Abstract
In this article, the authors explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate and manage multiple voices of ‘masculinity’ in a private-multi racial school in Johannesburg, South Africa. Individual and group interviews were conducted with adolescent boys between 15 and 18 years old. Data were analysed through thematic content analysis. The findings show that black and white adolescent boys’ understandings and experiences of masculinity are multiple and complex. Overall, the article reveals some of the tensions and complexities of how race and class intersect with adolescent boys’ social constructions of masculinity in the context of a private multi-racial school in contemporary South African society.

Keywords: adolescent boys; class; hegemonic masculinity; masculinity; race

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES ON YOUNG MASCULINITY IN SCHOOLS
In Britain and Australia, Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002), Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), and Martino and Pallotta-Chirolli (2003) have led the way in researching young masculinities amongst white and black school-going boys between the age of 12 and 18 years. These researchers explored issues of race and class, and argued that the experiences of social class, ‘ethnicity’, and ‘race’ play an important role in the concepts that boys develop about their masculine identities. For example, middle-class boys in private schools seem to view themselves as intellectually superior and
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as being more career-orientated than working-class boys in state schools. Frosh et al. (2002) found that middle-class boys valued leadership and intelligence as characteristics of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (an idealised version of what it means to be a ‘real’ man). Working-class boys, on the other hand, were likely to suggest that hegemonic masculinity was all about being streetwise (e.g., a gang member); being able to attract multiple girlfriends and looking ‘cool,’ which may involve taking risks such as publicly smoking and drinking excessively. Working-class boys interpreted these activities as a legitimate form of masculinity.

Looking specifically at the relationship of race and masculinity, Wright, Weekes, McGlaughlin, and Webb (1998) discovered a construction of black masculinity that was inferior to white masculinity in the context of schools. By positioning black boys in opposition to white boys, it seems that the former group was equated with failure and poor school performance. To defend themselves against not fitting into the dominant definitions of masculinity as prescribed by their schooling context, black boys tended to take up alternative forms of masculinity evident in sporting achievements, physical aggression, and sexual conquests. What therefore emerged on the whole was a stereotypical and homogenous perception of black males as aggressive, sexist, and violent. However, Sewell (1995) was critical about the ‘homogenisation’ of black masculinity, stating that not all black adolescent males engage in risk-taking behaviours, and that this construction also perpetuates these racial stereotypes. These stereotypes are problematic in that they tend to leave little space for thinking about the difficulties these boys face. Sewell (1995) and Wright et al. (1998) maintain that it is important that their risk-taking behaviour is understood and interpreted within the context of marginalisation and exclusion, because there is a complex relationship between race, class, and masculinity in the context of multi-racial schools.

THE ROLE OF RACE AND CLASS IN SOUTH AFRICAN MASCULINITY STUDIES

Ratele (2001) argues that historically little attention has been given to understanding of black masculinities within the context of South African research. However, in the last few years, it has become evident that multiple forms of masculinity exist, and that new forms of masculinity have been emerging since the end of apartheid (Ratele, 2001). During the apartheid regime, the social construction of masculinity was intertwined with inequalities and injustices. According to Morrell (2001), masculinity discourses under apartheid promoted the Afrikaans-speaking white man who displayed authoritative, punitive, and oppressive attitudes towards the black man who was forced into the role of a ‘non-man’ - ‘the powerlessness of knowing that a white man could violate your life at will’ (Clowes, 2005, p. 103). This construction of ‘hegemonic’ masculinity pervaded all aspects of social life, for example, in many
white schools sports such as rugby and cricket were viewed as sports played by white men (Morrell, 2001). During this era, hegemonic masculinity was ‘defined as that of a white, educated heterosexual, Christian male type’ (Shefer & Ratele, 2006, p. 29). Shefer and Ratele (2006) argue that ‘African men’ were located politically and geographically in a context in which they have had to endure insistent racial, socioeconomic, and power inequalities.

