Culture and Rape Myths

[64] See *Section 3.5.3.*

> Especially in the dining hall, there definitely was a sort of, who's the target for tonight, who do you want to hook up with, kind of attitude.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

Peter's above quote introduces "hookup culture", a term that essentially refers to a culture of casual sex. Sex is procured through the understanding between assumptively consenting parties that there is no intention to pursue a committed, romantic relationship.

The experiences shared by the participants details how conversations regarding men's sexual exploits that are shared in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding are often about encounters of casual sex, exploits meant to inspire respect among a young man's peers through how many partners he has or what sex acts were performed during this encounter.

"Your sexual exploits or the things you want to do," Petros describes the discourse shared in these spaces or particular communities of men (Author's interview with Petros, 2022).

> Within my first month at Rhodes, I was told to just hook up with as many people as possible. It was even in the presence of a girl, and they said it jokingly, but it is quite toxic, when people just keep telling you to hookup.
> (Author's interview with Doc, 2022).

Khumalo *et al* (2021) discuss how men's sexuality on a South African campus is subjected to three particular expectations: i) the coital imperative and one's sex drive as a source of respect and indication of manhood; ii) multiple sexual partners or *Umshayi wesinqa*[65]*;* and iii) the simultaneous judgment of women with multiple partners.

> In university…I had a large group of friends who were women. So [men asked], what's going on here? Why are you not smashing any of them? I still got girls [and] I had very beautiful women surrounding me.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

[65] An isiZulu term for *a man with multiple partners*.

Expectations of multiple sexual partners in Asakhe's above quote, while Sipho's experience highlights the pressures of the coital imperative that men Rhodes University students foisted upon each other in hierarchical homosocial spaces discourse regarding sex.

> I think, in the Rhodes context, most guys have multiple women. And that's not my thing. We [live] across a female res, which is very close. Then we have reses uphill. So someone would say, no I need to have someone close, and then someone who's far. So it's that kind of thing.
> (Author's interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

While spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding may only manifest at particular times among particular members, the principles of hegemonic sexuality extend beyond the confines of its corners into a young man's life as social norms and values. The experiences that the participants had with their own sexuality or encountered in the sexual expression of other young men illustrates that the hegemonic discourse within hierarchical homosocial bonding becomes a demonstration. Hegemonic masculinity manifests beyond merely a concept of hegemony into a norm that is valued in processes of hierarchical homosocial bonding, and, according to the testimonies of the participants, beyond the idea of hegemonic masculinity as a minority population (Connell, 2005)[66]. Peter's quote below illustrates how values of hierarchical homosocial with regard to men's sexuality is a widespread culture on the Rhodes University campus – i.e. "hookup culture".

> There was a level of praise for men who would hook up with five different people in one night. I remember there was this woman in particular who had a very healthy sexual appetite, and in one res, there was a pool table that was a little bit off balance and all the balls went to one hole, and it was [named after her] because it was the one that was easy to get into.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

[66] See *Section 3.4.*

According to Simeone and Jeglic (2019), who address sex talk among men in hierarchical homosocial spaces, discourse that degrades women assists in the manifestation of acts of sexual violence. They argue that a potential act is justified and carried out when an individual believes a said act is in alignment with what their peers or their community seems to believe is moral, decent, or normal (Simeone, and Jeglic, 2019). Peter recalls an incident in which this framework and its norms is made into a spectacle for enjoyment that is rewarded with the praise of one's peers.

> There was a competition to see how many people you could hook up with, and the one guy hooked up with thirteen different women, and people were like, 'well done'.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

This thesis recognises women's sexual agency and that many women participate in hookup culture freely and consensually; this thesis is neither attempting to patronise women for the decisions they make regarding heterosex, nor is it attempting to claim that sexual violence is inherent within and necessarily justified by hookup culture and hierarchical homosocial bonding.

However, a consequence of the narrative that men possess a sexuality that is compulsive in nature is a hegemonic ideal of masculinity that upholds heterosex as a right to, as opposed to a negotiation with, women and women's sexuality, negating consent (Orth *et al*, 2020). This is not an invariable consequence, but one that arguably legitimises how men's sexuality is framed in hierarchical homosocial spaces, and how hegemonic narratives of men's sexuality can thus be used to *potentially* justify transgressive and violent sexual acts (Fjaer and Pederson, 2015).

> They thought that if they bought you a drink, by default you owe [them] sex. Or go to [their] room at night to watch something - what were you expecting? In these locker room talks, it would come up. Like, honestly, we're adults. What did you think was going to happen when you come to my res at ten?
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

This is Kundai's recollection of how the men in his residence would talk about the sexual encounters they had had with women. The beliefs that they held were passed off as norms

regarding men's sexuality and these norms that negated consent from women in favour of men's perceived compulsory impetus of masculine virility were framed as 'common sense'[67].

Demonstration of hegemonic masculine sexuality aside, Greenshirt disagrees that discourse necessarily manifests as action, or should be considered a component of rape culture in and of itself - that is, in the absence of violent or transgressive behaviour.

> When someone talks about women like they're objects and they actually believe that women are objects and actually treats women like objects, that is extremely toxic. Because now you're overstepping what could be some raunchy jokes, and you've inflated it and it's become something that is you. It is your personality, it is your cultural perception. It is your perception of your reality.
>
> I'm not excusing raunchy jokes, but I do understand them and I do think they have a place in male bonding. But when they cross a line where they start behaving in a way that mirrors their raunchy jokes to a point where you are this very offensive individual in action, not just in jokes.
> (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022).

Greenshirt makes a crucial point here about the consent of hegemony. Gramsci's ideas of cultural hegemony claim that hegemonic ideals must be routinised, internalised, and justified (Verde and Rossi, 2024). While discourse in hierarchical homosocial spaces may make humorous quips or share desires about violent and transgressive sexuality, participants express awareness of how these spaces are modified moral orders - that is, divorced from the discourse they share in the company of women, men who do not subscribe to heterosex and hegemonic environments, family and their elders, and spaces of vulnerability and emotional closeness in vertical homosocial bonding (Hammaren and Johansson, 2014; Fjaer and Pederson, 2015).

I maintain that the discourse shared spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding leave an imprint outside of its corners - the common room, the kraal, and so forth - and manifest into norms and values. However, the participants seemed to create distance, of varying degrees,

[67] See *Section 3.4* for discussion regarding Gramscian cultural hegemony and how "common sense" is largely a reflection of norms and values of the hegemonic group.

between who they were as individuals, and spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding. This prompts discussion regarding the complexity of complicity in hierarchical homosocial bonding as men endeavour to maintain their own values or individuality while trying to attain validation as a man and acceptance among their peers.

6.4 Male Bonding: Hierarchical Homosocial Bonding as Initiation

Many of the participants discussed the ways in which they refrained from discourse in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding during their time as students, but why they did not actively discourage hegemonic narratives that they disagreed with. A few shared their desire to be integrated into these spaces in the hopes of acceptance and legitimacy as a man. Peter describes hierarchical homosocial bonding as "a testament to inclusion" (Author's interview with Peter, 2022).

> Locker room, to some degree, has a level of intimacy to it. It was literally in O-Week[68] that I got a nickname [out drinking]. I was like, yes! Inclusion! It felt like classic boarding school vibes of nicknames [among] a bunch of guys.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

Peter's remark regarding the perceived intimacy of hierarchical homosocial bonding echoes Greenshirt's earlier statement regarding how certain humour is valuable in how men bond with one another[69]. The ways in which hegemonic masculinity plays out and is represented in these spaces - such as through vulgar language, substance abuse, and stories of sexual conquest - depicts masculinity and friendship with other men as a process of socialisation achieved through violence and transgressive behaviour. It is the offer to assimilate to this modified moral order that acts as initiation into fraternity (Vaynman *et al*, 2020; Leone and Parrott, 2019; Everitt-Penhale, 2013).

> My peers didn't really talk to me about girls. They thought I was a loser. I was getting girls here and there. I knew that I could. I participated [in locker room talk], but it was a

[68] O-Week refers to Orientation Week, the period in which first-year students are meant to acclimatise themselves to campus and the institutional culture of the university.
[69] See *Section 6.3.*

> form of outburst. Stop denying me. I also get girls. At which point I then told a story detailing that I did this and that with a girl.
>
> In my language, we call it *lenyatso*. It's like when people undermine you; they underestimate you. They don't see you.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

In this section, many of the participants have described how the profane language and discourse about sex within hierarchical homosocial spaces are - to whatever degree - a demonstration of what is considered to be normative masculinity. Some participants, like Sipho, desired inclusion into this community.

Whatever the extent that his lifestyle beyond these spaces was hegemonic and transgressive, his participation in hierarchical homosocial bonding surpassed complicity into hegemonic behaviour for the sake of inclusion. Unlike the claims of the other participants, he did not refrain from participating in discourse regarding sex and his sexuality in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding; rather, it was something he pursued in the understanding that he was delegitimised as a man otherwise.

> During those high school years, there was a difficulty of wanting to fit in, and feeling uncomfortable about how you were raised to be respectful to women but at the same time, wanting to be connected to this masculine group that you already know is foreign and different to yourself. You already grew up as a child knowing you're sensitive. You're not exactly masculine. So that's me having those experiences leading me to engage in locker room talk or not stopping it.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

While both Gerald and Sipho admit to participating in the discourse of hierarchical homosocial spaces, Gerald does not disclose a desire to necessarily be considered masculine or to conform to normative masculinity. What he shares here, rather, is the understanding of the situation of gender accountability of these spaces and a desire to not invite scrutiny upon himself as a man (West and Zimmerman, 1987).

6.4.1 Cultural Initiation and Traditional Circumcision

Luka, Sihle, and Asakhe, the three participants who discussed traditional circumcision, described cultural initiation as no less a space of hierarchical homosocial bonding than the "locker room" experiences of the other participants. What is significant with cultural initiation and traditional circumcision is that this rite of hierarchical homosocial bonding is historically a material space that is removed from the rest of society for more than just a few hours at a time; and that how a young man moves through his community is premised on the evidence - a literal wound - of this space.

> So initially, Xhosa men would go to the initiation school in June…And the principles that you would have been taught were family values. How to look after the boy child, how to treat your wife. Because after initiation, you get married. All those good qualities to build the family unit were bestowed in that school.
>
> Over time it has changed. The moment they introduced alcohol, things started falling apart. When you go to the initiation school, there must be brandy for boys and then brandy for men. To show that you have moved from boyhood to manhood.
>
> There are some dangers of being cut there in the forest. One of them is hygiene. It is very dirty. You don't drink any water, there is always fire burning. Sometimes people would come and just beat you. Hence we are seeing death of initiates [sic]. Because you can't fight for yourself; you are wounded. You are nursing your manhood. These things happen because the environment makes it easier for any Jack and Jill to come beat you up. There are no fathers there. If I had my own family, my boy child would go to the hospital, not to that nonsense place.
> (Author's interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

For Sihle, it was in the environment of cultural initiation and traditional circumcision where he believes he first encountered hegemonic discourse regarding masculine sexuality, where such

discourse is shared prolifically as, seemingly, an integral component of the experience in its entirety.

