AN INVESTIGATION INTO MASCULINE-ATYPICAL BEHAVIOUR: A STUDY AMONG MOI UNIVERSITY STUDENTS WESTERN KENYA.

by

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Promoter: Professor Susan van Rensburg.

AUGUST 2007.
DECLARATION

I, Catherine Kituko Simiyu, do hereby sincerely and solemnly declare that this thesis

submitted for the fulfilment of the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

is my original and independent work, and has not been presented for a degree at any other university.

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AUGUST 2007

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Port Elizabeth.
Dedication

To the Lord God
Most Holy and All Knowing;
And to all men
unfeminized but positively emancipated
from hegemonic masculinity.
They are REAL!
Acknowledgements

I first and foremost thank my promoter, Professor Susan van Rensburg, for her endless support in ensuring that I was not only working, but doing so with relative comfort. She was religiously committed to our frequent meetings, sacrificed her holiday just to help me get over, and kept my spirits high by sharing with me her personal experiences which were greatly inspiring. Her unique supervisory technique will forever reverberate in me. The good professor helped me to scale walls with courage and a smile. God bless her life.

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Abstract

We are presented with a situation in which ‘the male identity is a fragile and tentative thing with no secure anchorage in the contemporary world’ (Brittan, 1989:3). However, empirical evidence surrounding the commonly perceived contemporary crisis of masculinity fails to support any overall crisis of masculinity thesis (Edwards, 2006:16). Instead, the different perceptions of the crisis tend to rest on at least one of the three propositions pointed out by Edwards (2006:17): Firstly; masculinity as a set of values, practices or dispositions may be suffering a crisis in so far as it is being undermined and devalued, or, moreover that masculinity per se is now to a greater or lesser degree equated with a series of negative rather than positive associations and connotations. Secondly; masculinity may be in crisis due to its perceived tendency to implore into femininity, whether through an undermining of any gender role distinctions or through feminization of some forms of masculinity as, for example, in the case of the rise of contemporary consumerist, fashion conscious or sexually uncertain masculinities such as metrosexuality. Thirdly, the crisis of masculinity may relate to the sense that masculinity in terms of the male sex role is itself ipso facto crisis-inducing. In this sense, masculinity is not in crisis, it is crisis. This study was based on the second proposition.

In the patriarchal Kenyan society where gender roles are fairly traditional, and the male person perceived superior to the female and male things valued above female things, the aspect of feminization of masculinity is not just new but indeed strange. This investigation was intended to find explanations for the feminizing behaviour by males.

The sex role paradigm developed in the 1970s explains acquisition of masculinity through socialization, sex role learning and social control. These mainstream theories of learning gender were explored in the assumption that they form the basis for the contemporary theories, and further, although much had changed with the times, a large part of the society still perceived gender roles from this traditional viewpoint.
The masculine crisis theory and the constructionist views of gender constituted the theoretical framework of the study. This was due to the researcher’s acknowledgement that individuals were active participants in the construction of their own gender identity, and that there was likelihood for the individuals to deviate from the social expectations of what masculinity means and should be. As a result they could construct a masculinity that did not reflect normality, hence portraying a crisis.

Data relating to the respondents’ perception of and reasons for feminine behaviour among young male adults was gathered from young males, young females, and both male and female parents through questionnaire and interview methods. Information about the home environment of the respondents was also necessary to help explore environmental factors that contribute to gender construction. In addition, observation was used to obtain information to dispute, confirm or complement the findings from the other mentioned methods.

An exploratory-descriptive qualitative type of research was undertaken at Moi University, Eldoret in Kenya, where the feminization of masculinity was observed. 100 male students chosen through both purposive and simple systematic sampling responded to the open-ended questionnaire which contained perception-eliciting items. A discussion with two focused groups of seven female students each, from the same institution obtained their opinion on the subject of cross.gender behaviour of their male colleagues. Selection of the females was based on willingness to participate. An in-depth interview with two male and three female parents of young male adults whose selection was upon availability, was done on a one-on-one basis to capture the view of adults (likely reasons for, and attitudes) on the matter of feminine behaviour among boys.

Data was qualitatively processed and analyzed, taking into account issues of dependability and accuracy. Explanations, findings and conclusions were made, based on the fairly rich data. Overall, the researcher concluded that an interplay between various factors in the young males’ environments, including peers, media, parents and the general dynamics of society (including the feminist movements) explained the feminization of
the masculine identity. All these were perceived as influenced by the postmodern movement that had transcended boundaries, thanks to modern communication techniques, to reach the initially very traditional societies.

The researcher acknowledged the irreversibility of the clock of time and behaviour trends, hence suggested inclusiveness of this group of males for overall society development, but against the backdrop of responsible guidance and understanding. The study was seen as significant, both for education as an institution that empowered individuals for social function, as well as for peaceful coexistence for the society at large. Conclusively, a redefinition of ‘masculinity’ and a change in the current social attitudes about masculinity and femininity was recommended. Hopefully this was a step towards enhancing an understanding of behaviour dynamics in the largely changing social systems which, in the same vein, remained the touchstone for behaviour formation, modification and prediction not only in Kenya, but Africa as a whole.

**Key words:** Masculinity construction, gender-atypical behaviour, gender role, gender identity, postmodernism.
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CHAPTER 1
ORIENTATION, PROBLEM STATEMENT, AIM, METHODOLOGY, AND STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH

Aim of the chapter

The contestation between gender roles and expected behaviour for males and females, as perceived by society and as enacted by individuals, has increasingly become more real than had been previously imagined. It is this realization that catapults the researcher into the arena of gender roles, with specific focus on the masculinity crisis arising from the feminization of some forms of masculinity and the resultant undermining of gender role distinctions. This chapter generally captures what goes into the research. It gives the background of the society in which the research is undertaken, the general view of how the research is done, and what the researcher intends to obtain from the study. The purpose of this chapter is to act as a guide into the way through the entire research project.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Virtually all societies are organized on the basis of gender differences (which are more socially constructed than innate) between males and females. Based on research findings by sociologists, Theodorson and Theodorson (in Germain & Bloom, 1999:45) define a society as ‘a group of people with a common and distinctive culture, who occupy a particular physical area, who have a feeling of unity among them, and regard themselves as a distinguishable entity’. Wikipedia, gives the definition of society as ‘a grouping of individuals, which is characterized by common interests and may have distinctive culture and institutions’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/society). Another definition verbalizes society as ‘a group of humans broadly distinguished from other groups by mutual interests, participation in characteristic relationships, shared institutions, and a common culture’ (http://www.thefreedictionary.com/society).
From the above, three components emerge as common to the varying definitions of society namely; social networks (relationships between people), criteria for membership (common interests and distinctive culture), and characteristic patterns of organization (shared institutions). Thus, in a human society, people share not only a variety of common symbolic expectations but patterns of social relationships and interaction as well. All these activities are undertaken in respect of the gender divide.

Gender differences are central to social order (Frosh, 1994:9). A person’s gender is composed of several elements and can be inter alia expressed through clothing, behaviour and choice of work, personal relationships and other factors. Most traditional societies expect males and females to behave differently and to assume different roles. A child should understand that he is a boy or that she is a girl and incorporate this information into his or her self concept (Shaffer, 1994:280). In a sense, it becomes a part of ‘nature’s guiding staff’ into all forms of negotiations in life.

The ways that we think about others and view ourselves are largely based on whether we are male or female. Gender polarization incorporates the perceived difference between males and females as the central organizing principle for the social life of a particular culture (Hook, Watts & Cockcroft, 2002:327). Thus, when one is born ‘a boy’ or ‘a girl’ it implies permanent membership in one or the other group, and their every experience (e.g. social roles, dress codes, expressing emotion, and sexual desire) is affected by the differences between males and females. Indeed, part of the development for young children is to learn to be male or female - to master the behaviours expected for their given sex.

Every society specifies the right and proper conduct for males and females, and endeavours to socialize its members to personally accept the legitimacy of these roles and act in accordance to them. Parents (especially), have the duty to transmit culturally accepted gender-typed values to their children. This is in a bid to help them fit into an adult world that is organized according to gender. Beal (1994:4) acknowledges the
differential socializations for males and females by asserting that ‘there is no known human culture that has raised boys and girls identically’.

Gender role socialization primarily takes place in the home. Parents’ encouragement of children’s activities is gender-specific as seen in the choice of toys (trucks for boys, dolls for girls), and assignment of simple chores at home (boys sweep the garage, girls wash dishes). Research also indicates that parents relate with their children differently. It is noted that fathers are more lenient and indulgent with their daughters but more active, firm and demanding with their sons. Mothers, on the other hand, treat their daughters more strictly than their sons (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1972; Berndt, Chueng, Lau, Hau, & Lew, 1993).

A father, especially, has a significant influence on the identity development of both son and daughter. Various research findings (cf. Biller, 1993; Corneau, 1991; Krampe, 2003 & Pruett, 1997) emphasize the importance of father-child relationship in the foundation of the overall well-being of the child, and development of who that child becomes. The father introduces the infant to the world beyond the mother, by transforming the intense comfortable connection the young child initially forms with the mother, into a relationship that includes others and that promotes the development of age-appropriate independence and autonomy. Weiss (1996:217) confirms this by explaining that while fathers put more weight on the need of the child to develop self-confidence and socially important competencies, mothers are concerned with safety, security, and immediate well-being of the child. This indicates that the father’s role is not interchangeable with that of the mother.

Fathers are particularly important in gender socialization of their sons. Although they tolerate ‘tomboysm’ in their daughters, fathers are highly intolerant of any ‘sissy’ behaviour in their sons (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:285). Maccoby (1980:239) elaborates that men may interpret certain kinds of feminine interests or actions as signs of developing homosexual tendencies in their sons and react to these tendencies in the strongest terms.
Fathers in general expect their sons to grow up into masculine men that exhibit characteristics such as leadership, competitiveness, aggressiveness, independence, and dominance. Boys in homes where the father is absent or abusive have been shown to have disruptive social behaviours (Garbarino, 1999:45).

The Kenyan society exhibits more or less the same pattern cited in the foregoing discussions. Fathers are seen to actively involve in inculcating male ‘values’ in their sons with pride. The involvement may be more subtle when the child is small, but climaxes during initiation which marks a transformation from childhood to adulthood. Traditional society regards men who have only daughters as ‘childless’ and on this basis, most Kenyan communities legitimate polygyny. Fathers teach their boys to know that they are different from girls and women, in keeping with the system of gender along which society functions. But just as in many other world societies, the system of gender does not only divide the human race into two categories, but privileges the male order over the female. This has not received emphasis elsewhere than in patriarchal societies, Kenya being one of them. In the next section, the practice of gender differences in patriarchal systems is examined, highlighting specific relevant references to the Kenyan society.