However, with the end of apartheid, post-1994, there have been many political and socio-economic changes that have influenced how young adolescent boys negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in schools. Bond (2004, cited in Terre Blanche, 2006) contends that ‘the reality is that South Africa has witnessed the replacement of racial apartheid with what is increasingly referred to as class apartheid’ (p. 73). Here, Bond (2004, cited in Terre Blanche, 2006) talks about the emergence of the new super-rich ‘black elite’ or ‘black bourgeoisie’ in post-apartheid South Africa, many of whom have moved out of the townships to live in the suburbs. They drive luxury cars and are able to afford the high school fees of former Model C schools for their children to receive what they perceive to be quality education (Dolby, 2001). Drawing on her ethnographic study at an urban multiracial high school in Durban, South Africa, Dolby (2001) stated that many learners’ choice of clothes and music are influenced by race and class. In this way, racial identity within this context is established, monitored, and produced through engagement with popular culture.

What is interesting is that young black males who attend former Model C schools are seen by their township counterparts as lacking the key characteristics of township masculinity, such as being stylish and wearing specific clothes (e.g., All Stars or Lacoste). Langa (2008) contends that these young males tend to equate the possession of certain clothes (e.g., All Stars or Lacoste) with township masculinity. Township boys accuse Model C black boys of being ‘coconuts’ because they are black but speak English with an American accent, wear baggy jeans, play basketball, listen to RAP music rather than listening to kwaiito (popular township music), and playing ediski (soccer) (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006; Pattman, 2005). These constructions indicate that masculine identities have shifted post 1994, as well as how class status for both working and middle-class boys plays a central role in the expression of township masculinity. Some of these identity politics also apply to white adolescent boys. Research conducted by Steyn (2001) provides some evidence of the different ways in which white adolescent boys are also struggling to manage changes from apartheid to democracy. What emerged in the research was a general feeling amongst white adolescent boys that racism is being inverted in post-apartheid South Africa, for example, through equity policies (Steyn, 2001).

It is against this brief background that the authors wanted to explore how adolescent boys of different races negotiate multiple voices of masculinity in a multi-racial school environment in South Africa. Indeed, in South Africa few studies have investigated the relationship between class, race and perceptions of
masculinity. What are some of the racial and class dynamics that exist in multi-racial school environments? How do adolescent boys in multi-racial schools manage these dynamics both practically and psychologically?

METHOD
The School – a context for masculinity research

According to Govender (2006, p. 146) ‘schools act as masculinity-making devices’, providing a context for the construction and creation of masculinities. Importantly, schools also do not exist in a vacuum and therefore a complex set of social relationships exist within them in influencing how masculinity is constructed in this context (Frosh et al., 2002). Morrell (1998) asserts the significant role the different categories of schooling, for example, rural, township, and public as well as the class and race dimensions play in the constructing of masculinities.

The current study was carried out with adolescent boys from a private multi-racial school in the broader area of Johannesburg, Gauteng. The school is recognised as one of the top academic schools in the country that offers a well-rounded educational system. It is a boys-only school whose scholars tend to excel at a national level in academic, cultural, and sporting competitions. In this school, 74.5% of learners are white and 26.4% are African (black, Indian, and Coloured). This disproportion of African to white learners, as argued by Shefer and Ratele (2006), reflects the disparities still evident in post-apartheid South Africa as well as the intersection of race and class dynamics. Working within this particular school context, the authors were interested in exploring how class and race dynamics influence adolescent boys and their behaviour in negotiating multiple voices of masculinity.

Participants

Participants consisted of eight scholars, four white boys and four black boys aged between 15 and 18 years. The selection of the sample was justified by the rationale of this study: that race, especially within the context of South Africa, plays an influential role in the social construction of masculinity. The study was guided by Morrell’s (1998) and Govender’s (2006) arguments that societal issues, as well as class and race differences, pervade and influence the school environment, and in turn, mould masculinities in particular ways. The decision to focus specifically on understanding the binary between white and black South African boys in a private multi-racial school in South Africa was due to time limitations as well as the complexity inherent if all race groups were included. It is important to note that the authors were in no way attempting to negate the complexity of each ethnic group’s composition, set of values, beliefs, and how they construct masculinity. The decision to work with adolescent boys stemmed from Frosh et al.’s (2002) argument that this
developmental period is a turbulent one that represents a transitional space from boyhood to manhood. It is also the time when boys begin to engage in masculinising activities that distinguish them from girls.