> It's where you are taught to be a man. Which I found to be a different experience, because whatever teachings they gave weren't making you a man. You're just going to become a man who sees a woman as an object. They teach you that some things women must do that men cannot do. One of the things they taught was that when you leave, you must immediately sleep with a woman. Which didn't make sense to me. I wouldn't say there was anything concrete that I got out of that experience.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

Sihle's testimony is an explicit illustration of how hegemonic discourse regarding masculine sexuality is directly involved in the processes of hierarchical homosocial bonding as an initiation process[70].

Cultural initiation and traditional circumcision are also an active demonstration of how these spaces serve as situations of gender accountability. If a young man from a particular community does not go through with the rites of traditional circumcision, he is denied his masculinity and the cultural privileges of masculinity in a particular cultural context.[71]

> If you didn't go, you weren't seen as a man. You are not allowed to enter certain spaces because you are not a man. You are not allowed to associate with some people because you are not a man. It's the culture.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

Since he did not participate in this particular rite of cultural initiation, Luka knew he had to prove his masculinity in other ways, and he did not necessarily do so in other hierarchical homosocial spaces. The weight attached to a young man's participation in this cultural hierarchical homosocial space and how he is regarded by his community was the impetus for Luka and his

[70] See *Section 6.2.*
[71] Refer to *Section 3.4* for critical discussion regarding masculinity and traditional circumcision in South Africa.

brothers to pursue legitimacy of their masculinity in other areas valued by their peers, like sports and education.

> During the early 2000s, initiates started dying in the mountains…So my mother, when she started seeing some of the initiates were not actually coming back, she told my father that my children are not going there.
>
> When you go to the hospital, you are not regarded enough as a man because you didn't go to the mountain and do the actual ritual and the processes of becoming a man. So the way we would avoid shame, we would use the fact that we were good in soccer, we were smart at school to make niggas not fucking look down on us that we didn't go to the mountain and shit. So to get them to not look at us as lesser because we didn't do it traditionally.
> (Author's interview with Luka, 2022.)

As the testimonies of the participants quoted throughout this chapter reveal, men are not ignorant of how spaces of hierarchical homosociality act as a corner of social life, a cavity in which certain ideas and principles regarding masculinity are enacted and upheld. The participants reveal why they have participated in these spaces, but ultimately with the understanding that these are just spaces and moments that they can consent to or reject.

Luka - as per the above quote - and Asakhe, in the context of initiation and traditional circumcision, act on the latter.

> Most of the time, Xhosa guys go to initiation school when they're from high school or they're eighteen. But for me, I only went recently. I was in my second year of varsity. Now when it comes to the initiation process, the guys that I was there with, I was way ahead. These were kids still thinking, 'after here, which girl am I going to smash?' It's not even boy behaviour, because when I was a boy, I wasn't thinking like that. It's a matter of upbring or attitude or peer pressure.

So even when I was there, the person who was looking after the initiates - I was teaching him certain things about life that he never even knew that they existed.
(Author's interview with Askahe, 2022.)

6.4.2 The Argument for Complicity as Hegemony

Some participants desired to pass through spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding and their hegemonic discourse with as little conflict as possible. The degree to which the other men in these spaces are willing to engage in critical discussion on the themes of gender and sexuality, and the severity of the discourse being shared in the space determines whether they believe it is worthwhile or necessary to attempt such a discussion.

I'm a person who, when you start talking about toxic things or things I don't agree with, I just remove myself from that environment. At the end of the day, I cannot change how people see things and their beliefs. I can try and give my view, but I can't change how they think.
(Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

I've had a couple of times where I've sat with myself and I've thought about…being passive in situations where guys are being toxic. I've been in situations where I do think people maybe overstepped. I do feel there are some conversations where you are morally obligated to step in, but if it's just some raunchy joke or a raunchy comment and it's not necessarily hurting anyone, I'm passive about it.
(Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

Greenshirt's further comment below describes the demonstration and consequence of complicity regarding men who act as bystanders to discourse of hierarchical homosocial bonding and the demonstration of hegemonic masculinity beyond these spaces:

When I would be around [that environment], I would adopt the persona of laughing along, not necessarily participating. I don't want to sound like I'm endorsing anything but at the same time, I'm not disparaging anything.

(Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

Greenshirt makes clear his feelings regarding hierarchical homosocial spaces, calling them spaces of "bigoted talk and male-fueled, testosterone-fueled nonsense" (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022)[72], and, from our interview, I cannot claim to know whether he personally condones or condemns the discourse shared in these spaces. However, the absence of the *demonstration* of hegemony in a space framed by masculinist hegemony is not necessarily an absence of hegemony as a *condition* of gendered power relations, both externally and internally driven - that is, upheld between men and women; and among men (Connell, 2005; Dharani *et al*, 2021). Hierarchical homosocial bonding as the relationships between men that serve to uphold and defend patriarchy mean that complicity in these spaces is arguably a demonstration of hegemony itself, as illustrated by X's experience of the space:

> You'd come in [to these spaces] and [men] would act uncomfortable. And you know why they're acting uncomfortable, because they're standing next to a gay man.
>
> A lot of heterosexual men [who] see themselves as being dominant would push out homosexuals from discussion and push out their opinions as being invalid. And it still happens - as a gay man, I still have to assert my views. Where heterosexual men feel that their views are more valid than mine. Their aggression being pushed or my views being perceived as unfounded or weak, just because they're coming from a gay person.
> (Author's interview with X, 2022.)

Women, and violent and transgressive sex acts aside, the hegemony of complicity in these spaces arguably furthers subordination and marginalisation of non-hegemonic masculinities. Complicity is an affirmative act, passive or not, to facilitate the maintenance of internal heteronormative gender ordering that impacts queer, gay, and non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Butler, 1995; Rich, 1980).

Of course, not all gay or queer men experience spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding in the same way. Unlike X, Peter was accepted into spaces of hierarchical homosocial

[72] See *Section 6.2.*

bonding that provided him with a true sense of validation, and enabled public perception of likeability and legitimacy of him as an individual.

> There was that kind of openness in terms of [my sexuality] with the guys than I'd ever generally experienced. I think part of that as well was that I could keep up with them when it came to drinking. It was something that I was good at doing that gave me access because it gave me the street cred that I needed.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

While Peter recalls certain comments that revealed the sexist nature of how his peers regarded women, and the extent of hookup culture in these spaces, he does not detail instances of his complicity regarding discourse on any violent or transgressive sexuality shared in these spaces.

However, much like the other participants, he admits to hierarchical homosociality as a space of performative masculinity, and how his "performance of strength" (Author's interview with Peter, 2022) among his peers was a significant factor in how his masculinity was legitimised in these spaces.

6.5 Conclusion

For participants, the hierarchical homosocial space holds a very specific expression of masculinity, and it is a space that is driven by sexuality. It is founded upon the idea that masculine sexuality holds a compulsiveness to it, condoning violence and transgression in pursuing sexual exploits.

In some instances, this masculine sexual aggression is not very explicit, yet holds undertones of it, and insinuation regarding how a man should engage in his sexuality. This is due to how the modified moral order takes sexual discourse considered to be deviant, and reveals its latency as a valued social norm not simply in the hierarchical homosocial space, but within hegemonic masculinity. Understood by participants as a manner of inclusion and fraternity, the process ultimately serves as an agent to socialise men into hegemonic principles of masculine sexuality, with particular focus, I argue, on the coital imperative.

Though not in such specific terms, participants did speak of the modified moral orders of these spaces; that these spaces were divorced from the rest of their environment or polite

society. However, the norms and values shared in the space as discourse did hold weight and significance outside of the hierarchical homosocial space, particularly hookup culture.

The participants all witnessed, experienced, and - for some - engaged in the performance of heteronormativity and the coital imperative that was profuse within spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding. While X attests to experiencing direct subjugation and struggle within the space as a gay man, discourse regarding sexuality within the space of a modified moral order caused most of the participants a degree of discomfort within the space itself or how they understood and related to their sexuality as men.

In spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding, all the participants were confronted with heteronormativity, and, for some, compulsory heterosexuality outside of these spaces and pervasive throughout campus was a significant part of their university experience that challenged their masculinity. The next chapter will address how other practices on the campus space in the form of habitualised customs within the institutional culture of the establishment have historically helped to reinforce hegemony at Rhodes university.

Chapter Seven
Tradition and "Toxic Masculinity"

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, participants reveal parts of their masculinity considered to be non-normative in hegemonic spaces on campus, and describe how they navigated these spaces and these facets of their masculinity in response. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the experiences of men who have been victims of sexual assault, sexual violence is indeed wielded against men just as it is against women, often because when a man's expression of masculinity falls outside of normative understandings of masculinity, he can become a target of hegemonic masculinist prejudices. The previous chapter discussed the violent and transgressive sexuality of hegemonic masculinity which, while negating the consent and sexual agency of women and femininity, also effeminises and subordinates men of a particular expression of masculinity and sexuality with the same narratives of violence and animosity[73]. The following chapter discusses how the participants of this research encountered heteronormative narratives of masculinity and sexuality, or heteronormative sexual scripts, at Rhodes University outside of the hierarchical homosocial space.

The #RUReferenceList of 2016 at Rhodes University frequently mentioned the term "toxic masculinity" as an integral component of rape culture at the university. The term was introduced into public discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s after being coined by a man who described his father's expression of masculinity as a sickness, with the hopes of a cure (Harrington, 2021: 347). This "sickness" has largely been used as a framework for describing various qualities or ideologies of masculinity posed as an interference to safe and functional relationships among men; and between men and women, children, and the LGBTQ+ community (Harrington, 2021: 349).

While the term lacks consistent context regarding use and, thus, definition - "used descriptively, without theorization or operationalization" (Harrington, 2021: 349), it has gained popularity for its appropriateness as a concise, digestible hashtag that easily encapsulates sentiment regarding men's culpability and complicity in rape culture and incidents of sexual

[73] See *Sections 6.2* and *6.3.*

violence that has occupied societal collective consciousness since the social climate of the #RUReferenceList and its aftermath.

While “toxic masculinity” and “hegemonic masculinity” are not terms that should necessarily be used interchangeably, some of the participants describe hegemonic masculinity - or elements of critical discussions regarding hegemonic masculinity thereof - in describing toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity became a familiar hashtag and topic of discussion at Rhodes University during the #RUReferenceList, a term that men on campus became highly familiar with, whether in the online or offline space. I have termed this chapter “Toxic Masculinity” to refer to how the participants frame masculinities that they find dysfunctional and detrimental, and, in many ways, this chapter continues the thesis’ discussion regarding hegemonic masculinity.

7.2 Sex, Liquor, and Serenades: Gatekeeping and Customs of Institutional Culture

> It was during first year, with the serenades. It was kind of weird cause you had to dress in a certain way just to impress girls and stuff. It was quite uncomfortable - we had to wear vests and towels and ties. The whole process was quite uncomfortable, really, and even the whole act because I couldn’t understand why we had to wear towels and go to girls’ res. There were better ways of getting to know each other.
> (Author’s interview with Sihle, 2022.)

The tradition of serenades at Rhodes University takes place during O-Week, where students from each residence voluntarily participate in a practice of song and dance as a way to get to know other first years from their own residence and from other residences. In 2012, an anonymous letter to the then-Dean of Students, Dr. Vivian de Klerk, disclosed the regular victimisation that was taking place during the week of serenades (RUTV Journalism Rhodes University, 2012).