1.2 GENDER DIFFRENCES IN PATRIARCHAL SYSTEMS

Society operationalizes its concepts of gender through the social role it assigns to each sex. In a patriarchal system, values and beliefs position the male and masculinity as the site of authority and power in society, and exclude women from these positions, except where that power and authority works to support individual men or the social system as a whole (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropoulos, & Kirkby, 2003:15). In simple terms, a patriarchal society is one in which the superiority of men over women is demonstrated in gender relations and maintained through an established cultural system that cuts across all political and social institutions.
Thus, young people learn more than the particular roles attached to the male and female categories. They also learn about patriarchy (Bem, in Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993:202). Shaffer (1994:292) supposes that one of the reasons girls in middle childhood are drawn to male activities is because of their realization that masculine behaviour is more highly valued. The same seems true with adult women. Cliff Cheng cites research that indicates that women who were successful associated themselves more with predominantly male groups, while the less successful associated themselves with predominantly female groups (http://www.xyoline.net/organising.shtml). It would appear natural that females want to be what is ‘best’. Sandra Bem clearly illustrates the three ways (gender lenses) in which gender roles are conceptualized by such societies, which societies the researcher hastens to add, are not only Western but also the ‘modern’ African ones.

According to her (vide Bem, 1993), the first lens is ‘androcentricism’, meaning, ‘male centredness’. This lens defines males and masculine way of doing things (experience) as the correct way or the standard, and forms the norm. Female experience is considered a deviation from that norm. The second lens is ‘gender polarization’ which uses the differences in men and women to structure society. It superimposes male-female differences on virtually every aspect of human experience, from modes of dress and social roles to ways of expressing emotion and sexual desire. The third lens, ‘biological essentialism’ holds that men and women are by nature different. Pease (2000:26) explains essentialism as a belief in fixed properties that allegedly define the nature of things, leading to the idea that women and men can be identified on the basis of eternal, transhistorical, and immutable essences. This third lens seems to rationalize and legitimate the other two lenses by treating them as the inevitable consequences of intrinsic biological natures of women and men, with emphasis on the differences of these biological natures. Furthermore, she perceives the three lenses as creating power in the following two ways: First, the social structure that is created as a result of these beliefs separate men and women unequally. Second, the lenses are taught through socialization, creating an individual who continues to reinforce them while living by them.
The researcher observes that in many ways, the inequality is sometimes unconsciously perpetuated by the dominated group itself. In Kenya for instance, the issue of dowry is popular among both the men and the women, regardless of the fact that it has contributed to the treatment of women as men’s property (UN Habitat, 2003). It is no rare paradox that some communities even include women in the group of dowry negotiators. But, it is the desire of the dominant group to maintain the status quo at all costs, through ‘compromise’ or force, that transformed patriarchy as ‘a concept’ into patriarchy as ‘an ideology’ (discussed in detail in the next chapter), resulting in varied reactions from the women advocating for equal rights.

The rise of the women liberation movements (loosely dubbed the feminist movements) in the West, saw women’s groups agitating for different rights that varied from one society to another. However, economic rights, education opportunities, social freedoms, and political participation were widespread goals (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988, 29:109). As women took greater control of their lives, many assumptions about relationships between men and women and family roles were challenged. Accordingly, most of the 19th and 20th C feminists in Europe did not see maternalism as an antithesis to equal rights, but rather as an ethical basis through which to claim rights and change both public and private gendered relations (Unger, 2001:68). Maternal feminists advocated for, among other things, paternal responsibilities.

By the late 20th C, feminism had gained worldwide recognition with many efforts being focused on improving the subordinate position of women in many societies. In the words of Mary Kite, the ground had shifted and some glass ceilings shattered as men were encouraged to take greater interest in the father role even though they were discouraged to take the role too seriously (in Unger, 2001:215). The feminist movement seems to have affected not only the general division of labour among the genders but also the child-rearing practices, an effect that has lately found its way into the Kenyan society, albeit subtly through socio-economic change.
1.2.1 **Some general changes in gender typing**

By the 1970s, data from research in America (Bronfenbrenner, 1972:534) showed that there was greater permissiveness toward the child’s spontaneous desires, freer expression of affection increased reliance on indirect psychological techniques of discipline (e.g. reasoning) rather than direct methods (e.g. physical punishment) and a narrowing of the gap between social classes in parental patterns of child rearing. The father was increasingly becoming more affectionate and less authoritarian while the mother was becoming more important as the agent of discipline, especially for boys. Fathers, yielding parental authority to mothers and taking on the nurturant and affectional functions traditionally associated with maternal roles, were affecting the balance of power within the family. Biller (1974:12) posits that a young boy will develop a masculine identification only if his father is the primary consumer of valued resources. Accordingly, power and authority are such resources.

Changing roles and relations among the male and female genders has resultant effects on the socialization of the children in view of the available social structures. The recent popularity of the information (in magazines) about men and masculinity is a reflection of men’s uncertainty over the roles they are expected to assume in society, at work, and in their social relationships ([http://www.media.awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/men-and-masculinity/masculinity-magazines.cfm](http://www.media.awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/men-and-masculinity/masculinity-magazines.cfm)). The clear ‘societal position’ of men and women is no longer the case. We now have to struggle with the ambiguities that the changes have brought, ending up with our own shares of confusion. Dobson (2001:71-72) argues that because the roles of a father as provider, leader, protector, and director, are being ridiculed and attacked by postmodernists, many fathers have a blurred concept of what they are supposed to do or how to get it done. He alleges that some have surrendered their authority at home and are either altogether uninvolved, or they are trying to nurture their children in ways that are more characteristic of mothers. Men are under pressure to be more like women, and women are supposed to be more like men. It is this role reversal that is terribly confusing to boys. Gunan’s lament, in this context, illustrates the point:
“I matured in a time that lacked consistent messages about the nature, goals, and responsibilities of men because all the human messages about males were in transition. At one point in my twenties I decided that it must not matter if ‘I became a man’. Being an ‘adult’ and a ‘person’ was enough” (2003, p.xxi).

It appears then that transition in gender roles, which happened earlier in Western societies, has come knocking in Kenya too. Roselyn Lung’aho, in a conference paper, alluded that Kenyan women did not view their role as mother and wife as a manifestation of oppression to fight against (http://www.ossrea.net/nw/kenya/Kenya-dec98-01.htm). Nevertheless, the increasing empowerment of women in education, economic, and political fields has resulted in new unstable situations which undermine the patriarchal identity of the men. The uncertainty regarding the concept of masculinity has never been so real. This seems to have put the identity of the young male adults at crossroads, considering that they prefer to identify with the strong model.

Boys no longer seem interested to develop masculine identification, or so it would appear, and modern parents are not keen about the issues of initiation and apprenticeship of their sons into adulthood, as had been the case in the past. Circumcision as a rite of passage is increasingly losing meaning, since it is performed on very young boys, such that the teachings that should accompany it are rendered irrelevant. Unfortunately, the boys do not get a further chance later in life to receive the teachings about what it means to be men. This unfortunate state of affairs is exacerbated when they join high school, where they are confronted with all kinds of conflicting interpretations of ‘a man’. The result is spotting behaviours that cannot exactly help identify them using the ‘normal’ criteria of dress and general physical appearance. The boys (especially in urban areas), are openly espousing initially ‘forbidden’ effeminate behaviours, such as polishing nails, wearing earrings, necklaces and makeup, and hairdo, (not like certain traditional communities do) to the dismay of the rural majority. In essence, behaviours that raised everyone’s eyebrows in Kenya not long ago, today pass unnoticed by many, especially the urban dwellers. Parents appear unperturbed or perhaps helpless by their children’s
behaviours. Lati, in support of an article titled, *Feminism is killing the Alpha Male* adds the following observation in reference to the Kenyan situation:

“The most annoying thing about the alpha male being a dying breed was men’s increased presence in women’s sanctuaries. Today I see them in places that only a few years ago would have sent girls and their fellow guys into giggles if they were spotted there. But today, your man and his boys visit your favourite beauty parlour to wait for their turn for a manicure and pedicure” (2006:15).

It may be that polarization on certain kinds of behaviours of boys and girls for purposes of gender identification (and differentiation) would not be too bad. This is not to say that the researcher subscribes fully to Kite & Whitley’s gender belief system model, cited in Unger (2001:215), which maintains that gender-associated attributes are bipolar. Instead it should be acknowledged that there is a great deal of overlap of behaviour between the sexes. However, when there is cross-gender behaviour enactment on the very common identifiers of sex such as dress (*sic*), one might be tempted to conclude that the boys may be experiencing gender-identity crisis, and most likely need help from their fathers and father-figures to establish themselves. A son learns who he is and what he has got, from a man or the company of men. The question is, ‘why the crisis?’ Is it the effect of the feminist movement, postmodernism, or any other? These possibilities are explored in detail in the Second and Third Chapters of this thesis respectively. What follows in the next section is a highlight on the concern about dress and physical appearance.

### 1.2.2 Physical appearance

Without limiting this to psychologists, we all agree that close to 90% of what people remember about an encounter is related to non-verbal communication, a large portion of that being one’s overall appearance and demeanor. When people first meet, they immediately begin making judgment about each other based on appearances. Since
gender is the most important aspect of an individual’s identity, viewers are often intolerant of gender ambiguity as they seek to interact with each other correctly. It is important to note that males are seen as opposite to women; and there are no means for interacting with gender-neutral others.

Together with speech patterns and content, and choice of activity, a person’s mode of dress and hairstyle are key signifiers that can be used to successfully position one as a female or a male. These signifiers do not only convey identity, but also allude to credibility, competence and self-confidence.

The assumption that women are fashionable but men are not has often reverberated in the separation and indeed gendering of production and consumption. Traditional Kenyan people especially, expect males to be plain in appearance, without exhibiting taste of fashion and decoration or adornment. On the other hand, it is seen as ‘obvious and known to everybody’ that women’s dressing is dictated by fashion and desire to look beautiful. Given that masculinity and femininity are structural properties of our society, each of us takes on board as our own the ‘knowledge’ of sex and of gender as they are socially constituted (Davies, 2002:283) and position ourselves by them. Dress and hairstyle is the most obvious apparently superficial form of physical positioning. In this case the presumption that only females display beauty determines our judgment of the males who do so, as deviant. Improper presentation by the boys does not only create confusion about their identity; it also sends the wrong message about them.

Thus, if by age three the boys have learnt to choose strictly masculine toys and play activities, and avoid feminine things like lipstick, mirror, hair ribbon, handbag, and nail polish (Maccoby, 1980:238), it is surprising to note that these very things (at least some) interest them in their young adult years. Whatever may have led to this change is partly what the researcher intends to unveil through the empirical investigation discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.
It is upon the above background that the topic is of interest. Margaret Mead (in Gunan 2003:53) asserts that ‘women are created at birth but men are created by their culture’. She argues that while hormonal systems and brain changes in girls during and after puberty force them to mature into women, boys must be ‘raised’ and ‘matured’ externally. In apparent endorsement of the argument, Herdt states that:

“Femininity is thought to be an inherent development in a girl’s continuous association with her mother. Masculinity, on the other hand, is not an intrinsic result of maleness; it is an achievement distinct from the mere endowment of male genitals. Masculine reproductive maturity must be artificially induced, by means of a strict adherence to ritual techniques” (1981:160).