Recruitment of participants

The procedure of recruiting participants included a number of steps. First, the study was approved by the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee. Second, permission was sought from the school principal. Once informed consent was given from the school principal, the authors worked closely with the school’s guidance teacher to advertise the study by visiting classes of learners and explaining that willing participants would need their parents/guardians’ permission before taking part in the study. All the adolescent boys who expressed an interest in participating were given forms to take home for their parents or guardians to sign. Only learners who had informed consent forms signed by their parents/guardians participated in the study.

Written consent was also obtained from all participants. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed and the use of pseudonyms in place of the participants’ actual names was explained. Before each interview was conducted, the authors reminded the participants that the process was entirely voluntary and that they did not have to answer any questions that they were reluctant to answer. In terms of the focus group, the authors ensured that all the participants signed the focus group consent forms. The importance of keeping what was said in the group confidential was also raised. Each participant also signed a confidentiality agreement before the process commenced. In order to facilitate the development of a relaxed and respectful environment, the researcher discussed the importance of giving others the opportunity to comment on a particular topic and of not interrupting each other.

DATA COLLECTION

Data were collected through individual and focus group interviews conducted by the first author. Each participant was given a disposable camera to take twenty-seven photographs under the theme ‘My life as a boy’. The photographs were then used to facilitate discussions in the individual interviews and focus group, as well as a means of gaining insight into the participants’ experiences as boys in contemporary South African society. Each individual interview lasted approximately one hour. The final stage in the data collection process included the running of a mixed race focus group with all eight participants. The use of a mixed race focus group was guided by Govender’s (2006) argument that one cannot understand masculinity or masculinities within the South African context independently of the issues of race and class differences. In this study, the authors were interested in exploring how racial and class dynamics play a role in influencing adolescent boys and their
behaviour in negotiating multiple voices of masculinity. Being a white female, the first author was constantly aware of how her gender and race could impact on the research process and how the participants would interact with her. According to Boonzaier and Shefer (2006) it is essential for researchers to practice reflexivity, to continually reflect on their subjectivity and its impact on the research process, if qualitative research methods are utilised. Personal reflections are included in the findings and discussion section of this article.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The individual interviews with all eight participants and the focus group were tape-recorded and transcribed for detailed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involved reading the interviews as well as the focus group material with a view to extracting significant themes regarding the participants’ constructions of masculinity. Working from a social constructionist paradigm, the analysis aimed to go beyond the subjective experiences and understandings presented by the participants, to explore how these understandings are shaped by larger, societal discourses of masculinity. For the purpose of this article, those aspects of the data that were significant for understanding adolescent masculinity and the influence of race and class in the boys’ constructions of their masculinity and/or masculinities are highlighted in the discussion section. The reading and re-reading of the transcript material allowed the authors to identify key themes that were then arranged under thematic headings to make connections and associations with the research questions. This analysis was aimed at examining how race and class influence participants’ social construction of masculinity.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Morrell (2001) argues that the post-apartheid South African context has brought much change to previous notions of masculinity, especially with regard to race and class dynamics. One context in which these changes and developments have taken place is in the school context. This context provides a space in which masculinities can be played out and negotiated. Connell (2000) as well as Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) argue for the important role of the school in the ‘making’ of masculinity or masculinities. This process can be argued to be a complex one in which adolescent boys may experience tensions between self and societal expectations of masculinity (cf., Connell, 2000). The findings and discussion in this article highlight some of the dynamics, such as race and class, which black and white adolescent boys in a school context may have to negotiate in constructing their masculine identities.
The construction of black boys as ‘coconuts’

Research in the area of black boys who attend schools in white suburbs has explored the way in which other black boys have labelled these boys as sell-outs or as ‘trying to be white’. These boys, in previous research, have been labelled as ‘AmaBhujwa’, ‘AmaCoconuts’, and ‘cheese boys’ by black youth who see them as traitors (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006; Stevens & Lockhart, 2003). In this study, participants also used the same derogatory names to talk about their own personal experiences of being ridiculed and accused of ‘trying to be white’ due to attending a previously all white boys’ school.