Men's residences have historically only serenaded women's residences, and prior to 2016, it was not uncommon for student leadership to instruct their first-year housemates to serenade shirtless and in a towel over their underwear. Over the years, as de Klerk (2013) writes, the tradition has become increasingly problematic: “song lyrics became increasingly

suggestive, and sexy dance moves crept in" (de Klerk, 2013: 91). Some students have argued, including the complainant of 2012, that the tradition objectifies women (RUTV Journalism Rhodes University, 2012; de Klerk, 2013: 91). Moreover, while it is said to be voluntary, it has involved peer pressure from student leadership within the residences. These student leaders hold a degree of authority in the Residence system and they, together with other housemates, compel women, men, and gender-queer students into heteronormative - and even salacious - customs of dress and performance (RUTV Journalism Rhodes University, 2012; de Klerk, 2013: 91).

Considering this, and given the discourse and norms of violence, transgression, and assimilation in the processes of prevalent hierarchical homosocial bonding discussed in the previous chapter, I argue that the serenades are just one of the means of induction into hegemonic Rhodes University's institutional culture of hegemonic masculinity that will be discussed in this chapter.

> I remember going there, and the great fear of, you're going to an only-male res. And there is a fear there of entering the bullying realm as an LGBT. And you know that there's always this heavy masculine feeling. You can almost smell it in the air, that you're amongst men. And you need to be fairly masculine in your manner. And I think that also led to more locker room talk that occurs in the reses, which I think was constant if you were part of those groups. And you could clearly hear it in the corridors and between rooms, about the conquering that went about in Rhodes.
>
> I know [bullying] did happen…subvertly through conversation. Through teasing, through gay subtext between heterosexual men. Teasing about being gay. Most of the time, it was done in your presence, just to maintain the status quo.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

Gerald's experience of being in a men's residence on the Rhodes University campus illustrates how hegemonic masculinity was demonstrated through the manner in which men presented themselves, the discourse they engaged in, and their act of subordinating - through both subtle discourse and behaviours - Gerald's masculinity as a queer man.

While Peter's experience in res cannot be divorced from his sexuality, he recalls how he was able to assimilate, to a degree, into the culture of casual sex prevalent on campus and rewarded by his housemates with the pardoning of total subjugation as a gay man[74].

> The first six months when I wasn't out, from a sexuality perspective, I didn't go out, didn't hook up with anyone, didn't go on any dates. I would maybe meet someone and we'd go somewhere, but didn't do any of that until halfway into my first year. In my second year, I ramped that up aggressively. So even though it was with other men, it was still like, [I'm] hooking up with so many people, yeah! I was still able to demonstrate that, so [my masculinity] was never really in question. I think there was an understanding that I wasn't doing badly for myself. [Other men encouraged me] to kind of participate in that behaviour.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

Gender scrutiny was not necessarily absent from Peter's experience of being in a men's residence on campus; rather, his demonstration of hegemonic masculine sexuality (in this instance, the demonstration of coital imperative, and having multiple sex partners) is possibly the behaviour that cleared him from the gender scrutiny of his housemates who engaged in these behaviours (Khumalo *et al*, 2021; West and Zimmerman, 1987)[75].

The undergraduate residences of Rhodes University are separated into residences for men, and residences for women. While postgraduate accommodation is gender-inclusive, undergraduate students who lived on campus are ushered into man-woman gendered spaces that, at the time of the #RUReferenceList, were alleged by students to promote homosocial norms, practices, and discourse that were sexist and homosexist in nature.

Two anonymous strategic informants[76] shared with me certain traditions in men's residences that they were privy to, either through observation or active participation. As demonstrated through the testimonies provided here, the nature of residence culture at Rhodes

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[74] As far as one can assume from what Peter has thus far shared about how he was received in spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding (see *Sections 6.4* and *6.4.1*).
[75] See *Section 6.2.*
[76] The informants' roles in this research were to provide information regarding customs practised by men's residences and men students on campus. I reached out to the informants for their former proximity to the traditions of men's students.

University is arguably defined by compulsory heterosexuality, the coital imperative, and phallocentrism. In addition to hookup culture and serenades, traditions prior to and during the #RUReferenceList that catered to a demonstration of virility included streaking (men running naked or half-naked through campus), and 'seal clubbing', where older men students, particularly in O-Week, made a point of pursuing romantic relationships with first-year girls, encouraging their weight gain, and breaking up with them on the basis of said weight gain - "fattening them for the slaughter", says Informant Two.

Informant One, who had been both a student and warden of men's residences during his time at Rhodes University talks about "Basket", an O-Week tradition particular to one residence where first-years followed student leadership to a discreet location where first-years were asked to strip naked and have their penis size evaluated. For residences with pool tables, a common penalty for losing a pool game was for the losers to have to walk around the residence in their underwear for the rest of the evening. Though voluntary, these practices were encouraged, contributing to a masculinist aspect of institutional culture of the university that stressed heterosex and machismo.

Informant One corroborates the common experience that queer students confronted in residence: frequent teasing of those who were openly gay and/or considered effeminate through dress; manner; or behaviour.

These traditions illustrate what Petros describes as his experience of being faced with hegemonic masculinities prevalent at Rhodes University:

> I think…because I was ex-military, [which] immediately dispels any talk of, like, you're gay, you're not masculine. So I didn't care. I could do what I wanted. It could be perceived as un-masculine but…for anyone who wanted to shame me, it was like, I'm more man than you'll ever be. So as a result of that…no one ever tried projecting [anything] onto me.
> (Author's interview with Petros, 2022.)

Petros's past in the army negated presumptions his peers on campus may have had regarding his masculinity, and while the argument that it is exactly the ways in which the military forges a particular kind of masculinity that the institutional culture of Rhodes University would

champion, his experience speaks to an expectation of masculinity imbued in the university's institutional culture and the gatekeeping practices on campus that assumed custody over accepted and acceptable norms and values of masculinity that, as suggested by the anecdotes shared by Informants One and Two, were underscored by the coital imperative, compulsory heterosexuality, and phallocentrism. These traditions of nudity exhibiting the phallus are arguably another demonstration of the transgression of heterosexual masculinity - aggressive, dominant, and a central focus of what it means to be a man[77]. Gerald recalls how the campus and the residence space felt conditioned by these undertones.

> You're walking into spaces that are masculine, that kind of remind you of what you need to behave like. There is this clash that occurs between what you think you can be in entering [Rhodes University] and what you must succumb to.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

Many of the participants expressed that Rhodes University was a liberal space regarding sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity; however, the phallocentric traditions and nature of men's residences were nevertheless gatekeeping establishments. The queer men of this study revealed the chasms and conflict that often manifested between who they were and how they wanted to express themselves as men, and the conditions of campus that imposed normative masculinity and demonstrated subjugation over their masculinity as queer men.

> Girls from girls' reses, they'd pick up that you're bisexual or gay. They'd try to pull you out of the closet and tell you that it's okay…that you can be feminine, you can be not as masculine, you can be whatever you want on the scale of masculinity and still be yourself. Then in the boys' res, if you tried to be on the feminine side, the guys would say, oh, you're embarrassing us.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Cultural conditions that are prefixed with "tradition" and treated as enshrined in history and an institution can serve to undermine practices, discourse, and identities that oppose hegemonic

[77] See *Sections 6.2* and *6.3.*

masculinity. Ratele (2013: 135) discusses how practices enshrined into the understanding of "tradition" establish cultural conditions can sustain heterosexual masculine dominance, reinforcing patriarchal and heterosexist oppression against women and the LGBTQ+ community. The practices that I have addressed in this section as traditions are practices that either are still or were historically venerated and preserved by Rhodes University through its student body, and the subsequent legacy of the institution.

One of Rhodes University's undisputable legacies is its drinking culture. As far back as the 1980s, and further back still, student journalism and activism highlighted concerns around the culture of excessive alcohol use and misuse prevalent among the student body (Goga, 2010: 42). Prior to 2016 and the changing demographics of the student body, drinking practices at Rhodes University did not just carry narratives of masculinity, but a demarcation of race and class drawn between mainly white students and upper to middle class black students, and black working-class students (Goga, 2010: 42). The former tended towards creating events, clubs, and societies in which alcohol represented privilege and social capital, like the Remember and Give (RAG) charity events of the late 20th Century, and Drinking Club, a popular society of the 2010s that only reinvents itself under various names every few years (Author's interview with Strategic Informant Two). The social capital of such clubs and societies was seen in the drunken depravity of the primarily white bourgeoisie of the student body, and their overconsumption of alcohol performed in public spaces (Goga, 2010: 42).

Inter-Varsity, a sporting event between Rhodes University, Fort Hare University, Walter Sisulu University, and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, was an annual demonstration of drinking culture and its intersection with race and class. It was a highly regarded social event, which brought out middle-class students in white overalls plastered in purple paint to represent their identity as "Rhodents". The threat of excluding Rhodes University from the event due to the degree of alcohol abuse and reckless behaviour among the student body prompted a backlash campaign, defending Inter-Varsity as a Rhodes University tradition that carried meaning and significance, and, to some, a custom that "unified" the student body. It was clear, however, that the idea of Inter-Varsity as a unifying force was to the interests of a particular demographic of the student body, of which black students largely did not occupy (Goga, 2010: 43 - 44).

Considering Inter-Varsity, Drinking Club, and RAG, drinking culture at Rhodes University has historically carried a means of social identity. While not officially or legally

barred from these events, the normative exclusion of black students from many of these communities at the time meant that black men were denied recognition of normative masculinity, marginalised from the social identity of being a “true Rhodent” by a particular hegemonic masculinity’s demonstration of ideological dominance, cultural privilege, and institutional power of whiteness against them (Goga, 2010: 42)[78]. Asakhe discusses how he experienced the custom of nightlife and drinking culture during O-Week:

> My very first day of [sic] Rhodes - during O-Week - the first years go to the pub. In the residence of 85 students, there were only four guys left in res, because we don’t drink.
>
> My friendship began on that very first night I was at Rhodes with those four guys left in res. That’s how our friendship actually developed. We came from similar backgrounds and belief systems, so I've never felt alienated by the majority that does not vibe with my way of thought and my way of doing things.
> (Author’s interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

At no point in the interview did Asakhe ever express sentiments of feeling excluded by the traits and customs of normative masculinity in his residence or on campus; on the contrary, he did not think very highly of these traditions from the beginning - namely, hookup culture, and the drinking culture - and preferred, as stated, to be in the company of others like him.

Many of the participants easily expressed dissent in the interview with the aforementioned traditions; however, to openly challenge the hegemonic masculinist customs of their residences and of the institution as a whole was, at the time, an issue of far greater complexity that took radically changing attitudes among the student body regarding masculinity and sexuality.

7.3 RU Gay? Sexual Scripts and Gender Scrutiny

[78] Given the very little data around race recovered in this research, the thesis can provide no further meaningful discussion in this regard. While this is not to say that other black students did not face issues of racism in their experience of their masculinity and hegemony at Rhodes University, they did not raise this and, as such, this matter did not present as a focal issue in the data.

When you see guys walking around in dresses and stuff at Rhodes, there was a culture shock. There was definitely a cognitive shift, and you thought to yourself, well, I guess they have the freedom to do that. At first you see it, and you're like, woah. But the more you're exposed to it, the more you get used to it.

(Author's interview with Doc, 2022.)