Thus, for the boys to become men, they must be led on the journey of manhood. The researcher is interested in finding out what may have ‘changed’ or ‘gone wrong’ on the journey. Are the leaders unable to lead given the prevailing circumstances, or, are the led refusing to go along? Why is physical appearance, the predominant feature that emphasizes gender, suddenly being overlooked? With the platform set, the next section articulates argumentation for, and the statement of the research problem.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Beal (1994:5) observes that of all personal characteristics, gender stands out as the most important and most prevalent. Others notice firstly if we are male or female, before taking note of any other of our characteristics, like age and how we are dressed, and certain displays of our being only help to enhance this truth. Siegler, Deloache and Eisenberg (2003:351), in support of the above observation, state that gender is one of the first things people notice about any stranger they encounter, and, on the relatively rare occasions when it is difficult to tell a person’s gender, they typically put some effort into trying to figure it out. Without this seemingly basic information, Cross and Markus
(1993:55) rightly observe that the simplest encounter is markedly strained, and even the most superficial social exchanges (“Hello, M-----Jones”) cannot be negotiated. This is because, as earlier noted, there are no means for interacting with gender-neutral others. Based on various studies, gender is a central category for thinking about others because it is easily discerned by visible clues such as physical appearance (cf. Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Brewer, Dull, & Liu, 1981; Cross & Markus, 1993; Deaux & Lewis, 1983, 1984; Hamilton, 1979; McArthur, 1982; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978).

Women in England acted as men from as early as the 18th C, especially in the military. In such cases, the women were fleeing poverty or severe restrictions on their lives, and were seeking the privileges, opportunities, and economic security that could be obtained only by adopting the male dress (Lips, 2003:7). An example is when an estimated 400 women dressed as men, enlisted, and served as soldiers in the American civil war (Burgess, 1994 cited by Lips, ibid). These, together with feminist demonstrations that culminated in events such as the creation of a ‘Freedom Trash Can’ into which were thrown ‘objects of female torture’ such as dishcloths, high heels, bras and girdles (deemed ‘bra-burning’ by the media), were a portrayal of women’s rejection of their subordinate positions in society. They were speaking with one voice, different ways. From then on, women have struggled to show that they are equal to men, only different. Freud explains female’s rejection of subjugation more interestingly.

According to Freud’s penis envy theory (Beal, 1994:57), the girl does not find it easy to identify with the mother who she sees as a less attractive model because she lacks a penis (a valuable organ). She feels contempt for herself, her mother, and other females for not having a penis. This anger and disappointment become internalized, leading to a lifetime of self-hatred for being feminine. Freud concludes that the ambivalence of feminine development explains why many girls try to be tomboys; they initially reject the mother as a role model and continue the quest to be masculine through dressing and acting as much like a boy as they can or, in extreme cases, by pursuing a career and rejecting marriage, motherhood, and feminine sexuality as an adult.
Thus, when women exhibit male characteristics, it is relatively easier to explain, based on the historical background and Freud’s penis envy argument. Not so the reverse, when men present female characteristics. In the African culture, for instance, male is synonymous with ‘superiority and privilege’. Even in Western cultures where gender distinctions are purportedly minimized, Beal (1994:7) reports that most U.S. parents still have preferences for boys, thus confirming the gender differences. An expected display of difference between males and females is captured in the following statement by Arthur Flannigan:

“Because a man’s most basic sense of self necessarily stems from, or at least must necessarily include a conception and image of the body as male, it would be surprising if biologic maleness did not entrain a particular self-identity and therefore an entire psychoculture distinct from those that would be engendered by biologic femaleness” (in Brod & Kaufman, 1994:241).

Gender, conclusively speaking, is a salient social category constantly used by individuals within any culture to understand and perceive the world, and reversed presentations of social expectations of gender, only serve to heighten perceptual confusion. If the above discussed reasons suffice to maintain a clear difference between men and women, then the challenge at hand is to try and explain why the men display the appearance of women in the most obvious ways. This formed the main problem of this research.

Men in African cultures have a special role to perpetuate the cherished traditional mores upon which their specific societies are founded. In Kenya for instance, women abandon their beliefs, customs, and their fathers’ names at marriage and adopt those of their husbands. The family line is preserved by its male members who pass the family name and virtues down to their offspring. In patrilineal organizations as the Kenyan case, the position of males in society is paramount, (although this has been cited as perpetuating gender inequality) and cannot be ignored or argued away.
However, men’s superior social position is not just about sex assignment. It also involves activities, traits, behaviour displays, bodily attributes and all, everything that enables them to attain male group identification, a group that is prestigious. Surprisingly, all these are slowly being eroded in the face of an increased tempo in the thrust for a society comprising ‘people’, not ‘men’ and ‘women’; a society in which gender is not an issue. It is yet to be seen how far this will be successful, but at the moment, only the tip of the iceberg is visible. Kenya has not escaped this erosion and, consequently, confusion too.

Based on the researcher’s observation and experience in Kenya, various aspects of behaviour distinguish between males and females, and these are inculcated in boys and girls, regardless of the increased flexibility in gender roles. It is generally expected for boys to dress in pants and shirts, play outdoors, ride bikes, get dirty, find their way when they get lost, hold their tears when hurt, and in the typical rural pastoralist Kenya, follow adult men to the grazing fields. Girls, are expected to dress in skirts (at least sometimes), play close to home, stay neat and tidy, be nice to other children, to be pretty, and help their mothers with household chores. Boys should grow up to be men, ‘doing male things’ and girls should grow up to be women, ‘doing female things’. The differences based on occupation have given way, but those on physical appearance still hold strong.

Nonetheless, there is increasing difficulty to tell, looking at the present generation of young adult males, their gender. The display of bodily attributes of one’s gender (e.g. clothing, body type, and hair style) cannot anymore be relied upon to differentiate between the two sexes. They are similar. Given the Kenyan setting where such gender roles are fairly rigidly defined, the phenomenon is simply, disconcerting.

Walking the streets of Kenyan towns, one comes face to face with young men who display an ‘ambiguous’ gender appearance, and by extension, identity. They have gone through ‘pains’ to portray feminine characteristics. Keeping short, neatly cropped hair, for example, is outdated. Men in certain Kenyan communities such as Turkana and Samburu wear ornaments and braid their hair in unique styles, but the young men’s fashions do not look like any of these. They are exactly like those of the modern Kenyan.
woman, having intruded the beauty salons where the women go. Children are seen to muse and bombard their parents with questions about why, and what should be, as the elderly seem deeply disappointed. The largely conservative Kenyans are wondering, and seeking an explanation for this ‘strange’ behavioural manifestation, putting the issue of the young men’s identity to question.

Interest in this matter led to informal exploratory research on reasons for the mentioned behaviour among boys. Through conversations with a number of persons, especially parents, reasons obtained varied between peer influence, electronic and media influence, urbanization, and women empowerment. These answers were not satisfactory as one question lingered on, ‘when all these forces attack the boy and dent his image about the male person, where is the father to protect his own identity, the boy’s, and that of the male fraternity, both today and for posterity?’

The concern about the fathers is based on the idea that in most Kenyan communities, children belong to men not to women. So while the children are the direct responsibility of the women with regard to nurturance, they also are to be the direct reflection of their fathers’ definition of the kind of social beings they finally become. This is especially true for the boys. It is against this backdrop of a gap between social behaviour expectations and enactment, that this research finds justification. Aspects of observation are limited to displays of body beauty (e.g. plaiting of hair, painting of nails, and wearing of jewelry and make-up).

1.4 THE AIM/PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Several factors are known to influence (in)stability of gender-specific patterns of behaviour. The focus of this research was, why the young adult males in Kenya were increasingly behaving in gender-atypical ways. The study aimed at understanding the current behaviour of the boys by exploring possible reasons for it. In the process, the
influence of the father in gendering their boys was also examined. The study was based on the specific objectives listed below:

1.4.1 **Research Objectives**

1. To establish the differences between males and females and the significance of these differences within the Kenyan society.
2. To evaluate gender roles in the Kenyan context.
3. To establish the causes of gender-atypical behaviour among boys in Kenya.
4. To evaluate the significance of Kenyan fathers and their influence on gender typing of their sons.
5. To explain the effect of the changes in the Kenyan society on boys’ gender roles.
6. To highlight the implications (of male-atypical behaviour) for education and make suggestions following the findings.

1.4.2 **Research Questions**

Following from the above objectives, the questions that guided the study were:

1. What are the differences between males and females, and what do these differences mean in the Kenyan society?
2. What are the male and female roles in the Kenyan context?
3. What are the likely causes of gender-atypical behaviours among boys in Kenya?
4. What is the significance of Kenyan fathers and how do they influence the gendering of their sons?
5. What changes in the Kenyan society seem to have influence on the boys’ ultimate behaviours?
6. What are the implications for education, and how can the situation be handled?
1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

This research was designed within the paradigm of the social constructionist view as opposed to the traditional theories of learning gender. While mainstream views portray the individual as a ‘passive’ participant in the process, constructionism recognizes the individual’s personal and conscious involvement in defining his own gender identity. The different yet complementary perspectives will be dealt with in detail in Chapters Two and Three respectively, given that the former gives foundation to the latter. However, both these views converge at the point that whatever gender is, it is determined by social dictates. West and Zimmerman observe that:

‘Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’ (in Jackson & Scott, 2002:42).

The researcher employed an exploratory-descriptive qualitative design. In order to realize the above objectives and answer the subsequent questions, the following methods were used to gather the required information:

a) A literature review of books, journals, newspapers, electronic media and research reports. These sources were consulted to obtain relevant information on gender role socialization in general, and in Kenya in particular. Aspects on paternal parenting and their effects on the boy child were of valuable use in this study. A literature review was appropriate since it served as a point of departure in an attempt to understand the phenomenon under investigation. It was important, for instance, to understand the process by which children are socialized into their specific gender roles in accordance to society, the influence of socialization agencies, and how the children come to identify themselves as boys or girls.
Incidentally, much of this grounding information is relatively static and similar across different cultures. This explains the inclusion of citations (especially Western) that might appear less than recent, but which are relevant to the study.

b) Primary data was collected through the use of a questionnaire administered to a selected number of young adult male students of Moi University in Eldoret, Kenya. Those in the School of Education were preferred due to the wider and direct influence that they finally have on society upon completion of studies and subsequent employment. The university was the center of research because the behaviour of interest was widely displayed, and the respondents were fairly mature to express themselves with some degree of understanding and freedom. Besides, the university too enjoys representation of the whole country in terms of social class, tribe, religion, and even race. The questions were largely aimed at eliciting information about how the young males related with their parents, and the views they held about feminine-like beauty enhancement among their lot.

c) In-depth unstructured interviews were held with five parents of college-going students. These were casual discussions (based on research objectives) initiated by the researcher while noting responses. From the interactions, the researcher targeted to pick their parenting styles, relationship with their children, threats to this relationship, and how they manage to keep these threats in check. Information was also sought on what they thought were the likely causes of feminine behaviour among boys, and how they felt about the behaviour in the light of society’s expectations; for example they had to say if their own boys were displaying the characteristics of female appearance. If not, why, and if yes, what were the reasons, and how did they take it. Of interest to the researcher was any pointer to anxiety pertaining the security of the ‘dominant’ position of the male gender in the prevailing circumstances. In essence, the researcher applied a ‘phenomenological approach’ of qualitative research to understand the meaning of interactions and events with specific people within a specific time-frame (De
Vos, et al., 2005). This is an attempt to interpret meanings that people bring to phenomena (Denzin and Lincolin, in Mosetse, 2005:12).

d) Focused group discussions, guided by specific questions, were held with female students at the university to gather information on their attitudes with regard the behaviour of their male peers. Two groups of seven were used, and data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews. Since the aim was to obtain the views of the opposite gender concerning the male-atypical behaviour, male students were excluded from these discussions.

e) Observation was used to collect information on the visible characteristic aspects of male students who displayed the masculine-atypical behaviour. This was guided by a list of specific observable characteristics against which the observer checked. The information was compared with that obtained through interviews and questionnaire, and included in the descriptive analysis of the research to make it richer.