P8B: Black on the outside and white on the inside.

P6B: I don’t care . . . If people are gonna be sour because I have more money than them then they can kiss my ass . . .

P1B: Ja gees this coconut thing it’s so stupid like well ja I mean my accent isn’t really the black sort of stereotype thing so people give me all that rubbish but I’ve really just learnt to get over that / I mean you can’t make everyone happy all the time.

Black participants appeared to be quite irritated and angry with being labelled ‘coconuts’. It seems that as much as the black participants argued that they were not emotionally affected by these verbal attacks, their responses seem to indicate the opposite. It appears that being called a ‘coconut’ or ‘cheese’ boy is belittling for any black boy. The term ‘cheese’ boy implies that one is too soft and spoiled to be a ‘real’ township boy. As in previous studies (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006; Stevens & Lockhart, 2003), the black participants in this study were also seen as lacking key characteristics of township masculinity. Township, specifically black, masculinity as previously mentioned, involves an engagement in anti-school behaviours such as missing classes and defying teachers’ authority (Sewell, 1995; Wright et al., 1998). It is possible that these Model C school boys were perceived as ‘nerds’ due to the fact that they always wore their school uniforms and placed emphasis on academic success. Black boys within this context appear to challenge stereotypical perceptions of township boys. However, the difficulty of breaking away from these social constructions is evidenced in these black boys’ personal accounts – ones which are steeped in ridicule, challenge, and accusation. In his individual interview, P6B was defensive, as evidenced by his statement that he did not care what other black boys thought about him. As authors, we sensed that this response was denial of possible feelings of emotional pain that he experienced due to constantly being judged by other black boys as being a ‘coconut’ for attending a private multi-racial school. Similarly, P1B argued that he . . . cannot make everyone happy all the time. However, on a deeper level, it seems that as much as these boys argued that they were not emotionally affected by these verbal attacks of being called ‘coconuts’, their defensive and angry responses indicate that these experiences are often difficult to contend with.
White participants also revealed their perceptions about black boys who attend this elite private multi-racial school. In the quote below, a white adolescent boy described black boys at his school as having characteristics that are associated with males rather than with black males that he attributed to their belonging to a high social class.

**P5W:** *Even like the blacks here they seem to have fairly white characteristics because they are the upper class.*

In the above quote, it seems that being white is equated with being upper class and being black with lower class. However, what also emerged was a sense that embracing ‘whiteness’ was far better than embracing ‘blackness’. These findings are consistent with Wright et al.’s (1998) study in which black masculinity was constructed as inferior to white masculinity in the context of multi-racial schools. On an important note, it seems that black boys are expected to uncritically shift and embrace ‘whiteness’, but not the other way round. P3W, another white adolescent participant, also described black boys at his school as possessing white characteristics. It seems both P5W and P3W have positioned themselves within the in-group, viewing the other, in this case black boys, as wanting to become like them as they speak in an accented English. According to Duncan (2003) through this process the self is represented as superior while the other, in this case, the black boys, is seen as inferior. Some of these comments reflect more subtle racist discourses in which black boys are expected to behave in a particular manner in order to be accepted in this multi-racial school. This theme emerged strongly when some black boys spoke about feeling ‘lost’ due to their inability to speak their home languages in the subsequent sub-section.

**Feelings of guilt and the pressure of being a rich black adolescent boy attending a private school**

Another area of negotiation in the construction of masculinity that, in this case, black adolescent boys have to navigate is one encompassing the feelings associated with attending an upper class school. What emerged in the black boys’ narratives was a sense of guilt associated with attending an elite private school as well as an immense pressure to succeed due to being given this ‘opportunity.’