Doc's quote above illustrates what many participants expressed to be the liberal nature of Rhodes University, and how it was fairly common to see the demonstration of subverting normative narratives of masculinity. For Butler (1990; 1991), there exists a handful of definitions of subversion, which include "displacing those naturalized and reified notions of gender that support masculinist hegemony, [and] parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames".

However, my intention is not to explore homosexuality in relation to hegemonic masculinity alone, but also to discuss how the behaviours and self-expression of my participants were regarded by their peers as "gay", because of how they presented their masculinity. Sipho recounts how his many platonic friendships with women students invited scrutiny from other men.

[Guys] were like, are you gay? These aren't your girlfriends, but you aren't gay. If you're the only guy amongst a group of girls, how is that possible? It's only gay guys who become friends with girls. Whereas straight men, real men, are smashing girls. (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

The above quote encapsulates some of the sexual script of heterosexual masculinity that was well-imbued by long-standing traditions of the university, like seal clubbing, penis evaluation, and values of multiple partners and the coital imperative. Sipho's recollection of the term "real men" being used to scrutinise his masculinity is a weaponisation of hegemonic in-group membership against expressions of masculinity that fall outside of normative standards. This membership relies on the sexual scripts fostered by the aforementioned traditions, and threatens men with subjugation and marginalisation (Thepsourinthone *et al*, 2020).

The assumption is, thus, that "real men" are engaged in regular heterosex, have sex with women, and demonstrate their virility through attitudes and habits of machismo and transgression - but a small exception, a gesture of authorisation, may be granted in the instance of gay men or gay masculinities that sustain other conventional definitions of masculinity otherwise (Connell, 2005: 80)[79]. While hegemonic masculinity positions masculinity beside heterosexuality and deems homosexuality as a deviant Other, there is - as explored by a couple of the queer participants in this study - a tendency for queer men and queer communities to internalise hegemonic narratives that an absence of otherwise normative traits in queer men (despite the communities being established as a safe space for fluid demonstrations of sexuality and selfhood) consigns them to a second citizenry as queer men (Thepsourinthone *et al*, 2020).

I raise this to highlight the hold of hegemonic masculinities across the Rhodes University campus in spite of its liberal inclinations. While a community of subversion and whatever degree to which it is embraced by wider institutional culture may challenge the hegemony of the institution, it does not topple hegemony, or the nature of the institutional culture of the establishment and its cultural legacies. X had this to say in addressing the contribution that queer communities on campus may have made toward masculinist hegemony at the university:

> There is a lot of hegemony, conforming to the masculine standard. It becomes toxic when feminine gays are excluded. Where femininity is problematised and ridiculed. Being gay doesn't mean that you are [necessarily] feminine. You can be very macho, as in: play rugby, for example. Those can assimilate more to masculinity better than even I can. They can play the part of being heterosexual, of being masculine. So that can be hegemonic. That route of being more virile, of being more attractive - hence, that whole distinction of being masc on masc[80].
> (Author's interview with X, 2022.)

According to Thepsoursinthone *et al* (2020), a queer man confronts a complex network of

[79] See *Section 3.4.*
[80] The term "masc on masc" refers to gay men who possess traits of normative masculinity who pursue relationships - sexual or otherwise - with other gay men who embody normative masculinity. The term is considered derogatory for its implied prejudice against gay men who are seen as effeminate or possessing traits of normative femininity (McPartlan, 2019).

socio-ecological factors when addressing his sexuality, and the authors speak of macro to microsystems in which these factors reside. The macrosystem entails ideologies and broad social structures that promote and perpetuate heteronormative values and practices and condemn and disparage in queer men behaviours considered to be normatively feminine. This can result in individuals and a community at large possessing what Thepsourinthone *et al* (2020) term homonegativity - the state in which homosexuality is viewed in a negative light by sexual minorities.

The scrutiny that men confront in the face of pervasive heteronormativity, and, therein, often homophobic sexual scripts, can act as an almost coercive measure for gender performativity into prevailing schema of hegemonic masculinity on campus if a student wanted to be considered masculine or "manly", particularly by other men:

> I always excluded myself from masculinity and men because I knew I couldn't identify with them. And I didn't want to have to identify with what they thought a man was. And I didn't want to engage in conversations about women and sex and locker room talk. I didn't want to have to deal with that, because that wasn't me. That's not what I wanted to be. The values about caring and loving I guess you put under femininity, but that's what I am.
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

Gerald chose to forgo assimilation into normative masculinity and its subsequent spaces as he matured as a Rhodes University student, creating distance between himself and what was understood on campus as a legitimate expression of masculinity. His quote reveals how normative masculinity on campus plays a divisive role; irrespective of the LGBTQ+ presence within the student body. The university campus is not immune to factioning among the student body compelled by masculinist hegemony, and all other communities on campus subjugated hence.

> Being gay doesn't mean that you're soft or whatever, but you can be. I'm soft and tender and flamboyant. The moment that being soft and tender as a gay man is problematised - that is toxic.

(Author's interview with X, 2022.)

The context of X's above quote is discrimination against normative qualities of femininity in LGBTQ+ community, at Rhodes University and in general, but it encapsulates very well the circumstances that some of the men of this research confronted during their time as students in circumstances of gender scrutiny under heteronormative sexual scripts. To be gay or to be straight as a man on campus was a consistent encounter with qualities of hegemonic masculinity and the demonstration thereof in various exercises mentioned in this chapter[81].

Many of these encounters, however prevalent, were, in response, undermined by the participants for being "toxic", and in this way, illegitimate as assessments of healthy and functional masculinity. In these same instances of gender scrutiny, participants had their own judgements regarding certain qualities of normative masculinity and demonstrations of hegemonic masculinity.

7.4 Experiencing "Toxic Masculinity" and Problematising "Traditional Masculinity"

I use the term "toxic masculinity" here to describe ideas and demonstrations of masculinity that are dysfunctional to healthy and productive relationships, and masculinities that do not contribute positively to societal attitudes regarding masculinity. I argue that "toxic masculinity" is not entirely dissimilar to "hegemonic masculinity"; rather, it is how hegemonic masculinity is understood and comprehended in popular discourse - a digestible term for the range of features of hegemonic masculinity that I have discussed[82]. However, in saying this, while this section addresses participants' understanding and encounters with what they believe is "toxic masculinity", this section will critically discuss what participants describe as toxic masculinity and relate it to hegemonic masculinity.

> One of my now close friends was so anti wearing shorts for a guy that are not beyond your thighs, and we'd talk about it and he'd storm out the room and refuse to be with you because you're wearing small shorts. He was so against guys loving each other, even as friends. He wouldn't want guys hugging each other, guys buying each other

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[81] See Section 7.2.
[82] See *Section 3.5.*

> food. He would just not want to be courteous to the next person.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022)

Kundai describes here the rejection of normative qualities of femininity expressed in men. Affection between men is contrary to qualities of anti-vulnerability, violence, and control that this thesis defines as hegemonic masculinity. Henceforth, affection is considered effeminate behaviour which must be subjugated in order to endorse what is understood to be the inherent nature of masculinity, as discussed in *Section 3.5*. These same qualities are expressed by Sipho's recollection of certain communities on the Rhodes University campus:

> It's going to sound tribalist, but those Xhosa guys…were very toxic. Very objectifying as women, the kind of men who don't want to be told what to do by anyone else. If you question them, it's like you're asking for death. If you try to question their ways and how they think. Some [Zimbabwean] guys to an extent. The Zim guys kept things very lowkey, but some circles did allude to saying and doing things that were quite toxic. I can't say there's no tribe that doesn't have toxic masculinity in it, but I'd say that it was quite prevalent in the Xhosa groups and in the Zim groups.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

Sipho does not detail the "toxic" behaviours or narratives expressed by these two groups; however, he does articulate how problematic discourse and conduct were not only wielded against women, but served as a threat against other men who challenged them. Sihle echoes Shipho's sentiments, expressing his general experience of Xhosa men:

> [Xhosa men] have their own beliefs, especially when it comes to women. The way they spoke about women, you could tell they don't respect women. They would speak freely [in that way] and that was troubling for me because I don't believe there's a culture that should teach you to treat women and gay people like that.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

Here, Sihle speaks to the modified moral orders of hierarchical homosocial bonding: spaces and

discourse wherein members share and foster norms and values of hegemonic masculinity regarding transgressive sexuality and subjugation of queer masculinity (Fjaer and Pederson, 2015; Orth *et al*, 2020)[83]. For both Sihle and Sipho, certain cultural masculinities as expressed by the men they encountered on campus demonstrated a toxic or dysfunctional masculinity, but it would be erroneous to fault the culture and traditions of indigenous communities in and of themselves.

While it is often argued that "toxic" masculinity and tradition have an intimate relation, referring to cultural norms and beliefs of South Africa's "patchwork of patriarchies" (Bozzoli, 1983) that sustain heterosexist and patriarchal masculinities, Ratele (2013) provides an important critique of attempts to situate opposition to these masculinities as "anti-tradition".

> In opposing non-heterosexual practices and queer desires to 'the traditional', critical scholars of men and gender activists unwittingly boost patriarchal heterosexual masculine dominance. Traditions at their most basic are thought to be inherited stories which we live by; discursive constructions handed down from one generation to the next and used to represent the world and ourselves. All traditions are ultimately involved in a project of naturalising strangers, turning them into 'believers' (Ratele, 2013: 134-135).

I do not disagree with the crux of Ratele's (2013) argument that critiques of traditional masculinity that frame themselves as "anti-traditional masculinities" must be critiqued. However, I offer the argument that, in the context of my thesis, both the queer and heterosexual masculinities that dissent against the norms and values of the normative masculinist customs of the university are at once "anti-tradition" and "tradition." I will expound on this shortly.

Considering the historical customs and tactics of the university to initiate men into the institutional culture of campus discussed in *Section 7.2*, hegemonic masculinity is demonstrated very clearly. In the vein of Connell's (2005) typologies, and what the thesis posits as hegemonic masculinity in particular, I argue that there is space for the concept of historically "traditional" masculinity within the institution. As hegemonic masculinity, as this thesis defines it, is the demonstration or wielding of ideological dominance, institutional power, and cultural privilege

[83] See *Sections 6.2* and *6.3.*

over women and non-hegemonic masculinities, it therefore relies on particular principles and characteristics of masculinity - discussed in the theoretical framework of Chapter Three - that are encouraged by Rhodes University's long-standing customs around inducting men into the institutional culture. It can be argued in this way, then, that the masculinities informed by these customs are some of the university's traditional masculinities, and that dissenting masculinities as non-normative masculinities can be framed as anti-traditional masculinities.

However, as Ratele (2013) explains, the idea that non-normative identities do not exist prior to becoming "anti-tradition" is to ignore the histories of communities across Africa and throughout time in which queer masculinities were certainly present, and moreover, were indeed tradition in those societies at a given point in time (2013: 143). Like one of Connell's (2005) founding aspects of masculinity - that hegemony and the status of a given masculinity are never static, moving through time and social change -, so is "traditional masculinity" more than a single expression of a man's identity.