1.6 DEMARCATION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

The participants of the research were primarily young adult males studying at the university, most of them in the 18-25 age bracket. The Second Year Education students of Moi University were purposefully sampled, and owing to the qualitative nature of the study, only 100 of them were randomly selected to respond to the questionnaire. Further details on this are discussed under the chapter on Methodology (cf. Chapter Four of this thesis).

Contributions to boys’ gender typing, and the attitudes of the society regarding the trend in the behaviour of boys were gauged through in-depth interviews with five parents of college-going boys. These were drawn from different cultural backgrounds although all reside in Eldoret town of the western part of Kenya. Young females’ views were based on
focus discussions with fourteen female university students at the same institution with the boys who responded to the questionnaire. The female students represented various other faculties at the university as well.

Although the researcher belongs to the department of Educational Psychology, the study of any behaviour cannot be understood without a social context. This explains the significance of Social Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy disciplines in the entire study. Simply put, the problem is better understood from an interdisciplinary point of view of social science. All these disciplines were incorporated to make the study more meaningful.

Results of this study may be useful in explaining the partial transformation of male identities and male social characters within the specific institution, and by extension, within the Kenyan society as a whole.

1.7 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

In a bid to realize the study objectives earlier stated, the entire research bears the following structure:

Chapter 1
This section comprises the background of the study, statement of the problem under investigation, the aim, the objectives, a brief outline of the methodology, and the demarcation of the research.

Chapter 2
This chapter deals with definition of key terms as used in the text, an explanation of gender identity and roles, and the traditional theories that explain the gendering process based on reputable literature sources consulted. Furthermore, the aspect of masculinity is
introduced, the development of patriarchy shown, and reaction to it in the form of feminism examined.

Chapter 3
The chapter reflects a continuation of literature. It however deals with the contemporary views of gender which form the theoretical framework of the study. This chapter is also a link to the next that deals with empirical data. It acts as a bridge between secondary and primary data. In a way it helps bring out the motivation for the actual data collection.

Chapter 4
It deals with the empirical investigation into the gendering of boys in Kenya. The methods through which the data is gathered are discussed in detail with the intention of showing how they would enhance obtaining the needed information that would go a long way in answering the research questions and meet the goal of the research. Simply, the chapter deals with what, where, and how of the research.

Chapter 5
The researcher in this chapter explains the immediate level of processing the data collected from the field. Specifically, the chapter deals with analysis and description of the data gathered.

Chapter 6
In this chapter the researcher undertakes interpretation of the data collected, against the reputable literature sources in the related field. This interpretation reflects the meaningfulness of the data collected in respect of the purpose of the research study.

Chapter 7
This chapter deals with discussions and implications of the research, recommendations, and conclusions. Otherwise stated, the chapter is a wrap up of the research project.
Conclusion

This first chapter of the thesis lived up to its aim stated at the beginning. It contextualized the study, identified and showed motivation for the research problem, as well as specified the goal for the study; all which were significant in directing the entire research project. The chapter was some form of a forecast into the entire process of the research; giving the researcher a ‘roadmap’ into the project, and giving any reader an idea of what to expect. Simply put, it set the research process ball rolling. Having been flagged off, the next task was that of obtaining literature information about the study problem. This was the undertaking in chapter two immediately below.
CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING GENDER CONCEPTS, THE MAINSTREAM GENDER THEORIES, AND GENDER RELATIONS

Aim of the chapter

The chapter aims to undertake an exposition of the concepts of gender and the mainstream theories that explain how individuals learn gender, according to reputed sources of literature. On the one hand, an exposition of the gender concepts is necessary to enhance the researcher’s understanding and therefore appropriate expression of information pertaining to the study. Mainstream theories on the other hand, are discussed in recognition of the fact that they are a foundation for the constructionist views which form the theoretical framework for the study. Furthermore, the issue of gender relations is also examined with the assumption that it reflects the core reasons for differential behaviour of men and women. On the whole, the issue of masculine-atypical behaviour cannot be effectively tackled without first understanding what gender is, what gender roles are, how individuals become gendered, and how the different sexes (ought to) relate and the implications. The chapter therefore is intended to show to what extent consulted literature can contribute to a broader and deeper understanding of the problem under investigation.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

It is clear that gender identity and gender roles have become very blurred in contemporary times causing a crisis of sorts. With this background, it becomes necessary to highlight relevant literature that elucidates the general perception of gender identity and gender roles involving historical views and theories about gender, and how they have evolved to the viewpoints currently held.
Cross and Markus state that biological sex dictates one’s role in reproduction, but the conceptions of gender held in one’s significant socio-cultural contexts influence everything else - from one’s name to one’s occupation, choices, preferences, and aspirations (Beall & Sternberg, 1993:56). Gender is a very significant source of differentiating the way people are responded to and brought up in human societies, as it determines the roles that one engages in, often depending on the specific society. Indeed, gender is not just a variable that influences the ‘basic’ processes of thinking, feeling, appreciating, striving, and acting, but also a social fact that conditions and governs these very processes (Beall & Sternberg, ibid).

Gender influences every facet of our interactions. Owing to its central role in enabling people to understand and think about their social world, gender is acquired beginning early in life. Yet the fluidity of the concept of gender, due to the adaptations that must be made to fit in with changing times, makes it difficult to certainly state what is, and what is not, femininity or masculinity. This is what the researcher calls a crisis as it causes both confusion and anxiety, especially among the male gender, which is supposed to be the standard (vide Bem’s ‘androcentricism’ lens in section 1.2 of this thesis). But before embarking on the greater exposition of gender as a whole, key concepts within this thesis are defined.

2.2 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

There was need to explain how the key terms are used in the study. This is in response to the acknowledgement that same terms may have a variety of meanings, based on the user and the specific contexts. The definitions given here reflect the researcher’s understanding of the concepts, positionalized against definitions by reputable sources.

- *Gender* is defined as ‘the supposed traits and behaviour of males and females’ (Baron, 1988:329); ‘the state of being male or female’ (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:273); or, the psychological and socio-cultural meanings added to biological
maleness or femaleness (Huffman, 2004:379). West and Zimmerman define gender as ‘the activity of managing situated conduct in the light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category’ (in Jackson & Scott 2002:43). In this study, the author borrowed and elaborated on Weiten and Lloyd’s definition, and used the term gender to mean, one’s maleness or femaleness that is culture-specific. Although social scientists clearly distinguish between ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ by holding that ‘sex’ is a biological assignment, and ‘gender’ is the social construction of femininity and masculinity, the two terms were used interchangeably in this study.

- **Gender Role/Sex Role.** Wikipedia explains that the term has two meanings. People’s gender roles could be; the totality of ways by which people express their gender identities, or, the kinds of activities that society determines to be appropriate for individuals possessing their kind of external genitalia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_identity). Huffman (2004:380) defines gender role as ‘societal expectations for normal and appropriate male and female behaviour. It could also be defined as ‘a set of duties, rights obligations, and expected behaviours for individuals of a given sex’ (Maccoby, 1980:233); or, from the point of view of Johnson (1986:393), ‘a set of expectations about how males and females should appear and behave’; or further still, ‘the culturally defined expectations about appropriate behaviour for males and females’ (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:273). For the purpose of this study, the last two definitions which are similar were incorporated and put simply as the prescribed cultural behaviour of an individual based on sex. Behaviour here is all inclusive of activities, expressions, and totality of actions. The researcher recognizes that roles may change, even within the given culture, depending on the prevailing circumstances.

- **Gender Identity** refers to ‘the perception of oneself either as male or female’ (Beal, 1994:91; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:273); or, as Huffman (2004:380) simply puts it, ‘gender identity is self-identification either as a man of a woman’. Wharton (2005:36) views it as ‘the fundamental existential sense of one’s
maleness or femaleness’; while Parke & Locke (1975:586) define gender identity as ‘the perception of oneself as either masculine or feminine’. The researcher in this study adopted the definition by Hook et al., (2002:326) that gender identity ‘involves how one’s interests, behaviour, and psychological characteristics conform to one’s own internalized definition of masculinity or femininity’. It is, in essence, the self-attribute of gender. An important point to note at this juncture is that these individual definitions are usually the definitions which society has prescribed, and which the individual accordingly adopts (Mussen, Conger, Kagan and Huston, 1990, in Hook, et al., 2002:326).

- **Gender Expression** describes how people manifest feeling masculine or feminine through how they look, act, or dress. In other words, judgment of maleness or femaleness is based on appearance and performativity which sometimes may, according to Judith Butler (vide Jackson & Scott, 2002:48), subvert the binary logic of gender. These certainly will be the variables of observation against the background of the individuals’ biological assignment as males. The researcher assumed that ‘improper expression’ i.e., a departure from the expectations of society, was a communication about the changing set of relationships. In the past these relationships were limited and unchanging, but today, not any more.

- **Gender-Role Identity** was used in this text to refer to a person’s identification with the traits regarded as masculine or feminine (vide Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:293).

- **Gender Typing** means the ‘process by which children acquire not only a gender identity but also the motives, values, and behaviours considered appropriate in their culture for members of their biological sex’ (Shaffer, 1994:281). Newcombe (1996:321) explains that psychologists have used the term *sex-typing* to describe the ways in which biological gender and its cultural associations are incorporated into the child’s self perceptions and behaviour. She further adds that sex-typing is not a single process but develops from gender identity (accepting one’s basic biological nature as male or female) through acquiring concepts (knowledge about
gender and social stereotypes), sex role preferences (what a person values or would like to be), to sex role adaptation (acting in ways that are culturally defined as feminine or masculine). The term was employed in the study to mean the process by which people learn everything to be able to function as males or females in their particular society.

- **Socialization** is the fostering of ‘gender-appropriate’ behaviour patterns by providing children with information and using rewards and punishments (Rathus & Nevid, 2002:361). The term was used in this thesis simply to mean the ways in which children are taught their male and female roles respectively.

- **Gender Identity Disorder** is described in an article by Reckers (1986) as a severe form of cross gender identity problem. He explains that apart from exhibiting features of Gender Role Behaviour Disturbance such as cross-dressing, play with cosmetic articles, ‘feminine’ appearing gestures, avoidance of masculine sex-typed activities, avoidance of male peers, predominance ratio of play with female peers, high ‘feminine’ like voice inflection, predominant ratio of female speech content over masculine, and taking predominantly female roles in play; a boy with a Gender Identity Disorder manifests one or more of the following features in addition: An expressed desire to be to be a girl or a woman, expressed fantasies of bearing children and breast-feeding infants or assuming a female identity, or a request to have his penis removed.

The term was used in this report to refer to difficulty experienced by the males to effectively identify and display the behaviours expected of a person of their sex, in keeping with their specific societies. No pathological dimension was attached.