**P8B:** *I think you do feel like bad in a way, because they’re not getting the same opportunity as you are . . . And I just choose not to talk about // like when I am around people, even if they ask how much is your school; I say I don’t know because I just do not wanna talk about it.*

**P2B:** *It’s like I don’t even know my language/ it’s disappeared coz I could get used to speaking than other people/there’s nothing I could do about it.*

The above extracts highlight the daily struggles that black boys who attend this particular elite private school encounter. Duncan (2003) contends that one cannot
negate the destructive impact of racism on the social, political, economic and psychological reality of the majority of South Africans. Even though the black participants in the study may not be experiencing the economic hardships that the majority of South Africans still have to endure in the aftermath of apartheid, it can be argued that they still endure the psychological impact of race and racism. Many appeared to experience guilt in relation to attending an elite school as the majority of black boys in South Africa are not afforded such an opportunity due to economic challenges.

One way in which these boys appear to manage this guilt is by avoiding conversations about school when they are with friends in the township. This point became apparent in one of the interviews with P8B, in which he mentioned that he avoids talking to his male peers in the township about the cost of his school fees. He asserted that he does not want them to think he is a ‘Lebhujwa’, a term used to refer to black boys who attend Model C or private schools (Stevens & Lockhart, 2003). This extract reveals tactical strategies that this group of black adolescent boys employ – strategies, as previously mentioned, that allow them to present an image of what they perceive a ‘real’ black boy to be. This need to present different forms of masculinity in different contexts once again highlights the complexity and the fluid nature of masculinity. According to Connell (2000), masculinity is not a fixed, homogenous, and innate construct, but is rather fluid, relational, contextual, and constantly being negotiated.

The black participants also mentioned that they avoid speaking English when they are in the township due to the fear of being seen as ‘coconuts’. However, P2B spoke about his dilemma of not knowing his home language or any African language. It appears that by embracing whiteness, many black boys may experience themselves as losing their traditional culture, their native language, and their identity. Drawing on Fanon’s (1986) argument, it seems as if P2B has become alienated and estranged from his own race. According to Fanon (1986), through structural oppression, the black individual’s mind becomes ‘colonised’, resulting in constant feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. P2B’s comment indicates feelings of shame attached to his inability to speak any of the African languages. In order to manage these feelings, it seems that he has had to construct this loss of his traditional language as something that he had no control over. By stating that it disappeared and that there was nothing he could do, he seems to be justifying his inability to speak his home language.

The construction of white boys as ‘wiggers’

White adolescents boys in this context also appear to have to negotiate and work their way around racial stereotypes that influence their construction of masculinity. This was evident in the use of the term ‘wigger’, a slang word given to a white person who emulates mannerisms, slang and fashion stereotypically associated with urban
African Americans, urban black British, and Caribbean culture (Stadler, 2008). In the present study, the term was also used to refer to white boys who play sports stereotypically associated with black boys. During the individual interview, P5W described the way in which, on more than one occasion, he had experienced being called a ‘wigger’ due to his love of basketball, a perceived black sport, *Ya... plenty of times, which is not helped by the fact that I play basketball. So it has happened plenty of times before, but for me it has never been a problem. Because it is what I enjoy, so I really couldn’t care about what other guys think about it.* This narrative highlights the way in which at times, race still plays a central role in shaping boys’ ‘masculinity’ and everyday experiences. That is, instead of being perceived as a boy who enjoys basketball, he is constructed as a white boy trying to be black. However, unlike previous research that has noted the way in which black boys have been positioned as trying to be white (Durrheim & Mtose, 2006;), this study revealed that there are white boys also trying to be black.

**P4W:** *I think more white guys are trying to be black, than black guys trying to be white. I do not know why that is... But I think it has got a lot to do with culture and who you are. I mean a black guy, coming from a rich background, a rich culture and stuff like that wouldn’t want to be a white guy; whereas a white guy that’s got no heritage behind him, no culture, he would find being one of the black guys appealing and try to be one of them.*

**P2B:** *I also know some white boys trying to act like blacks.*

It seems that unlike in the case of apartheid in which black masculinity was stereotypically constructed as inferior and violent, (cf., Morrell, 2001), black boys in the current study were positively constructed as having culture and heritage. In this context, there appears to have been a shift in which ‘blackness’ is celebrated as a positive masculine identity that white boys also aspire to embrace.