The aforementioned characteristics of hegemonic masculinity that I have listed are only components of a particular strand of tradition made overt in Rhodes University's history. Indeed, the institution is known for its prevalent queer community, an overt and ongoing challenge to the institution's normative masculinity. While I have discussed the homonegativity and internalised hegemony of the queer community[84], the persistent representation of queer masculinities in the university's student body illustrates Ratele's (2013) argument regarding tradition and the erroneous understanding that tradition is and has always been masculinist and heteronormative. The institution's legacy as one of South Africa's more liberal establishments should be considered as a tradition and a legacy of the establishment just as the institution's more aggressive history of masculinist hegemony. As much as participants were faced with what they call "toxic masculinity", they also describe encountering the subversion of normative masculinity and hegemonic behaviours because (as the participants attest to) of the presence of LGBTQ+ community. In responding to my question as to how Sipho experienced the LGBTQ+ community at Rhodes, he says this:

> I got to university where I met people who could relate to [my] pain and the struggle. And when you cried, they didn't say, oh, why are you crying? They actually embraced

[84] See *Section 7.3.*

you and you cried even harder now. You have the freedom to cry; now, there's no shame in crying as a man.
(Author's interview with Sipho 2022.)

Sipho is referring here to the absence of judgement regarding vulnerability in certain spaces and communities on campus, particularly those inhabited by the queer community. While LGBTQ+ students are not necessarily embraced by the student body without exception - many times subjugated by acts of hegemonic masculinity by their peers - it is worth noting that the university is recognised by queer and heterosexual participants as a place of safety regarding queer identity and non-normative masculinities relative to other South African universities.

Below, Sihle also discusses the absence of violence against the queer community on Rhodes University's grounds, and how that seems to extend, as far as he experienced, a general freedom of self-expression on campus.

> When you're from where I come from, gay guys are treated in a certain way. At Rhodes, it was different. Everyone was free and no one was there to judge or do bad things [to the gay community]. That's one thing I value from Rhodes. Everyone is free to be who they want to be. I could be me without everyone having to judge [me]; it was a healthy environment and something good to witness.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

Sihle echoes this sentiment:

> The way people were so different, they came from places that were accepting. In Polokwane, you find a lot of homophobia here. Other places you won't. Joburg, there's more gay people there. Cape Town, there's more people there. Then all these people come to Rhodes; they're used to gay people. They're more accepting of gay people.
> (Author's interview with Sihle, 2022.)

As a gay man, X could attest to how, to some degree, Rhodes University did hold up as an institution that prioritised the well-being and validated the presence of the LGBTQ+ student

body.

> For me, Rhodes is a bit more liberal than Tuks. Rhodes was a lot more welcoming and liberal space, and nurturing for me. Queer bodies at Rhodes have a completely different experience than other universities. They can express themselves more loudly and freer. Tuks had Pride Day, but that was [just] a day, while at Rhodes, we were able to tackle and engage with certain issues.
>
> So at Rhodes we were able to debunk a lot of stuff. I was only able to understand and engage with the transgender experience [at Rhodes]. At Rhodes, that is a thing. The bodies were there, multiple and in different classes. The white bodies were there, the black bodies were there, and you could see the intersections. It was a more malleable experience.
> (Author's interview with X, 2022.)

I do not claim that LGBTQ+ students do not lay complaints of harassment, or feel comfortable in expressing public displays of affection with their partners. Indeed, if co-existing with traditions and communities of masculinist hegemony, Rhodes University's liberal traditions of queer-inclusivity will undoubtedly come up against opposition. Nevertheless, however flawed, burgeoning traditions of non-hegemonic masculinities are present on campus, and in the vein of Ratele's (2013) argument, should be considered, thus, as just as much tradition as the traditions of hegemonic masculinities at the university. In grounding traditions such as a prevalent queer society, and Pride Month in which various critical discussions are held regarding LGBTQ+ issues of sexuality, identity, and politics, heteronormative and heterosexist policies and traditions of the institution are rendered visible and offered up for critique (Gibson and Macleod, 2012: 24).

Though dated to the 2010s and detailing the experiences of lesbian students, Gibson and Macleod (2012) still make useful contributions in deepening the understanding of heterosexist policies and microaggressions against queer bodies at Rhodes University. The expectation that homosexuality would be made routinised at a queer-inclusive university means that resistance is offered up by the LGBTQ+ community as tradition in claiming space and reclaiming their power

(Gibson and Macleod, 2012: 24).

7.5 Conclusion

Critiquing the notion of hegemonic masculinity as "tradition" at Rhodes University is imperative in addressing the customs of the establishment that endorse hegemonic masculinity among the student body. Prioritising one expression of masculinity as having greater legitimacy throughout the university's history is almost inevitable as one looks through the customs of campus through history, and how, indeed, these customs are one particular demonstration of masculinity that has largely evaded serious consequences and intervention.

In the same breath, the presence of queer masculinities at the university means that the campus has not entirely been without subversion of the heteronormative institutional culture, and alongside hegemonic masculinities, there is resistance by both queer and heterosexual men who dissent against hegemony. While the argument that long-standing customs of the university create particular notions regarding the legitimacy of the kinds of masculinities performed and prevalent on campus, it can also be argued that the refusal by some to adopt, internalise, or maintain these masculinities speak to a different tradition - a tradition of defiance against the hegemony of an expression of masculinity founded on characteristics of dominance and privilege over others. A tradition of not merely disagreement, but of protest, is a part of the institution, embodied by the voices and the bodies on the frontlines of the 2016 #RUReferenceList. After a considerable period of sexually objectifying customs at the university, a movement was born to openly challenge the modified moral order, violence and control, and transgressive sexuality of hegemonic masculinities and their practices on campus that violated the dignity of other students. This will be addressed in the forthcoming chapter.

Chapter Eight

Rape Culture and the #RUReferenceList

8.1. Introduction

The term rape culture was conceived in the 1970s as a way to express how societies condone sexual violence through social norms and beliefs about the normative sexualities of men and women (Merril, 2004). In 2016, Rhodes University witnessed a movement in which a group of students named and shamed alleged rapists on campus - a list of names which came to be known as the #RUReferenceList. Subsequent action was taken by students to coerce these individuals into disclosing acts of sexual violence on campus, and to convince Rhodes University management to take disciplinary action against the alleged perpetrators[85]. The Silent Protest held annually at Rhodes University serves to highlight how rape culture is prevalent on the Rhodes University campus, and how it regards the safety of perpetrators over the dignity of sexual assault survivors[86]. This chapter addresses the participants' experiences of the #RUReferenceList, including how they observed and experienced the ways in which hegemonic masculinity on campus was challenged both online and in the offline world, and the consequences of the movement on the men of Rhodes University in the aftermath.

8.2 The #RUReferenceList[87]

I asked participants to describe the catalysing events and/or the aftermath of the #ReferenceList, and their responses included observing and partaking in the movement, viewing comments made on the Rhodes University Facebook pages, and being present during a variety of conversations regarding the #RUReferenceList.

> There were precursors to the RU Reference List. People were writing names [of alleged rapists] on bathroom stalls. It took a minute for people to figure out what the

[85] See *Section 1.1.*
[86] See *Section 2.2.2.*
[87] The #RUReferenceList was introduced in Section *1.1* of the thesis.

> list was saying, 'cause obviously it was just "#RUReferenceList" and a list of names, but people put together very quickly what the names had in common. But it wasn't specifically stated.

(Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

Prior to the #RUReferenceList there were movements across South Africa that signaled the country's crisis of sexual assault against women. The One-in-Nine campaign was formed in 2006 to demonstrate solidarity with Fezeka Kuzwayo, a woman who accused Jacob Zuma, then vice-president, of rape (Keepile, 2010). #RememberKhwezi, the pseudonym used for the plaintiff, was a viral hashtag that, along with the One-in-Nine campaign, brought to attention South Africa's culture of sexual violence that excused transgressive and violent sexuality of men at the expense of the safety of South African women and the wellbeing of survivors of sexual assault (Keepile, 2010).

The Chapter 2.12 campaign was a movement that took place on the Rhodes University campus in 2015, just a year before the #RUReferenceList, highlighting legislation meant to protect the bodies of university students, with the following mandate:

> To be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources; to bodily and psychological integrity, which includes the right… to make decisions concerning reproduction; and to security in and control over their body *(Constitution of South Africa, Section 2.12)*.

Mitchell Parker, Editor of *Activate* at the time of the movement, believes that the #RUReferenceList was established as an attempt to achieve what the Chapter 2.12 campaign had not - the latter considered by students to have been handled poorly by the management of Rhodes University.

The #RUReferenceList was a major component of the burgeoning counterpublic at Rhodes University - the counterpublic as opposition to the public sphere (Charles and

Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015)[88]. Habermas's public sphere describes the gathering of dominant groups to discuss matters relative across a region or community in which arguments of logic and coherence prevailed over arguments of a more sentimental and subjective view. It is established as a mediator between the state and its members, and Habermas claimed it as a space of inclusion and equality. However, critics point out that these spaces were exclusionary to women, people of colour, and the queer community (Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015). These marginalised individuals held stories and experiences highly personal to their lived realities, and as these public spaces were negotiated on the basis of universal logic - that is, logic meant to transcend individual, personalised, and subjective experiences - those who were not part of dominant groups and whose lived realities were thus not standardised experiences found themselves on the fringes of these public spaces (Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015; Orth *et al*, 2021).

As a consequence, women, people of colour, and queer persons began to form their own publics, which scholars term counterpublics, to discuss issues more relevant to their experiences that were not brought to the fore by dominant groups in the public spheres. What cannot be emphasised more is how dominant groups in the public spheres found these counterpublics as threats to prevailing narratives and standardised experiences, and counterpublics, across history since the 1800s, have had to confront opposition (Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015.)

The #RUReferenceList began on social media, a space that has become popular for counterpublics to exist and to thrive. Hegemonic masculinity as the dominant group is the control of certain principles on campus premised on ideological dominance, institutional power, and cultural privileges. As this thesis has discussed in the previous chapters, hegemonic masculinity present on campus prevails through the socialisation and initiation of hierarchical homosocial bonding in the traditions of "toxic masculinity"[89]. The argument, then, is that the #RUReferenceList provided a counterpublic to the aforementioned, birthed online before quickly gaining traction as a significant movement on campus.

Kundai's initial reaction to the #RUReferenceList was a reflection of the public sphere's discourse around sex and consent that articulated particular tenets around sex, and how pervasive this discourse was in men's residences at the time.

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[88] See *Section 2.4.2* for literature and further discussion regarding the counterpublic and the #RUReferenceList.

[89] See *Section 7.2.*

> Initially when the #RUReferenceList came up, I really did not agree with almost all the girls. I did not believe the rape survivors. I did not believe the victims. Because of where I was in res, how I grew up, and the mentality I was raised with. Because with most cases I would hear, it was the girl who went to the guy's res at night then the guy forced himself on her. For a long time, we as guys thought, what were you expecting?
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

The first demonstrations of the #RUReferenceList began that evening as students mobilised to confront the alleged perpetrators at their residences. I would like to call attention to the significance of protesting survivors and allies alike demonstrating at the front doors of the men's residences (and, in some instances, gaining access into the residences). The previous chapter of this thesis focused on the customs regularly practised in the men's residences that were considered traditions in initiating first-years and socialising "Rhodents" into the institutional culture of the university[90]. Here, the protests of the counterpublic meet the public sphere of hegemonic masculinity at one of the primary places that the latter demonstrates and maintains its hegemony through habitualised customs, demanding accountability and social change.