- **Masculinity** according to Brittan (1989:3) refers to ‘those aspects of men’s behaviour that fluctuate over time’. He contends that in some cases these fluctuations may last for decades and in others just a matter of weeks or months. His argument is that we cannot talk about masculinity, only masculinities,
because ‘masculinity’ is neither timeless nor universal (Ibid:1). It may appear in different guises at different times. Lindsay and Miescher (2003:4) use the term to mean a cluster of norms, values, and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others within cultural and historical contexts. The researcher used the term in its simplest way to mean having culture-specific characteristics, traits and behaviours associated with men. In other words, masculinity is a social construct with a physiologic (biologic) component. This is based on the view that regardless of the many and complex varieties of gender identity, societies tend to assign some classes of roles (sic) to ‘male’ individuals and others to ‘female’ individuals. This study therefore saw masculinity both as a collective expression of social practice to be observed within specific historical contexts, as well as an individual experience of identity and subjectivity.

- **Patriarchy** is an ‘umbrella’ term for describing men’s systematic dominance of women. Walby (1990:20) defines patriarchy as ‘a system of social structures and practices through which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’. It is also conceptualized by Pease (2000:13) as institutionalized male power. In this text the term was used to refer to a social system in which men hold privilege, power and authority, backed by the political, economic and cultural structures; excluding women from the power and authority except when it serves to maintain the social system.

- **Society** is often confused and used interchangeably with community. The term was used in this text to mean a group of people within a large territorial area, sharing a distinctive culture and a feeling of unity among them (vide Germain & Bloom, 1999:45; Popenoe et al., 1998:50).

- **Role of fathers** was envisioned from the point of view of how the fathers discharge their parental responsibilities. It comprised involvement in parenting,
availability and contact with the child, provision, consistency in discipline, personality and social power, security and role modeling.

- **Identification.** In psychodynamic theory, it is the process of incorporating within the personality elements of others. In social-cognitive theory, it is a broad and continuous process of learning by observation and imitation (Rathus & Nevid, 2002:361). The term was used by the researcher in the psychodynamic context.

- **Postmodernism** is a movement of ideas arising from, but also critical of elements of modernism. According to Wikipedia, the term was coined in 1949 to describe a dissatisfaction with modern architecture, founding the postmodern architecture. The idea of a reaction, or even rejection of the movement of modernism was later borrowed by other fields. Postmodernism’s many manifestations tend to refer to a cultural, intellectual, or artistic state of lacking a clear central hierarchy or organizing principle and embodying extreme complexity, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, and interconnectedness or interreferentiality (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism). In postmodernism, Ward (2003:120) states that ‘we have a recognition, and sometimes a celebration of disintegration, fragmented desires, superficiality, and identity as something you shop for’. In this thesis, postmodernism was conceptualized as a movement that constitutes arguments that disregard dignity and orderliness, and celebrate deconstruction in the expression of various (alternative) identities that suit various individuals at various times.

- **Construction** generally implies participation in bringing about something into being. The term was used in this study to challenge the mainstream views that tended to emphasize a passive learner. The researcher recognizes that individuals use whatever they learn from their environments to decide what kind of gender identity to come up with and reflect. This is in line with constructionist theorists (cf. Beall & Sternberg, 1993:127-147; Cranny-Francis et al., 2003:169-200; Hare-

- **Deconstruction.** Joan W. Scott (in Herrmann & Stewart, 1994:358-371) explains that although this term is used loosely among scholars, often to refer to a dismantling or destructive enterprise, it has a precise definition in the work of Derrida and his followers. It involves analyzing the operations of difference in texts, the ways in which meanings are made to work. According to Wikipedia, deconstruction is a term used to denote the application of postmodern ideas of criticism, or theory, to a ‘text’ or ‘artifact’, based on the architecture deconstructivism. A deconstruction is meant to undermine the frame of reference and the assumptions that underpin the text or the artifact (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism). The researcher perceived deconstruction as the actual process of challenging (almost rubbing) socially established meaning through exploration of alternative meanings that the individuals involved in deconstruction deem suitable. In this case, it involves giving different meanings to the concept of masculinity.

### 2.3 UNDERSTANDING GENDER

In this section, the author examined what gender entails, how gender identity is formed, and the various gender types. The purpose of this was to be clear about what gender is, being an important facet of the study upon, and which the entire investigation was based. Definition, different gender identity types, and developmental gender typing are discussed.
2.3.1 What is gender?

Gender is a broad term whose presence can be discerned in all communication languages thus making a concrete definition a challenge. The concept is perceived by Andrew Kimbrell as a ‘mystery’, as quoted below:

‘Gender remains among the most alluring mysteries and wonders of creation. Throughout the natural order, the attraction and interaction of male and female are the basis of the regeneration of much of the living world’ (1995:14).

From the above, it is clear that gender is of paramount importance for man’s existence or procreation. Gender is therefore, an important biographical aspect of the self. Being male or female is just one aspect of a person’s identity, just like being European American or African American, Christian, Muslim, or Jew (Rathus & Nevid, 2002:88). Because it is easily discerned by visual cues such as physical appearance, gender always passes as the easiest identifier of any individual; and on rare occasions when it is difficult to tell a person’s gender, we typically put some effort to try and figure it out. An ‘odd thing’ would have happened if we completely failed to tell whether the individual is a man or a woman, and we would be certainly embarrassed if we wrongly labeled someone. Similarly, the wrongly labeled person may be very unhappy with the incident. At this point, it is evident that although ‘gender is a social practice while sex is a natural attribute’ (Cranny-Francis, et al., 2003:3), discussion of gender cannot be divorced from sex. It is for this reason that the researcher chose to use the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ interchangeably in this text as pointed out in the definition of terms. Furthermore, it is this ‘naturalness’ of gender that makes it unnoticed, although it is in operation everywhere.

Sex is a biological given. It is the starting point upon which gender is constructed. But gender refers to a set of meanings that sexes assume in particular societies. Essentially, it is the culturally variable elaboration of sex (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003:4). Otherwise stated, it is the social creation built on a foundation of physical (read genital) difference. Whether one is born ‘a boy’ or ‘a girl’ will affect the expectations others will have of him
or her, the treatment received from others, and the individual’s own behaviour. Indeed, gender embodies the social terms of reference, and it permeates all aspects of social existence – family, work, sport, film, music, education, and the rest. The entire process of interaction reflects the maleness (masculinity) or femaleness (femininity) of that individual, even as language and communicative behaviour (explicit or subtle) is gendered.

Thus the researcher comes to the realization that gender as a basic category in social life is not limited to person perception but to many objects and activities. Apart from dividing the human race into two categories, gender is also a system which organizes virtually all aspects of our lives; whether we are sleeping, eating, watching television, shopping or reading (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003:1). The individual’s duty from an early age is to identify the self with the appropriate gender in order to understand the world and to live in it with relative ease and success. This calls for learning the language of gender. Bronwyn Davies (in Jackson & Scott, 2002:280) argues that ‘this is not just a skill one must acquire in order to communicate, but an acquisition of the means by which one constitutes oneself as a person in relation to others in the social world’. The first step therefore is gender identity.

2.3.2 Gender identity

According to Brittan (1989:21), roles are allocated to biology to assign gender to people, and once this happens, men and women acquire their appropriate gender identities. It is the social meaning given to biological differences, internalized by individuals, which constitutes gender identity (Williams, 1995:111). Several scholars agree that gender is not just learned very early in life as a way of understanding others, but it is one of the first components of the self concept to be developed (Slaby & Frey, 1975; Spence, 1985; Stanger & Ruble, 1987 in Beall & Sternberg, 1993:58). While gender attribution is other people’s assessment of one’s gender, gender identity is one’s own sense of being male or female, or indeed a third gender.
Based on the simple concept of femininity and masculinity (cf. Pleck, 1981, 1984), most psychologists in the 1930s and 1940s accepted the notion that behaviours, attitudes, and interests generally associated with either femininity or masculinity were exclusive features of women and men. Women were not only different in basic personality characteristics but these characteristics were also thought to be opposites of each other. Females for example lacked competitiveness, aggressiveness, and independence, which were seen as male traits. In terms of behaviour, whatever a feminine person did, a masculine person didn’t. This was the social establishment then, but has largely underwent change, as shall be seen later in the next chapter under sociological gender differences (vide section 2.4.2). Nevertheless, children not only learn to identify themselves as males or females, but also internalize social expectations pertaining to roles and behaviour of each gender. Adults in the children’s lives ensure that this process takes place appropriately.

According to Bandura & Bussey (2004:696), gender identity emerges from cognitive processing of correlative experiences in which physical characteristics, objects, and activities are differently linked to the sexes. Societies all over seem to have mutually exclusive scripts (such as mentioned in the preceding paragraph) upon which socialization of children is based. However, some individuals are said to feel deep within themselves from early childhood that they are of the opposite sex, and that the evidence of their anatomy, such as normal genitals and the usual secondary sex characteristics, does not persuade them that they are what others see them to be. In other words, the sexual anatomy and the sense of gender are in dissonance. Under normal circumstances, their gender identity is questionable. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (2000:582) labels such individuals as people with gender identity disorder (GID). At this juncture, an examination of other gender types, apart from the heteronomative male and female gender becomes necessary. The reason these other gender types were relevant for this study was to establish if the boys who were study subjects might find placement in any of the categories, hence enabling the researcher to explain their behaviour with some apparent certainty.
2.3.2.1 Other gender types

The increasing acknowledgement of the ‘other’ or the ‘third’ gender by some societies threatens the ability to categorize every person as male or female. If so, then gender may not be a particularly important category for organizing people into roles (Lips, 2003:10) as this would probably mean no specific available role for the ‘other’ gender group. In this section the author discussed the groups of gender that cannot comfortably be labeled male or female, owing to incongruence between their sex and, their physical appearance and behaviour. This was in view of the fact that the research was set within the framework of a heterosexual background. The gender groups that have no parallels within the Kenyan society were examined in brief, but greater emphasis was placed on those found in Kenya as well. It is also important to note that some of the groups discussed here are termed sexual orientations by various scholars. However, for the purpose of this study, the author chose to view them as ‘other’ gender.

In Native American societies, anthropologists encountered individuals who apparently had an ‘intermediate’ gender status, accomplished by combining the attributes and behaviours of males and females. They were referred to as nadle, winkte, or heemaneh (Lips, 2003:8). There is also evidence from anthropological studies that blended roles were created in some societies to accommodate children who would be considered gender-disturbed in contemporary American society (Beal, 1994:276). One such role was the Native American berdache. The male berdache was a man who lived as a woman, dressing in women’s clothes, wearing a female hairstyle, using the language of women, living with the women of the tribe, and doing women’s work (Blackwood, 1984; Callender, & Kochems, 1983; Whitehead, 1981 cited by Beal, 1994:276). Berdaches were highly respected for their skill in women’s work such as weaving, and were quite wealthy since their work was never limited by pregnancy or childcare. They also had prestigious ceremonial or spiritual functions within the community because they could move freely between the worlds of men and women. Some berdache became men’s wives, which was essentially accepted as heterosexual arrangement and the husbands
were not considered homosexuals. The berdache roles comprised both those of men and women.