**Playing rugby as the key marker of hegemonic masculinity**

Within the context of the school, the researchers became aware of the popularity of some sports as opposed to others. Irrespective of race, most of the boys commented on how certain sports were associated with a higher and more masculine status than others. The sports that boys play therefore contribute significantly to the way others view them and their degree of masculinity. Rugby was unanimously described as the dominant masculine sport within the school and playing rugby, especially being in the first team, was perceived as the key markers of being a ‘real’ boy. This was evident in P8B’s narrative that, *I mean at school when you are in the first team you get a striped blazer, you get a white scarf and stuff like that. And so that sets you away from other people. And it’s like something special being in the first team.* This statement highlights the importance of playing for the first team for all boys, irrespective of race. The process of being selected into the first team and being given special blazers emphasises the way in which schools can promote adolescent masculine practices.
and ways of thinking. Connell (2000) contends that this ‘masculinity process’ is one which perpetuates hegemonic standards of masculinity.

The hierarchal structure of sports, with rugby being placed at the top of the pyramid, is also evident in P3W’s statement that if you were to play badminton, you wouldn’t be seen like somebody who plays first rugby, you would be in a different league . . . You know guys won’t be able to come up to me and like; hey how was your badminton game.

However, on a critical note, the superior status that rugby is afforded within this particular school context alludes to the powerful role racist discourses promoted in the apartheid era still play within contemporary South Africa. During this era, rugby was constructed as a superior, hegemonic, sport that only white men were allowed to play (Morrell, 2001). Thus it seems that even though this school appears to be open to diversity by virtue of educating different races, on a more subtle level, racist discourses still appear to be active. Although none of the black boys explicitly stated that they felt excluded from being a part of first rugby team at the school, their narratives seemed to reflect feelings of resentment and exclusion from the prestige associated with playing this sport: a sport that promotes an idealised form of masculinity associated with power, aggression, strength, and muscles. For example P8B, a black boy, argued that, in South Africa rugby [is a sport for white boys]. And football would be the sport for black boys. This comment highlights the racial segregation of sport in contemporary South African society. The powerful nature of this comment is clear in the way it naturalises the racial dimension of sport. In such a way, the majority of black boys are indirectly prevented from ever reaching the idealised form of masculinity of the white first team rugby player with his striped blazer.

If black boys are included in rugby teams they tend to fill one position as noted by P1B, ‘Black boys we do play rugby but umhh I suppose it’s about having a high position like a black guy is the fastest and you put them on the wing and that’s just the way it is\ it’s like that for every team’. Black boys become stereotypically placed in certain positions with little option of negotiation. The placement of these boys in a peripheral position translates into the way in which black boys are seen as playing a marginal role in the white-dominated sport of rugby. This process of positioning black players in this manner is referred to as ‘stacking’ and is a well-known occurrence in professional South African rugby (Desai & Nabbi, 2007). It also seems that where white boys are selected for rugby teams by virtue of being white, black boys are expected to prove their athletic ability. For example, P1B argues that if a black boy is selected he has to be fast. This finding is supported by Gavin Rich, a journalist for the Sunday Independent newspaper, who wrote that, ‘the fact that not everyone in South African rugby is racist does not change my perception that a Black player has to conquer many negative mindsets to be recognised for his true value’ (cited
in Desai & Nabbi, 2007, p. 406). It seems that black boys still experience these discriminatory practices and are required to conquer many obstacles before they are recognised for their true value.

However, what also emerged in some of the boys’ narratives was a more progressive view – a move away from the assumption that a boy’s race determines the sport that he should play. This was evident in the following extracts:

**P6B:** *I just like sports irrelevant of colour.*

**P4W:** *But black guys and white guys can play any sport they want and be equally good at them.*

Both these extracts represent a challenge of the belief that different race groups should play different sports. It appears that P6B, a black boy, wants to play any sport irrespective of his skin colour. He seems to be rejecting racial stereotypes that black people cannot play certain sports such as rugby. This view was also supported by P4W, a white boy, in his argument that all boys are equally capable of playing different sports and that race does not play a role. Both race groups, therefore, appeared to hold more progressive views of the issues of sport and race. More importantly, these extracts reflect a shift in race relations within the South African context – one that does not judge a boy according to his race group. These narratives are indicative of the rainbow nation metaphor coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the commencement of democracy. This metaphor is one which promotes the idea of South Africa as consisting of diverse cultures and races that live in harmony with one another (Habib, 1996).