> I remember the first time things started happening. We just heard banging and shouting outside our res, and people forced open our doors and alarms were going off, and there was this large crowd gathered.
> (Author's interview with Doc, 2022.)

Like Doc, Asakhe can vividly recall the evening of April 17, 2016.

> I was staying uphill. We hear very beautiful singing, and [the crowd was] going to this one res, saying that this guy raped someone. There's a list, and [the alleged rapists] need to account [for their actions]. One girl was addressing us. There were two guys from uphill who were taken from their residence, accused as rapists.

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[90] See *Section 7.2.*

> I think we stayed [at the Drama Department] the whole night. It was rough; it was tense for the guys in the firing line. And I think the way [the protestors] took them from their residence was that you called them out, or the whole building collapses. That was the power of the crowd. So while we were at the drama department, there are [sic] speeches and singing about ending rape culture.
> (Interview with Asakhe, 2022.)

A particular turning point in the protests was the advent of police presence. While protesting students and staff were not necessarily deterred, the brute force and over-exertion of authority of police presence through teargas, rubber bullets, and arrests sparked concern from university management, despite management's initial reservations regarding the movement. Petros found that the nature of imposition by police is what startled him awake to the gravity of the #RUReferenceList, and to what the protestors were fighting for in the face of armed opposition.

> It hit me when I was busy walking to class, and students had blockaded [a crossroad] and the police were there. And I walked past them, and then the police suddenly threw grenades of teargas. I've experienced teargas - they trained us with it in gas masks, in the military. I remember running toward the gas, and a girl was lying down and she couldn't see. I had a glass bottle full of clean water, and all you really need to do is put water in one eye and then the other eye. So I helped her out and helped carry her to the Biko building. So I was like, things are really going down now.
> (Author's interview with Petros, 2022.)

The imposition and force of police presence against unarmed protestors is a microcosmic event that foregrounds how law enforcement often defends the public sphere and hegemonic masculinity in broader South Africa, thereby undermining resistance efforts (Krige, 2021; van der Bijl and Rumney, 2009: 425 - 427; Gqola, 2015)[91]. Opposing protestors with teargas and rubber bullets is a manifestation of beliefs that prevail irrespective of legislation and a theoretically progressive state and its reforms regarding sexual violence. Officers in law

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[91] *Section 1.1* introduces the discussion around university campuses as microcosmic sites of the country's issues of sexual violence.

enforcement in South Africa, much like magistrates of the judicial system, are susceptible to meeting accusations of sexual violence with their own biases and internalisation of rape myths (van der Bijl and Rumney, 2009: 427). The conditions of laying a charge of sexual violence can be complicated by principles of hegemony that obscure protocol in accurately taking a statement from a victim (van der Bijl and Rumney, 2009: 427).

Rape myths thrive under the authority of the ideological dominance, institutional power, and cultural privileges attached to dominant or hegemonic masculinities. The coital or heterosexual imperative, and the denial of gender identity and expression beyond normative masculinity and normative femininity give rise to rape myths that are ingrained in and justified compulsory heterosexuality and gender essentialism; anti-vulnerability, violence, and control; and the modified moral order (Mkhize *et al*, 2022)[92].

> And I still don't know why the cops were involved like that. I understood people were upset, and I think it's students' duty to protest. We shouldn't be apathetic to the status quo. I don't know why they used stun grenades and teargas like that. For me, that's when it hit home and I started looking into things. That was the closest I think I came to any of the larger protests. For me, that's the moment things really kicked off.
> (Author's interview with Petros, 2022.)

Petros speaks of the status quo, and prior to the #RUReferenceList, while there were attempts to interrupt rape culture on campus, the existing conditions of Rhodes University as an establishment - regarding sexual violence - was an that of institutional culture that largely maintained rape culture[93]. Police presence, irrespective of the Rhodes University management's mandate, used brute force to curb a resistance movement attempting to enact social change. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss at length the nature of South African law enforcement's attitudes around sexual violence, it is worth noting that the country's history of privileging masculinity and the use of the police to maintain this privilege to propagate inequalities against women in particular, was re-enacted in the #RUReferenceList (Bridger, 2023)[94].

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[92] See *Section 3.5.*
[93] See *Section 7.2.*
[94] See *Section 2.4.1.*

8.3 Rape Culture vs the Counterpublic

The online counterpublic of the #RUReferenceList manifested in real-world action that conveyed the frustrations that students had with how sexual violence was being treated in the public space - lack of accountability, and the safeguarding of alleged perpetrators, as well as the perpetuation of rape culture as a set of norms and values, were what students took issue with and sought to remedy.

For Baym and Boyd (2012), social media and the offline world are close mirrors of one another, the former imitating the latter's practices and social issues to the extent that problems raised in online counterpublics can easily manifest in tangible reality to combat these social problems. These social problems, especially in recent times, are often encapsulated in hashtags that circulate social media and quickly gain traction in the pursuit of social change.

The backlash on the part of hegemonic masculinity on social media and in the offline world alike were apt instances of the status quo or the public space being threatened by the counterpublic and its actions. Orth *et al* (2021) put it as such in discussing Habermas's public space and the criticisms thereof:

> The opposition of…counterpublics served as a threat to the values and ideals of the dominant mainstream public, and as a result, were stigmatized and deemed inferior as a way of discrediting the movements. Therefore, we need to move away from narratives which describe the public as a space of equal access and participation, rather we must understand the public sphere as a desirable space of privilege and legitimacy. In contrast, the counterpublics represent the Other, the deviation from the norm of society (Orth *et al*, 2021: 245).

If, then, the dominant mainstream public in the context of the #RUReferenceList perpetuated rape culture, the #RUReferenceList addressed the dismantling of rape culture. In response, the mainstream public - in this instance, hegemonic masculinity - attempted to denounce and extinguish the demonstrations that took place on the Rhodes University campus through police presence, fault-finding of the movement by other peers, and criticisms made on social media.

I asked participants whether they witnessed a change in how men engaged with social

media during and in the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList, and discussion was raised regarding hashtags of the movment, and hashtags expressing backlash to challenge the #RUReferenceList.

There were various hashtags that went viral across social media during this time that deserve mention. The #nakedprotest accompanied protests in which women students stripped to their underwear to, firstly, defy the notion that women deserved to be raped because of their dress and behaviour, and, secondly, to stand in support of a woman's agency over her body (Orth *et al*, 2021). #MenAreTrash was an outcry expressing how gender-based violence is perpetuated by toxic masculinity, with toxic masculinity becoming a hashtag in and of itself.

#NotAllMen began to trend across social media platforms as #endrapeculture protests in support of the #RUReferenceList were sparked on campuses around the country, with some communities of men students taking issue with the idea that sexual violence and rape culture was perpetuated by all men and across expressions of masculinity. #NotAllMen is an apt example of how the public space, preserved and occupied by masculinity as the dominant experience and narrative, felt threatened by the rise of the counter-public and its determination to challenge hegemonic masculinity (Orth *et al*, 2021; Charles and Fuentes-Rohwer, 2015).

Participants spoke of these online hashtags, as well as the ways they saw men engage in social media during and following the #RUReferenceList.

> There was a time when men were suddenly feeling under threat. The one thing that comes to mind is men arguing that men aren't trash. 'Oh, no, I'm one of the good ones'. 'Oh, no, I'm not a rapist'. That kind of rhetoric. Did I say you were? No. Please read the room. It's a hashtag, not a census document. I think there was deliberate misunderstanding, people trolling a little bit. I definitely noticed people talking about these 'entitled' [protestors]. So there was a lot of that, from men in particular.
> (Author's interview with Peter, 2022.)

Online, tensions between the public sphere and the counterpublic were palpable. Given the array of hashtags, and the general social climate on campus committed to scrutinising masculinity, factions among men student, and whether their solidarity lay with their friends, with hegemonic

masculinity, or with social change, became evident[95].

> You see, there's different sections. You'll find that there are sections like me and a friend…so-called woke men, [who] understand and try to ask questions. You are able to explain to your friends what underlies the phrase 'men are trash' as a social trend or pattern or deeply embedded social problem. Then there's those men who feel as though their masculinity has been poked because it's like, 'everything's about women now. These women need to know their place'. So there's that attitude of some men who don't want to listen.
>
> Then you [have those who] have the attitude of just being nonchalant, like it doesn't involve [them]. So that's how I experienced the conversation. And it's not just men on campus, but men in society, especially in the hood.
> (Author's interview with Luka, 2022.)

The many individuals, predominantly men, who opposed the moment, engaged particularly in rhetoric that included victim blaming and trivialising rape culture (Orth *et al*, 2021). Victim blaming is a crucial component of rape culture, a practice of making a sexual assault survivor the perpetrator of the violence they endured, questioning what the victim was wearing, what they were doing, and what part of town they were in when they were assaulted. In doing this, it condones the actions of those who wield violence against others and does little to dismantle existing power relations in which aggressive masculine sexuality is positioned as the norm (Orth *et al*, 2021).

Kundai found himself engaging in victim blaming at the inception of the #RUReferenceList as a consequence of living in a men's residence, and interacting with the men he lived with on the subjects of sex and women's sexuality.

> There was also the whole point where a lot of guys would believe that if I buy you

[95] Please note that it was not just men who defended hegemonic masculinities, rape myths, or sexist norms and values online, or, presumably, offline. However, I am exclusively drawing from Orth *et al's* (2021) paper and the quotes given there, and the testimonies of the participants.

> drinks, you owe me sex. You can't drink my money. I cannot buy you a drink and you think I'm just being generous. Going out, you would've seen that girl dancing on the guy, and you would think, how did you think the night was going to end? So I did not know about consent. I did not know about the conversation you had before you got to that point.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Kundai's testimony in this regard is significant because it speaks directly to narratives and cultural practices that keep victim blaming alive. In Orth *et al's* (2021) study, the authors review these narratives in the online space in reaction against the #nakedprotest. The following is taken from Orth *et al's* (2021) paper as examples of Facebook comments regarding the #nakedprotest:

> *User 4 (Male): Some of the rapists were busy playing "my mother told me to choose that 1 but l want the best of them all" pointing so if any of them fine ones get raped don't be astonished cause they asking for it*
>
> *User 3 (Male): By exposing your body you are creating more rapists, my dear. Would rather demonstrate fully covered to stop any potential rapist. As it stands you are very inviting*
> (Quotes cited from Orth *et al*, 2021: 250)

These comments reflect the narrative of victim blaming that women's bodies are an invitation for sexual assault, and that rape is a consequence of what a woman is or is not wearing. This, Orth *et al* (2021) explain, is part of a greater attempt to destabilise the reliability of a victim's account of sexual assault, by emphasising some details of the circumstances around which sexual assault took place - such as what a victim was wearing - and trivialising others.

> The reference list for me came and it happened without any understanding altogether of what it was, what it meant. I actually thought it was an attention-seeking stunt.

(Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

The trivialisation of rape culture, such as Kundai's statement above, is the denial that there exists a set of mechanisms in place that promote sexual violence and condone masculine sexual aggression. This denial is propagated through certain ideologies - for instance, that a woman who cries rape simply regrets the consensual sex she had - shared among communities.