In Samoa, *fa’afafine* are considered to be a ‘third gender’ alongside male and female. They are biologically male, but dress and behave in a manner considered typically female (Lips, 2003:8). They do not pass for women, nor do they follow the rules that are understood to be in place for ‘proper women’; rather, they act as jesters who mock certain gender restrictions and can violate them with impunity. In India, *hijras* adopt female dress and become a kind of third gender. They sometimes submit to castration to define their status by renouncing male sexuality (Lips, ibid). The berdache and *fa’afafine* have no known parallels in Kenya.

Nonetheless, the foregoing information helps us to understand that gender is but one aspect of human life. This is more so that gay, lesbian, and transgender issues are coming to the forefront in several cultures (especially Western) as studies lend further credibility to genetic basis for variations in patterns of human sexuality and gender (http://gender.house.infor/). That notwithstanding, much remains unchanged in the Kenyan society. Being gay, lesbian, or transgender is still a social disadvantage. There are no facilities to address the needs of the transgender individual, and public declaration of gay or lesbian status is unlawful (though there have been some efforts to secure the freedom). An examination of the ‘other’ genders is undertaken below.

**Transsexuals**

Transsexuals are also known as transgendered individuals, although some scholars like Catherine Anderson, in her article, prefer to use the term transgender in the broad sense to mean people who have an interest in being, dressing, acting, or living as a member of the opposite sex. Such usage encompasses both transsexualism and transvestitism (http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/cathytg/help.htm).
Transsexuals have gender dysphoria. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (2000) defines a transsexual as an adult who has a persistent, deep sense of discomfort in his or her anatomic sex, and often wishes to be rid of the genitals to live as the other sex. The feeling must be consistent for more than two years and excludes people who may, under specific stress or illness (e.g. schizophrenia), temporarily reject their anatomic gender. The deep feelings that transsexuals harbour may not allow them to function as socialized. They are also likely to encounter an identity problem.

In well-developed countries, such people may undergo radical surgery and hormone treatment (gender reassignment) to make their bodies assume as much as possible the anatomy of the opposite sex. This is in a bid to convert their outer physical selves to attain congruence with their inner gender.

Since the Kenyan society, like any other, is structured along masculine/feminine or male/female framework, such individuals live and die with their deep sense of inappropriateness. Even if they had the economic capacity to undertake gender reassignment, the social structure provides no such forum. It could not be stated whether or not the boys in this research study can be classified transsexuals since this would involve some medical cross-examination, way beyond the researcher’s ability.

**Homosexuals**

Homosexuals are men and women who seek emotional-sexual relationships with members of the same gender. Although they constitute a minority group, they are nevertheless significant. According to Maccoby (1980:231-232), homosexuals unlike transsexuals, have no identity problem. Male and female homosexuals (gay and lesbians) know they are men and women and accept their identity; only they are sexually attracted to individuals of the same sex like themselves. There are several unanswered questions about homosexuals (Weiten, 2007:392) such as; since sexual orientation is best represented as a continuum, where does one draw the lines between heterosexuality,
bisexuality, and homosexuality? How does one distinguish between overt behaviour and desire? Where does one put a married person who has never engaged in homosexual behaviour but who reports homosexual fantasies and acknowledges being strongly drawn to members of the same sex?

The origin of homosexuality is based on biological and environmental views. Biological theorists originally assumed there were hormonal differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals (cf. Doerr et al., 1976; Dorner, 1988). However, Weiten (2007:393) reports that studies comparing circulating hormone levels in gays and straight found only small inconsistent differences that could not be linked to sexual orientation in any convincing way (cf. Bailey, 2003; Banks & Gartrell, 1995). Later studies with twin and non-twin gays and lesbians revealed that homosexuality may have a hereditary basis and the organizing effects of prenatal hormones on neurological development (cf. Bailey, Denne, & Martin, 2000; Breedlove, 1994; Meyer-Bahlburg et al., 1995). There was a higher percentage of homosexuality among identical twins (52%) than among adoptive gay brothers (11%) (Bailey & Pillard, 1991) and a companion study with lesbians yielded a similar pattern (Bailey et al., 1993); just like atypical prenatal hormonal secretions were associated with a predisposition to homosexuality (cf. Mustanski, Chivers, & Bailey, 2002).

Environmental theorists (psychoanalytic and behavioural) both proposed environmental explanations to the development of homosexuality. Freudian theorists on the one hand argue that a male is likely to become gay when raised by a weak, detached, ineffective father who is a poor heterosexual model and by an overprotective, close binding mother, with whom the boy identifies (Weiten, 2007:392). The boy in these circumstances becomes overly attached to his mother, who is not only seductive but also restrictive with respect to his sexual interests and behaviour. The result is that the boy is sexually stimulated by his mother who at the same time punishes his sexual interests and advances. The boy, hurt and frustrated, learns to fear and hate his mother and represses any sexual feelings towards her and toward all the women for whom she stands. Homosexual relationships then become the only safe and comfortable outlet for sexual
gratification. Behavioural theorists on the other hand have argued that homosexuality is a learned preference acquired when same-sex stimuli have been paired with sexual arousal through chance seductions by adult homosexuals (Weiten, 2007:392).

Whatever the origins of homosexuality, much of what we claim to know about gay people is shrouded with mythology and prejudice. One of the erroneously widely held myths according, to Elkind (1979:51-52), which is relevant to this study, is that all gays are effeminate. He contends that the ‘screaming queen’ with tight pants, open shirt, eye makeup, and feminine gestures and vocal intonations is the exception rather than the rule. The vast majority of gays cannot be distinguished from heterosexuals in either appearance or demeanor. The ‘screaming queen’ may be asexual rather than homosexual, and his behaviour is more narcissistic rather than seductive. Such queens are as repugnant to the majority of gay males as they are to men who are straight. The position is that gay males are attracted to other males, and the belief that they are effeminate and are attracted to effeminate males is not true. Based on this argument, the boys (in this study) who put a feminine appearance may be given the benefit of the doubt.

However, Nicolosi (in Dobson, 2001:118) ascertains that several aspects of cross-gender behaviour, such as preference for cross-dressing or simulating female attire in boys, and insistence on wearing only stereotypically masculine clothing in girls, are signs of prehomosexuality. According to him, homosexuality is a gender identity disorder, a departure from Maccoby’s stand that homosexuals have no identity problem. In fact, a close observation of known male homosexuals in particular, reveals that they often strive for feminine gender expression, a probable indication that they may not be comfortable with their own anatomical identity.

On a contradictory note, Elkind (1979:55) concludes that becoming a homosexual is a conscious and often courageous choice, and that, homosexuals should not be discriminated against, based on their sexual preference. Kinsey and his colleagues (cited by Elkind, ibid) add that homosexual behaviour should be considered normal and healthy, just as heterosexual behaviour. As emphasis, Kinsey writes:
“Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexuals and homosexuals. The world is not divided into sheep and goats. Not all things are black and white. It is a fundamental fact of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories. Only the human mind invents categories and tries to force facts into separate pigeon holes. The living world is a continuum in each and every of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behaviour, the sooner we reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex” (Elkind, 1979:55).

In fact, Kinsey and his colleagues have argued that many people who define themselves as heterosexuals have had homosexual experiences - and vice versa. They conclude that it is more accurate to view heterosexuality and homosexuality as end points on a continuum (Weiten, 2007:392).

Although the researcher was interested in pursuing environmental links to the gender expressions of her subjects; and the issue of weak father and dominant mother raised by Freudian theorists appears attractive, it is worth noting that it is difficult to tell, just by looking, that a person is gay. And considering that gays are not yet free to speak about it in Kenya, the boys in this study may, or may not, have homosexual tendencies. In the next section, an exposition of transvestites will given in an attempt to determine if the Kenyan subjects of this study fit the description.

**Transvestites**

A transvestite on the other hand, is a cross-dresser who however does not feel gender dysphoria like a transsexual. Weiten & Lloyd (2003:432) describe transvestic fetishism as a sexual disorder in which a man achieves sexual arousal by dressing in women’s clothing. Garbar (in Belsey & Moore, 1997:165) defines a transvestite as a cross-dresser whose clothing seems deliberately and obviously at variance with his anatomical gender assignment. According to the sexual inversion hypothesis of Freud, a transvestite has his
sexual feelings diverted from women towards the female clothing or to himself as an imagined female (Anderson, 2001). The man chooses to display the attractive features of women, and to enjoy those, rather than to enjoy the features as present in an actual woman. In a bid to establish that transvestitism is a sexual perversion as most people believe, Anderson (2001) discusses three classes of factors that may promote the inversion in some males and not others:

1. *Drive factors:* Among these she cites genetic disposition and availability and closeness to the mother. One may have a genetic tendency toward female things, but there is not much said about this. On the mother issue, Anderson contends that statistical findings show that first sons (i.e., first born children, first male child, or the only child) are over-represented among cross-dressers. She explains that mothers show a lot of affection to first sons who, by experiencing loving maternal emotional involvement and contact, develop a strong impression of the mother (and women generally) as nice and an idea that femininity is pleasurable.

2. *Barriers to normal expression:* These include; a) oedipal fear where the boy’s sexual feelings toward the mother are avoided for fear of his father. He therefore reaches a compromise which gratifies the feelings while avoiding anxiety by focusing on the female clothing, or on himself as a female; b) the boy’s reluctance to admit that his mother is an object of his sexual feelings because it is taboo. To avoid the superego and incest taboo, he turns to female clothing, cross-dressing, or feminine identification to gratify his feelings; c) the mixed emotional messages that the boy receives from the mother, alternating between love and indifference, are also a barrier to normal expression of feelings. The detachment that the mother must initiate at a certain age in the life of the boy causes him to miss the tender, affectionate touches of the mother. The boy may now learn to meet his emotional cravings on his own. He may literally ‘become the mother’ in order to gain the same soothing feelings associated with his earlier, happier interactions with his mother; d) the boy may also have developed the idea that he is not attractive to women, lowering his expectation of success in fulfilling his sexual desires with women.
3. **Facilitating experiences:** These are circumstances that may make it easier for the boy to discover cross-dressing as a way to gratify his sexual feelings, for instance, the presence of many women in the household - sisters, aunts - will stimulate his curiosity about feminine things ([http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/cathytg/inv.htm](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/cathytg/inv.htm)).

Cranny-Francis et al., (2003:170) dispute the above by disclosing that male transvestitism has a long history in theatre and performance. They trace it to the Elizabethan times when women were not permitted (by the state) to act on stage, so all female roles were played by young men and boys. Even today, transvestitism occupies an important role in comic theatre, whose particular audience is children. While on the one hand this may serve to enforce social (heterosexual) norms, as the acting transvestite is presented as funny, it may also have a subversive effect on the other hand, interrogating children’s expectations of masculinity and femininity.

Thus, Cranny-Francis et al., (ibid) fault the inversion thesis by emphasizing that transvestitism is not about wanting to be sexually different from what one is, but rather an interrogation of how sexuality itself is determined and made manifest. It is therefore an indication of radical deconstruction and a challenge to gender categorization. In a show of agreement, Martin Rose states that transvestites are only defying convention ([http://www.repartee.co.uk/Help.htm](http://www.repartee.co.uk/Help.htm)). In fact, he continues, transvestites are usually attracted to women, often marry and have children, and many limit their cross-dressing to a part-time activity. Their interest is to experience their inner femininity based on what they understand it to be, although they report that they may not have similar experiences as women. On the whole, they remain men with a new fashion and lifestyle choice ([http://www.geocities.com.whytv.whatibelieve/stillmale.html?200725](http://www.geocities.com.whytv.whatibelieve/stillmale.html?200725)). The question that comes to mind is why the male cross-dresser should be viewed as deviant but not the female cross-dresser. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher will be able to tell if the subjects of the study cross-dress solely to defy social convention and why.