### Race as a burden

According to Frosh et al. (2003, p. 165) ‘the experience of racism is itself a major marker of racialised identities in boys’ lives and therefore plays an important role in the construction of masculinity’. This was also apparent in the current research project. When analysing the interviews, the researchers in this study became aware of black boys’ experience of racism in the school context as well as white boys’ fears of being perceived as racists. It seems that even though legislated racial inequality no longer exists within post-Apartheid South Africa, the following extracts illustrate the way in which racism still forms part of this country.

**P6B:** *There are racist guys here (at school).*

**P1B:** *Oh ja well\ just like for example we’ve got a boy in my standard who makes it quite clear that he doesn’t like other races\ and he’s sort of clear cause he is quite a hot shot big guy . . . It’s definitely an issue\ some people deny it but that’s how it is.*

**P4W:** *I think being a white guy these days is that if you had to say something about a black guy or to a black guy, you would be racist.*
P5W: *I mean when people say racism everyone immediately seems to think whites hate blacks. But no one seems to consider that black people might have a hatred for whites.*

In the individual interviews, both P6B and P1B provided accounts of racism within the school environment. When talking about their experiences, many of the black boys became quite emotional with regard to the experience of being judged negatively on the basis of their race. In this school, it seems that ‘black’ boys’ voices are often marginalised and subjugated. When discussing his experiences, P6B became quite emotional; that is, he seemed very upset that when he greeted the boys’ mothers, especially white mothers, he would be ignored. Once again, black boys appear to be judged primarily on the basis of their race. P1B referred to an extremely racist white boy in his standard. It seems that because this boy is quite a ‘hot-shot’ in the school, his racist attitudes remain unchallenged. In such a way, both hegemonic masculinity and racism work together in the subjugation of black boys in the school context. That is even though structural forms of racism are no longer evident in South African society, many people still seem to be positioning themselves in line with racist discourses and acting on these (Duncan, 2003).

In terms of the white boys’ narratives, they perceived themselves as victims in that being ‘white’ was equated with being racist. Both P4W and P5W described the process in which the ‘racism’ and being white are often synonymous – white boys are often perceived as racist. This assumption therefore tends to overlook the possibility that the black race group could in fact hold racist perceptions. It seems that, especially within contemporary South African society, being perceived as racist is something that some white boys fear and attempt to avoid through employing various discursive strategies.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In conclusion, it is evident that the social construction of young masculinities in contemporary South Africa is a complex process. The findings in this article indicate the need to explore further how adolescent boys position themselves in the changing context of multi-racial schools as a way of unpacking the complexity and contradictory nature of adolescent masculinity in post-apartheid South Africa. It is hoped that this will allow for more egalitarian forms of masculinity to emerge.

**NOTES**

1. The term masculinities is used in the article to show that masculinity is not a fixed, homogenous, and innate construct, but is rather fluid, relational, contextual, changing, and constantly being negotiated (Connell, 2000).
2. In adopting the labels of ‘Black’ and ‘White’ the researchers do not support the existence of such constructs but simply use them as a means of providing terminological consistency in
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the writing of this article (Stevens, Franchi, & Swart, 2006). Black in this study refers to African, Indian, and Coloured male learners.

3. Pseudonyms in the form of three letter codes have been utilised to ensure the anonymity of participants. In order to indicate racial categories, the third letter of the code is either ‘B’ for black participants or ‘W’ for white participants.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Robyn-Leigh Smith is a Community-Counselling Psychologist. Her research interests include the social construction of masculinities, race, gender, poverty and the pervasiveness of power asymmetries specifically within the South African context. She is particularly interested in giving voice to the voiceless within society.

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