> By accepting the realities of rape and rape culture, people need to accept that rapists are not mentally disturbed deviants, rather they are people who have social ties, and can, therefore, be someone who is known to them. They would need to accept that sensible people in their lives are in fact capable of committing such a senseless act of violence. The denial of both the act of rape and the culture that perpetuates it leads to the assumption that neither the act nor the culture exists.
> (Orth *et al*, 2020: 253)

The comments below point to ideologies that reject the idea that sexual violence is not sustained through norms and values that collectives of individuals practise on a daily basis. Rather, these commenters understand rape as a thing of abnormality; that legitime sexual violence is a rare occurrence that has nothing to do with prevailing norms of hegemonic masculinity and masculine sexual aggression.

> *User 20 (Male): These people obviously don't want to study, next they will be protesting about cloudy days or being lied to about father Christmas. Let's start protesting about the healthy gym freaks because they make the rest of us look fat..!*
>
> *User 26 (Male) Don't you people have anything better to do¿???????? How can the situation be so out of control that this needs to be protested in this manner?*
> (Quotes cited from Orth *et al*, 2021: 253)

Orth *et al* (2021: 253) point out the presence of the fallacious arguments used here that serve to

undermine a crucial discussion by turning its attention to the character and motive of the person presenting the argument. The above comments are examples of individuals who trivialise rape culture by framing the protests as unreasonable and unnecessary, declaring sexual violence as less significant and pervasive than it is.

Aside from comments like these, participants experienced the social media space during and after the #RUReferenceList as a space in which some men refrained from posting explicit or suggestive content about sex and women, and others attempted to inform their peers about rape culture and sexual violence, and engaged in discourse discouraging the movement.

> Funny enough, before, I didn't see trash posts from men. Like men objectifying women. But it's like, after the protest, there was an explosion. Men saying, ah, women should be in the kitchen. Stuff like that. Guys just saying wild things.
>
> So a lot of men are trash - they know there's a #MeToo movement but they're like, ah, I don't care about that. I'm a man. I deserve to do and say whatever I want. And some others are like me, where they want to create awareness around it; they want to change the way they speak. But those men have been challenged by other men in saying that, you're a simp…you just want to impress women, saying all these things 'cause maybe she'll give you some ass.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

The term "simp" is used to describe a man who is perceived as submissive, compromising, and overly affectionate toward women at the expense of his dignity. This quote illustrates how men who showed support for the movement were accused of falsely supporting the #RUReferenceList out of superficial or disingenuous solidarity with the movement. Kundai describes how, from his perspective, men largely allied with one another, and in the absence of constructive feedback or conversations around their own values and behaviours, they did not engage positively with or demonstrate meaningful support for the movement.

> On the [Facebook] Confessions page, half the time when a guy [was] accused of something, it would have a point where the boys would come to defend [him], then the

> girls would counter that, then the boys would delete their comments. But the initial comment would have been your initial thought, but because the girls have countered your comment and maybe crushed your point, maybe you'd see the other [perspective], or maybe because you're being crucified and being seen as an enabler, you'd then delete your comment. But I don't think at any point I saw guys trying to engage in these topics for the positive good.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Kundai's experience of the online space mirrors his experience of the #RUReferenceList as a man on campus. The desire to defend his friends conflicted with his desire to learn more about rape culture, gender-based violence, and consent, and he found himself anxious to stand up to the accusations that the #RUReferenceList made against his friends, and against other men.

> After the RU Reference List, a lot of guys became scared…of voicing their opinion. You were scared to end up on the [Facebook] Confessions page with your story. So when it came to those topics, guys would not comment. We were in fear because you might say the wrong thing. And when you say the wrong thing, they would write about you on that page saying you're an enabler of this and that, or that one of your boys had done this. They would drag the whole clique or squad of friends. Like I said, in our defense, we saw her dance on him the whole night and they went home together. But then it would be, did your boy ask for consent? Did your boy wait for the girl to say it's okay? And even if the girl said it's okay at the beginning, midway before your guy came and the girl said stop, did your boy stop?

> We were so scared of not being politically correct that either you didn't comment at all, or you support the survivor. But you'd never ask for the other side of the story or defend the accused because you've been long-time friends.
> (Interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Subsequent to the #RUReferenceList, the climate of campus for men was one of trepidation - the nature of hierarchical homosocial bonding and the implications of this for modified moral

order in flux.

8.4 Consent Talks: A Shift in the Modified Moral Order?

For the participants, hierarchical homosocial bonding at Rhodes University was a space for implicit instructions and insinuations on how to become a man, embody a particular expression of masculinity, and engage in modified moral orders regarding sex, aggression, and potential violence (Ntisana, 2020)[96].

The #RUReferenceList, though not explicitly concerned with "locker room" discourse, raised issues of "toxic masculinity" in which men shared conversations that objectified women, complimented with beliefs and practices around heterosex that condoned sexual violence through modified moral orders of permissible sexual transgressions (Fjaer and Pedersen 2015; Vaynman *et al*, 2020: 1240). Participants observe that, as a consequence, "locker room talk" or this nature of homosocial bonding was discouraged on campus because of its implications, and in some instances, participants found that these spaces were treated with caution for some time.

> Locker room talk became more private. There are things that you wouldn't say in the open. There wouldn't be a big gathering talking about some booty; you'd be saying it very privately with one or two friends.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

Kundai shares this sentiment - that men of Rhodes University simply became more discerning as to the appropriate company in which to engage in discussions of this nature.

> [These conversations] did not change at all. There'd be very few guys who would defend the girls among 95% of guys I've encountered. The topic and the mindset would not change. The talks would still defend the same behaviour. But people became aware of what is expected to be said, and what should not be said. So they knew clearly [in] which crowd to say this, and in which crowd to say that.

[96] See *Section 6.2.*

(Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

The consensus of the participants is that the gravity of the #RUReferenceList went largely unrecognised among the men of the student body. Once the initial shock and disruption of the demonstrations had sobered, the status quo reset, if ever it had been truly interrupted beneath the short stint of protesting and online activism.

> I'd say maybe two months into it, people were very reserved, but after that, everything went back to normal. Which was an unfortunate thing, really. Because these opportunities for having genuine conversations were eliminated. I think most people - most guys - were just buying their time, weathering the storm, then after that everything just goes back to normal like nothing has changed.
> (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

The university held numerous on-campus discussions and hosted numerous forums for students to engage with these topics, to ask questions, and to come away from these talks with insights into norms and values that propagate sexual violence. As a woman, I found that many other women were having in-depth conversations about gender-based violence and masculinity, and I wondered whether men were doing the same.

The nature of hierarchical homosocial bonding and how it fosters the modified moral order occupies the other end of the spectrum of the probing and discerning subjects explored by the #RUReferenceList, the #nakedprotest, and Chapter 2.12. The former is deeply embedded in a culture that prioritises and rewards hegemonic masculinity, while the latter endeavoured to undermine hegemonic values and practices (Orth *et al*, 2021).

The #RUReferenceList was the impetus for the Consent Talks, a campaign by the university to educate staff and students on issues of rape, sex, and gender. These compulsory talks took place in residences and dining halls across campus, and primarily addressed consent. Two officials of Rhodes University involved in the Consent Talks remarked upon how men on campus largely received these talks, highlighting the presence of hegemonic attitudes among a great deal of the students.

> They asked questions about the no. They can't take no for an answer. There were talks around a small no and a big no and I would be like, a no is a no...And for me, that resonates with patriarchal attitudes and mindsets that need to be changed. We must bear in mind that women in our society have been socialised to be carers, have been socialised to be kind. They might be saying no, but in a kind manner, and the man might not be willing to accept that no (Rhodes University official quoted by Ntisana, 2020: 38).

> Patriarchy is very rife, we must bear in mind that our students are individuals, but they are coming from the community and South Africa is a patriarchal society. Values that students bring themselves are the values which have been assimilated during their socialisation in those communities (Rhodes University senior official quoted by Ntisana, 2020: 39).

I inquired with the participants of this research as to whether men were having conversations around rape culture outside of these Consent Talks, and they speak to the dichotomy and opposition between the movement that took place that sought to challenge hegemonic masculinity, and the hierarchical homosocial spaces that were still manifesting among students.

> They were [having conversations about rape culture], but with the opposite meanings where amongst boys alone, they would trash the victim and support the perpetrator. Because a lot of guys were resistant to the new knowledge. They would still believe their mindset. So in the talks, they would say what was expected. But alone, they would say the opposite. They would even support the opposite.
> (Author's interview with Kundai, 2022.)

Seeker discusses the intersection of hierarchical homosociality, and the discussions around rape culture in circles of men that were taking place in the company that he kept. While men at Rhodes University would distance themselves from the act of sexual violence and rape culture

- and even engage in informative talks around rape culture - the modified moral orders of their private discussions would reveal their true attitudes toward rape culture, and the act of sexual violence itself. For Seeker, the impact of the #RUReferenceList made him realise that the conversations shared between men held little regard for the ways in which they continued to perpetuate sexism and misogyny.

> Within my circles, guys would still have their normal conversations, but in terms of rape, they would still be against people that rape. Or, rather, [they] would say, we don't understand why people would rape. But [their conversations] was [sic] not far from rape. It's as if as rape is something that would not be done by me, but my thinking and my talking is still showing the same masculinity that would rape.
> (Author's interview with Seeker, 2022.)

Greenshirt attested to the same experience:

> What I did experience was that, unfortunately, people weren't being genuine in having conversations like that. Most people, and I'm talking about the male individuals…were having conversations about it in dining hall [that were] very general, almost virtue-signalling conversations about it. It was never anything of depth or substance.
>
> What I did notice was that a lot of people that kept quiet maybe felt as though trying to add anything could be misconstrued. There was an atmosphere of people who were keen on being active in the whole #ReferenceList thing being quick in pointing fingers and being aggressive instead of being willing to have these open conversations.
> (Author's interview with Greenshirt, 2022.)

Virtue signalling refers to the act of spouting discourse in defence of a movement or issue in order to position yourself in a favourable light, whilst holding no real meaning or genuine attempts of change. Virtue signalling is an act of self-promotion by appropriating the tribulations of a specific group with little intent to make or contribute toward significant change of a social ill (Cocks, 2022).

When it comes to the #RUReferenceList, participants who accused others of virtue signalling recognised a lack of authentic conversations taking place that did not merely repeat the same manifesto of the movement.

> The closest we came to [conversations about rape culture] were our house meetings. And we did talk about it, in that formal, encouraged setting. But to hear rape culture talked amongst guys privately - [not really].
>
> I think it's because so many guys felt accused. Also, rape is such a terrible word and to think that we are all participating in rape culture…are we all rapists? And a lot of it was like the Men Are Trash thing. The first thing people jumped to was "not all men. I'm not trash". As a result, so many discussions weren't had because the idea kind of threatened the male ego. Guys operate on the ego. And it's something that does not want to die. It will not take any kind of criticism like that lightly.
> (Author's interview with Petros, 2022.)

For men, spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding preside as almost a rite of passage, embedded in ideals of how to behave and be perceived as a man[97]. These spaces, in which rape culture can arguably be conceived and perpetuated, thus has implications on perceptions of masculinities and how men receive and internalise movements that challenge how men engage with their sexuality (Curry, 1991; Vaynman *et al*, 2020). Men sharing meaningful conversations regarding rape culture means opposing the modified moral order of violence and aggression rife within these spaces, risking the gender accountability of long-held masculinist hegemonic that perpetuates it, invoking criticism of gender accountability and "gatekeeping" from in-groups[98]**.**

Petros's quote above calls attention to how men's response to #RUReferenceList in this regard is a byproduct of how the movement interrogated hierarchical homosociality, the modified moral order within, and the traditions of "toxic masculinity" thereof. To acquiesce to

[97] See *Section 6.4.*
[98] See *Section 7.2.*

the accusation of rape culture - to believe it to be true - is, perhaps, for some men, to admit complicity where they do not believe they are guilty.