The discussion on transsexuals, homosexuals and transvestites, helps one to understand that masculinity and femininity genders include a range of identities beyond conventional
heterosexual masculine and heterosexual feminine identities. They are each a conglomerate of multiple gender identities such that each gender may include heterosexual, homosexual, transsexual, racial, historical, gendered identities (Williams, 2007:120) with varying expressions. The conceptualization of this study however was one of heterosexual gender identity, admittedly reinforcing the social conventions of gender. Having discussed the different gender identities, the next step was to examine the stages by which children gain understanding of their gender identity; based on the explanation of developmental theorists.

2.3.3 **Developmental trends in gender typing**

The process by which children acquire the values, motives and behaviours considered appropriate for their gender in their culture (gender typing) takes various forms according to different theories. These are examined later in this chapter. What follows is a brief developmental theorists’ explanation of the way children gain an understanding of their own gender and that of others, as males or females. This is thought to occur in interrelated stages.

**Stage 1: Development of the gender concept**

In the first stage of development of a gender identity, children learn to discriminate males and females and treat them as categorically distinct (Shaffer, 1994:289). This happens in infancy (about six months of age) when the baby is able to distinguish between male and female voices using differences in pitch, and faces (Beal, 1994:94; Shaffer, 1994:289). Babies’ ability to tell males and females apart may imply that gender is a basic characteristic among human beings since it is perceived even before the babies have had much social experience or exposure to the surrounding culture (Beal, ibid). By the second year, infants begin to show greater interest in other children of their own gender, as long as they had gender-typical clothing. Using physical characteristics such as hair length and dress, infants are able to distinguish males and females and can identify
‘daddy’, ‘mommy’, ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ by age three. They believe that someone with short hair and who wears pants, and enjoys rough outdoor games must be a boy. Beal (1994:96) explains that relying on appearance and activity makes sense as biological information is not available, and that appearance cues are quite reliable indicators of gender in our cultures (although current trends clearly put this assumption of appearance cues to question).

Stage 2: Development of sex-role stereotypes

At this stage children begin to acquire sex-role stereotypes as they also begin to label themselves as boys or girls. The two to three year-old boys and girls agreed about what girls do (talk a lot, never hit, often need help, like to play with dolls, and like to help their mothers with chores such as cooking and cleaning); and what boys do (like to play with cars, like to help their fathers, like to build things, and are likely to make statements such as ‘I can hit you’) (Shaffer, 1994:290). Over the next several years, children learn more and more about the activities and behaviours of males and females and eventually begin to draw sharp distinctions between the sexes on psychological dimensions by age eight, but also become more flexible in their thinking about sex-role stereotypes (Damon, 1977; Martin, 1989 in Shaffer, ibid).

Between 12 and 15, children again become intolerant of certain cross-sex behaviour (like male wearing nail polish or a female sporting a crew cut) but remain flexible about hobbies and occupations that men and women pursue. This renewed gender chauvinism may be explained in terms of gender-related issues becoming particularly important to them in their desire to find identity (Maccoby 1980:244). This is different from the pre-school stereotyping when children firmly classify themselves as boys or girls.

Stage 3: Development of sex-typed behaviour

During this stage, children develop a sense of value about their gender. They avoid cross-sex toys, and play with same-sex friends. This behaviour is evident by age two. They
begin to imitate people of their own gender as they strive for acceptance as males or females. By ages four-six years, they develop deep emotional bonds with the same-sex parent, the bonds that generally assure gender role socialization. By age seven their idea of gender is more stable. They begin to identify the behaviours that are appropriate for each sex. The theory based on developmental psychologists however does not explain how children select behaviours from the many that are defined as appropriate for their gender (Johnson, 1986:414), but shows that children acquire gender identity quite early. A detailed account of this developmental acquisition of gender was undertaken in cognitive developmental theory (section 2.6.1.3.1). But just what (or where) is this gender difference between males and females that even toddlers are socialized to know and uphold as they grow into adults? This question is dealt with in the next section.

2.4 UNDERSTANDING GENDER DIFFERENCES

In this section, the researcher’s desire was to know the source of the gender differences to be able to appreciate the different nature of socialization brought to bear on the children by society. By this the researcher looked at what it is that makes boys men and girls women, and the stability of these differences based on their origins. This was to help bring out, as well as question, the role of socialization in guiding the children to know what roles and behaviours to adopt.

Conventional meanings of gender typically focus on difference, emphasizing how women differ from men. The French for example have an expression “Vive la difference”, which means “Long live the difference” (between men and women). Modern life however, has challenged our conceptions of what it means to be a woman or a man. Rathus and Nevid (2002:353) rightly observe that the anatomical differences between women and men are obvious and are connected to the biological aspects of reproduction. They argue that biologists therefore have a relatively easy time of describing and interpreting the gender differences they study. However, the task of psychology is more complex and is wrapped up with sociological and political issues, making psychological gender differences less
obvious. It is therefore interesting to note that ‘although most differences between males and females are seen as culturally specific and historically fluid, different theories represent these differences as essential, universal, highly dichotomized, and enduring’ (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, in Herrmann & Stewart, 1994:49-50).

The researcher looked at the differences between the male and female gender from two broad perspectives; biological and sociological. While radical feminists would teach that men and women have no differences between them except those created by human thought and culture, biological science indicates that the two sexes are actually different. Biological differences are examined first.

2.4.1 Biological differences in gender

The biological origins of gender differences have centered on the evolutionary bases of behaviour, hormones, and brain organization. Many so-called experts of gender insist that masculine stereotypes, for example, are an inevitable result of biology. Author and conservative politician George Gilder asserts that men are biologically and intrinsically selfish, violent, and sex-driven – needing women, marriage and children to civilize their innate competitive and destructive drives (Kimbrell, 1995:21). Below, an explanation of these biological views is undertaken.

2.4.1.1 Evolutionary view

The evolutionary view is based on the assumption that gender differences in behaviour are largely the same across divergent cultures. The argument put forth for this assumption by Beller and Gafni (1996), and Halpern (1997) is that better documented gender differences in cognitive abilities, aggression, and sexual behaviour are found virtually in all cultures (Weiten, 2007:460).

Evolutionary theorists postulate that gender differences reflect different natural selection pressures operating on males and females over the course of human history. Males for
instance are supposedly more sexually active and permissive because they invest less than females in the process of procreation and can maximize their reproductive success by seeking many sexual partners (Buss, 1996; Schmitt, 2005 in Weiten ibid).

The gender gap in aggression is also explained in terms of reproductive fitness. Because females are more selective about mating than males, males have to engage in more competition for sexual partners than females do. Greater expressiveness is thought to be adaptive for males in this competition because it should foster social dominance over other males and facilitate the acquisition of material resources emphasized by females when they evaluate potential partners (Campbell, 2005; Cummins, 2005 in Weiten ibid). Even male superiority in spatial ability is explained by evolutionist theorists as attributed to adaptive demands of hunting; since men handled hunting and women, gathering. However, the evolutionary hypotheses are highly speculative and difficult to test empirically, and do not pass as convincing reasons, to the researcher, for the society to actively cultivate gender differences between males and females. Next, the researcher examines the differences based on chromosomes, hormones and brain organization.

2.4.1.2 Chromosomal, hormonal and brain differences

Initially all fetuses are the same until a few (about seven) weeks after conception. During this time, the embryo has a gonad, a ridge of tissue that is sexually undifferentiated. It contains two systems of internal ducts: the Wolffian ducts that will become the vas deferens and seminal vesicles in male and the Mullerian ducts that will become the fallopian tubes and uterus in the female. The embryo therefore has the potential to develop either masculine or feminine reproductive organs. Following the instructions from the sex chromosomes in the cells, sex hormones are produced in the embryo. If the Y chromosome is present, the embryo will develop testes which will begin to produce the male sex hormones, the androgens. The androgen testosterone leads to the development of the male internal duct system while the di-hydro-testosterone causes the external genitalia to develop into a penis and scrotum. Finally, another hormone is produced that inhibits the development of the female duct system.
On the other hand, the absence of the Y chromosome in the gonadal tissue will develop into ovaries. The vagina, clitoris, womb, and fallopian tubes also develop during the prenatal period. Then at the beginning of puberty, another flood of testosterone causes the appearance of secondary sex characteristics in males. In females, oestrogen is the hormone responsible for secondary sex characteristics. Both males and females have the same hormones in their blood, but differ in how much of each they have. Females have more oestrogen while males have more testosterone. This difference plays an important part in the physical development of boys and girls into men and women as they determine, among other things, the size of their bodies, amounts of body hair, potential for muscle development, and the size of breasts and hips (Johnson, 1986:391).

Besides the differences determined by chromosomes and hormones, some theorists propose that male and female brains are organized differently, which might account for differences in some cognitive abilities. The cerebrum (divided into left and right halves) is responsible for most complex mental activities. A large number of studies show small differences between men and women on certain cognitive processes (cf. Berenbaum & Hines, 1992; Law, Pellegrino, & Hunt, 1993). Men, for instance, tend to score higher on tests of spatial ability, and process verbal material differently than women. Women on the other hand, tend to hold an advantage over men on certain verbal tasks (Baron, 1988:66). While this is supposed to support the view that men and women are differently wired, it is argued that a significant amount of brain development occurs over the first five to ten years after birth, during which time males and females are socialized differently. It is therefore possible that different life experiences may accumulate to produce differences in brain organization (Hood, et al., 1987, cited by Weiten & Llyod, 2003:281).

Nevertheless, the account of an identical twin, Bruce, who lost his penis in a circumcision accident at seven months, helps to emphasize that there could be predetermined difference between boys and girls (see table 1 below). Although the child was finally raised as a girl following surgical steps to enhance female structures, and renamed
Brenda, it was reported that the child liked boys’ games and didn’t particularly like to play with dolls. She was also described as bossy. At adolescence, Brenda expressed thoughts of becoming a mechanic, and her fantasies reflected discomfort with her female role. By age 14, she insisted she wanted to live as a boy. When the truth finally came out, ‘Brenda’ reclaimed his male gender identity and renamed himself David (Diamond & Sigmundson, 1977. See Huffman, 2004:376-377).