> I think I had these knee-jerk reactions of, 'it's not me'. They're not talking about me. I don't necessarily identify as masculine. They're not talking to me because I'm not a straight male…[before] realizing, you can't Other yourself. You really have to be present in actually accepting that yes, everyone is involved in this. In gender-based violence. And the idea of the bystander and how important the bystander is in all of this.
>
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

While many men students, according to the participants, resisted the idea that the norms, values, and discourse of sexuality shared among them that entail aggression and violence, there seemed to be, nevertheless, an understanding (however displaced or ill-conceived) that men faced particular persecution, even in the aftermath of the movement.

> I don't know whether there was a victimisation of masculinity…a victimisation of men. But when I say that, it sounds totally incorrect. But it almost seems as though there was something like that. There was something going on. Men are being [sic] under attack. Masculinity is being [sic] under attack.
>
> (Author's interview with Gerald, 2022.)

While the argument may be made that the social climate of the #RUReferenceList was a period of victimisation for the men of Rhodes University, it is also the case that such terms may have helped to displace the urgent need for accountability, potentially enabling communities of men on campus to forgo confronting their complicity and instead, focus on how not to become another victim of the #RUReferenceList. Unfortunately, the uncritical framing of the #RUReferenceList in this manner only positions men who - if they do not demonstrate hegemonic masculinities, then often otherwise inhabit spaces of hegemonic masculinity - consider themselves to be targets of baseless accusations or superfluous outcry.

> [A girl and I] made arrangements to go on a date in my room. When she got to my res room, she was already [drunk]. You were a bit nervous now [sic] what's about to unfold. Why did you come lit already? And already I knew, I just got to keep asking. Eventually, she said, let's just do the thing, but with everything I was doing, I had to keep asking. It wasn't sexy, but next thing, you're on the #ReferenceList because you didn't ask…
>
> You just have to make sure a brother's safe. Yeah, make sure the woman's safe, but make sure a brother's even more safe. 'Cause one wrong move, that's your life. You're on the list.
> (Author's interview with Sipho, 2022.)

No participant other than Sipho spoke about the nature of their sex lives following the #RUReferenceList, and no participant other than Gerald framed the #RUReferenceList in this way. And while both Sipho and Gerald made comments throughout their interviews that demonstrated their support for the #RUReferenceList, condemning hegemonic masculinities in the process, their quotes help sum up what the participants throughout this chapter have expressed regarding how some men experienced the #RUReferenceList not as activism - as a means to bring about accountability - but as persecution; a witch hunt brought down on the men of Rhodes University.

8.5 Conclusion

The catalysing nature of the #RUReferenceList online began as a reflection and an extension of the waking world in which claims of sexual violence were minimised and silenced by the public spaces dominated by hegemonic masculinity where sexual assault and its prevalence was trivialised and minimised, and consent negated.

The counterpublic of the #RUReferenceList provided a very necessary opposition to the public spheres of hegemonic masculinities on the Rhodes University campus, such as hierarchical homosocial bonding, modified moral orders, and traditions of "toxic masculinity" that were established and allowed to permeate the campus.

As presented in the previous chapters of this thesis, hegemonic discourse around the male sex drive is largely constructed and perpetuated in spaces of hierarchical homosocial

bonding, and in the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList, participants observed how the modified moral orders of these spaces contributed to a cultural climate that forced the action and demonstrations of the movement.

The #RUReferenceList revealed the need to address spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding where men gather, and in which modified moral orders and traditions of "toxic" masculinity are prized as tenets and customs. As a movement that began in the mirroring of the offline world, the #RUReferenceList and its backlash online revealed the attitudes and ideas regarding rape, sexual violence, and the negation of consent that, offline - when beyond the act of sexual violence itself - are often confined to spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding. Hegemonic norms and discourse around the male sex drive were opposed as harmful to women's welfare, and in the face of this opposition, hegemonic masculinities clung tightly to the aforementioned spaces that safeguarded these norms and discourse. This was observed by participants, who spoke of how spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding barely transformed in the aftermath of the #RUReferenceList, continuing to internalise and routinise the deeply-embedded masculinist institutional culture of campus.

Chapter Nine
Conclusion

In accounting for the key findings of the research, I turn to the primary and sub-objectives that the thesis set out to investigate; namely, how men at Rhodes University experienced hegemonic masculinity and the 2016 #RUReferenceList through the interrogation of how hegemonic masculinities are inculcated and manifest on campus; and, subsequently, how the #RUReferenceList addressed hegemonic masculinity and rape culture at the university.

Four notable concepts in relaying hegemonic masculinity and relating it to the phenomena explored in the thesis are the coital or heterosexual imperative, normative sexual scripts, gender scrutiny, and compulsory heterosexuality. These concepts are woven throughout the thesis, highly apropos to the investigation into how hegemonic masculinities show up and how rape culture prevails on the Rhodes University campus, and, effectively, at the heart of men's experiences of masculinity and the #RUReferenceList.

To appropriately speak to the primary objective of this thesis, I respond to the sub-goals; namely, how hegemonic masculinities presented on campus, and how the #RUReferenceList addressed these masculinities and the #RUReferenceList. Firstly, then, hierarchical homosociality in how men on campus not only related to one another but related to their masculinity as young adults proved to be a crucial space of enacting and validating hegemonic masculinity, as well as initiating other men into this particular fraternity of interacting with identity and sexuality.

Hierarchical homosocial bonding as a process of socialisation fundamentally concerns itself with the modified moral order in which transgression is fused into sexuality through the discourse of violence. To be sure, one cannot make the claim that hierarchical homosocial bonding is responsible for sexual violence; rather, elements of sexism and objectification of women that underlie the often profane nature of the conversations shared in this space arguably incentivise violence through the esteem shown to men who participate or claim to participate in transgressive sexual acts.

Within these spaces, the coital or heterosexual imperative takes an important role in the identity of masculinity through the social pressure to perform masculinity through the enactment of consistent heterosex (or even homosex, dependent on a man's configuration of sex, desire, and gender - how he may perform masculinity in other areas of his life). Sexual activity becomes an innate part of how men perceive other men in the hierarchical homosocial bonding process, and how men may come to perceive themselves.

The hookup culture of Rhodes University fuels prevailing norms and values of compulsory heterosexuality, set up as a determinant of favour or validation among men in the hierarchical homosocial bonding process, on campus. In recognising, of course, the freedom for students of age to engage in whatever consenting sexual acts they may choose, data of the research does raise how prevailing compulsory heterosexuality encouraged by spaces of hierarchical homosocial bonding may aid in the manifestation of violent transgressive sexuality.

The negation of consent, as opposed to the negotiation of consent, is - while not invariably - potentially an offshoot of the nature of discourse exchanged in hierarchical homosocial spaces and what this discourse considers as significant to the male bonding experience and the socialisation of masculinity. The discourse of these spaces is often simultaneously framed by and a catalyst for a culture of compulsory heterosexuality in which rape myths may go unchecked, and are maintained and even celebrated as (hegemonic) tenets of male sexuality.

As briefly aforementioned, hierarchical homosocial bonding is a process of socialisation that serves to initiate men into these tenets. Hierarchical homosociality is different from vertical homosociality; men experience the latter as connections based on vulnerability and the freedom to express themselves beyond the parameters of normative masculinity. The former, however, foregrounds normative masculinity as the basis of fraternity, encouraging hegemonic behaviours through the perceived promise or opportunity of inclusion. This inclusion is premised on assimilation into prevailing and standardised ideas of masculinity grounded in the modified moral order.

With hierarchical homosocial bonding and all the aforementioned concepts the first argument for how hegemonic masculinities present on campus, I moved to discuss an extension of said homosociality that lies in the historical customs of the university. Participants and strategic anonymous informants gave testimony to certain practices that took place in the men's

residences on campus: customs which contributed to the objectification of women, the subjugation of gay men, the foregrounding of compulsory heterosexuality and the coital imperative, and a general phallocentric preoccupation within these residences. The queer participants of this research openly admitted to the daunting nature of living in residence and its ever-present and deep-rooted hegemonic masculinist culture, and the heterosexual men that I interviewed spoke to heterosexist sexual scripts outside of residence and in campus life more generally. The "toxicity" on campus that some participants identified included homonegativity and internalised hegemony in the LGBTQ+ community, and the tribalist nature of certain communities, and the weaponisation of hegemonic in-group membership against masculinities that go against beyond normative parameters.

In addition to hierarchical homosocial spaces, the customs of men's residences, and "toxic" cliques and behaviours on campus, the #RUReferenceList grappled with other hegemonic discourse and historical proclivities ingrained within the institutional culture and the student body. The #RUReferenceList took up the position of formidable counterpublic against the hegemonic masculinist status quo that, given the historical customs of the university and the hierarchical homosociality embedded within the university, had long served discourse and behaviours that arguably contributed to the culture of sexual violence in the establishment.

The movement, as a backlash to hegemonic masculinity, quickly witnessed "a backlash to the backlash": #MenAreTrash came to encounter the vitriol of #NotAllMen; an outcry for accountability faced criticism as an unlawful witch hunt. The landscape of Rhodes University, at times, came to mirror wider South African society and the country's attempts to fight sexual violence. The teargas and rubber bullets of forceful police presence mimicked wider societal issues regarding how claims of sexual violence are met by law enforcement. In a country still under a great patriarchal hold, the fight against sexual violence is a fight against masculinist rule, which does not often acquiesce without demonstration of further demonstration of hegemony and violence.

The #RUReferenceList as an online movement initially ultimately sought to tackle the hegemonic masculinist status quo of Rhodes University through officialising opposition through the creation of an online space in which the voices of survivors and allies to the anti-rape movement were given credence, and, moreover, were the very testimonies to found a movement beyond the online space that had real-world consequences. These consequences did not just leave

their impact on alleged rapists, but became a warning that all men on campus at the time understood well: that allies and survivors were not just silent victims and outliers of a hegemonic masculinist institutional culture, but a counterpublic that would and could be just as a forbidding force.

Rhodes University saw a divided student body - and these were not factions because of the #RUReferenceList, only factions that the movement revealed to be already present, buried beneath the dominance of the hegemonic masculinist public sphere, and the facade of "tradition". Participants reflected on witnessing the divide between allies and friendships, between #endrapeculture and those who joked about the naked bodies on the frontlines.

For most of the participants of this research, the 2016 #RUReferenceList was the catalyst to a profound awareness of how prevalent sexual violence was on campus, but the deep-seated nature of rape culture as part of the institutional culture. Queer participants, as men who were accustomed to varying degrees of subjugation by hegemonic masculinity, were arguably in a more knowledgeable position as to the hegemonic masculinist institutional culture, but not invariably to the same extent. The heterosexual men of this research expressed throughout their testimonies how the movement was an impetus for greater self-awareness regarding their own masculinity, the masculinities they had been socialised into as "Rhodents", and the vulnerability of the women around them .

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