Table 1: Dimensions of Sex and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex Dimensions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chromosomes</td>
<td>XY</td>
<td>XX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gonads</td>
<td>Testes</td>
<td>Ovaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hormones</td>
<td>Predominantly androgens</td>
<td>Predominantly estrogens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. External genitals</td>
<td>Penis, scrotum</td>
<td>Labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, vaginal opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Internal accessory Organs</td>
<td>Prostate gland, seminal vesicles, vas deferens, ejaculatory duct, Cowper’s gland</td>
<td>Vagina, uterus, fallopian tubes, cervix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Secondary sex characteristics.</td>
<td>Beard, lower voice, wider shoulders, sperm emission</td>
<td>Breasts, wider hips, menstruation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sexual orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual, gay, bisexual</td>
<td>Heterosexual, lesbian, bisexual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Gender identity (self-definition)</th>
<th>Perceives self as male</th>
<th>Perceives self as female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Gender role (societal expectations)</td>
<td>Masculine (“Boys like trucks and sports”)</td>
<td>Feminine (“Girls like dolls and clothes”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to Garrett (1987:2), many people believe that biological factors are very influential in shaping the gender roles of men and women in society. She explains that biological factors are responsible for personality and temperamental differences between
the sexes, making women more emotional than men, and to have a desire to care for others. Citing the article by Andrew Sullivan published in *The New York Times* titled ‘The He Hormone’, Dobson (2001:21-22) confirms that no doubt exists that there is a link between hormones and human behaviour. Testosterone is responsible in humans, at least in part, for what might be called ‘social dominance’, and plays a role in the fact that the vast majority of violent crimes are committed by men, and that the prison population is occupied by a vastly disproportionate number of males. After all, biological maleness has been generally equated with greater size, weight, and strength. In the same vein, researchers Anne Moir and David Jessel, authors of the book *Brain Sex: the Real Difference between Men and Women* provide the cutting-edge scientific view of gender differentiation by stating that:

“Until recently, behavioural differences between the sexes have been explained away by social conditioning - the expectations of parents whose attitudes in turn reflect the expectations of society….Today; there is too much new biological evidence for the sociological argument to prevail. The argument of biology at least provides a comprehensive and scientifically provable framework within which we can begin to understand why we are who we are….It is our hormones which make us behave in specific stereotypic ways….What makes the difference is the interplay between those hormones and the male or female brains, pre-wired specifically to react with them” (Kimbrell, 1995:23).

Since much of the biological difference between boys and girls is indisputable, it could easily follow that these two sexes be brought up differently. However, this requirement is not in itself, biological, and is strongly disputed by Barrow who remarks thus:

“The claim that males and females are by nature different, whatever the extent of its truth, would be inadequate to justify the further claim that they ought to be brought up differently. It is directly comparable to the
inadequate attempt to justify apartheid by insisting that black and white are by nature different” (1982: 68).

Clearly, males and females are anatomically, physiologically, and hormonally different. But when it comes to psychological variables, sex differences are less marked (Siegler, et al., 2003:351) and not as obvious as biological gender differences (Rathus & Nevid, 2002:353) as illustrated in table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Documented Psychological Differences Between the Sexes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal ability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual/spatial abilities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mathematical ability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aggression</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity level</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fear, timidity, risk taking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotional expressivity</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Compliance  From the preschool years, girls are more compliant than boys to the requests and demands of adults.

Developmental Vulnerability  From conception, boys are more vulnerable to a wide range of developmental problems.

(Sources: Eaton & Enns, 1986; Feingold, 1994; Halpern, 1997; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Ruble & Martin, 1998 cited by Siegler et al., 2003).

It appears then, that the emphasis on differences between boys and girls are just social constructs. The biological sex is used as the basis upon which behavioural segmentations (unnecessary according to some people) are constructed. In fact, various scholars (Baron, 1998; Battancourt & Miller, 1996; Rathus & Nevid, 2002; Voyer, Voyer & Bryden, 1995) agree that there are indeed some differences between males and females with respect to many aspects of behaviour, but that in general, the magnitude of such differences is overestimated by prevailing gender stereotypes; and that differences between individuals within a given gender are generally greater than between genders.

Nevertheless, the researcher’s view is that the biologically determined differences should not be exaggerated, and should not be ignored either, but acknowledged and accorded their rightful position in human existence. This is because, as Arthur Flannigan succinctly puts it:

“the physiologic differences between men and women mirror how people differentiate between masculinity and femininity as inherent divisions within the human psyche and thus how people differentiate and understand all ‘genderized’ polarities, whether real or imagined and whether in the body, mind, or culture” (Brod & Kaufman, 1994:243).

The differences as are socially constructed are discussed for the purpose of providing a balanced discussion.
2.4.2 Sociological/Anthropological Gender Differences

While psychology defines sex differences and sex role differentiation in terms of personal characteristics (traits), anthropology generally defines them in terms of social and cultural processes (roles or activities). All these are regarded here as sociological, only that some are culture-specific while others cut across cultures. The differences reflect the culturally transmitted patterns of behaviour determined in part by the functioning of society (Rosenberg & Sutton-Smith, 1972:68). Bandura and Bussey (2004:691) aver that although some gender differences are biologically founded, most of the gendered attributes, roles, incentive systems, constraints, and opportunity structures arise from cultural design operating through gendered societal practices.

While the 1930s and 1940s psychologists saw femininity and masculinity as opposites as earlier mentioned, the late 1960s and 1970s saw the introduction of the androgynous model by Sandra Bem (1974) to the measurement of gender role orientation. In this new perspective, psychological characteristics of femininity and masculinity were viewed as comprising two independent dimensions that could be separated but could overlap as well. An individual had both feminine and masculine traits, differing only on how they scored on each item. One could score high on both female and male characteristics (androgynous), high on female and low on male items (feminine), high on male and low on female items (masculine), or low on both female and male items (undifferentiated). Several other scholars (Doyle & Paludi, 1994:69; Franzoi, 1996:157-158; Sigelman & Rider, 2003:328-329; Weiten & Llyod, 2003:293) support this explanation. Carl Jung, in apparent agreement about the presence of both characteristics in all people, gives a different explanation.

According to the analytical psychology of Carl Jung, people consciously reject not only qualities that are evil or inconsistent with their persona, but also qualities incompatible with their sex-role identity (Cloninger, 1993:76). He explains that men possess the ‘anima’ (the repressed feminine typed qualities) while women possess the ‘animus’ (a woman’s repressed masculine typed qualities). When a person is possessed by his anima
or her animus, he or she tends to act in a reversed role manner. Men tend to act moody and emotional while women become preoccupied with power. When a person is able to differentiate and make conscious the anima or animus (which constitute the unconscious), he or she develops more androgynous qualities.

Based on Jung’s explanation, cross-dressing, for instance, is likely related to the process of a man’s coming to terms with his anima. Rather than being a mere aberration, it should be viewed as a part of a normal developmental process of individuation. Jung however clarifies that the content of the anima and animus varies depending upon the sex roles taught in a particular culture. Considering the problem of this study based on Jung’s argument, one would explain that the habit of boys spotting feminine appearance has nothing to do with identifying with, or wanting to become women; rather, it is an expression of the feminine self. Although this research should help us determine the validity of this viewpoint, yet the so-called expression of the opposite self by some individuals goes beyond cultural acceptability, causing discomfort.

Sociologically then, males and females differ in what they do and how they do it. Men, for example, tend to display more aggressiveness and self-confidence whereas women display more tenderness, vulnerability and emotion in social interactions (Johnson, 1986:392); differences which are a consequence of cultural institutionalization. The popularists of androgyny argue that since these differences are socially constructed, they could also be done away with to allow boys and girls to be brought up without gender-specific inclinations, thus enabling them flexibility to take upon any preferred roles any time.

Unfortunately, the truth is that the different social expectations are based on the physical differences between the two sexes, each with prescribed traits. Some research reviews suggest that influences of biology on gender differences are relatively minor (Baker, 1987; Jacklin, 1989), yet society reifies and amplifies these differences many times over, creating a sense of a pervasive difference between men and women (Cross & Markus, in Beall & Sternberg, 1993:56). In apparent consensus Geis, (in Beall & Sternberg,
1993:18) says that stereotypical assumptions influence the behaviour of both perceivers and actors, and sex differences in social roles and status are both cause and effect of the differential expectations.

In an article, Trigiani (1999) argues that advocates of sex role admit that prescribed traits for the sexes have their limitations, but they always assure us that in the final analysis, conforming to our gender role ascriptions will bring glad harmony between the sexes. The researcher supports this argument.

2.5 GENDER ROLES

In this part of the literature review, the researcher presented an exposition of gender roles and trends, as perceived both in the West where most resources emanate, and more specifically in Kenya from where empirical information was gathered. The aim was to compare Western and Kenyan gender roles, justify or dispute expression of current gender roles, as well as find explanation for any roles that could be viewed as socially deviant within the Kenyan context. This information was to contribute in establishing a base for answering research question (no. 5) which sought to explain the social changes that may have influenced the boys’ ultimate behaviours.

Gender has been the most important basis for assigning rights and obligations and determining the division of labour within the family and within societies. Although division of labour based along gender lines is seen as somewhat arbitrary, given the differences between cultures, and sometimes within a culture, Levi-Strauss (1971, cited by Beall & Strenberg, 1993:133) argues that it serves to make the two genders dependent on each other for survival. This is in the sense that whenever one gender performs a specific task, the other gender is not allowed to perform it, hence he/she needs a member of the other gender in order to survive. It is upon justification of these differences that gender roles can be understood to complement for the purpose of harmony and to avoid confusion that comes with ambiguity. However, it is important at this juncture to mention
that with changing relations between men and women and weakened traditional structures of society, gender roles have become even more confusing and complex.

Regardless of the many shades and complexities of sexual identity and gender identity, societies tend to assign some classes of social roles to ‘male’ individuals and others to ‘female’ individuals. The assignment is based on the original oversimplification that there are unambiguously male human beings and unambiguously female human beings who should behave in all important ways as men and women naturally behave. Any act of dressing or behaving like the other sex is treated as a trick or joke, allowed only in comic theatre, or as an aberration altogether. Needless to add, Kenya is basically one such society that perpetuates traditional gender roles, as will be seen shortly below in the discussion on Gender roles in Kenya (in section 2.5.2).

Most of the behavior associated with gender is learned rather than innate (Maccoby, 1980:224) and society as a whole communicates clear messages to children about their gender differences as they are growing up. It is argued that children undertake activities consistent with gender-linked stereotypes before they acquire gender identity, gender stability, or gender constancy. The explanation is that there is a pervading social reality, such as parents, who make gender salient and functionally significant. They bring their influence to bear on the development of gender orientation from the very beginning of life. They do so by structuring, channeling, modeling, labeling, and reacting evaluatively to gender-linked conduct (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Leaper, 2002; Pomerantz, Ng, & Wang, 2004 in Bandura & Bussey, 2004:696). These gender-linked influences provide infants and toddlers with more than enough incentive to pay attention to, categorize, and remember the characteristics and the consequential import of the gendered reality. This makes the children to differentiate the sexes on the basis of the observable markers and the functional significance of this category before they recognize that they are a boy or girl (Bandura & Bussey ibid). Martin and Szkybalo (2004:703) dispute this explanation by arguing that Bandura and Bussey do not explain how young children could selectively attend to same-sex models and associate gender-typed behaviours with each sex before they could demonstrate the ability to correctly apply gender labels to themselves and
others. What Bandura and Bussey explain is how gender differentiation occurs before gender identity. Nevertheless, all are in agreement that children learn to act like same-sex models.

Weiten & Lloyd (2003:284) postulate that gender roles in Africa are more rigidly defined than among Whites (where most researches have focused), although these roles are slowly changing. Johnson (1986:391) argues that most societies assign males and females to sharply different statuses and, on this basis, distribute wealth, power, and prestige unequally. It is generally believed that women have an instinct for nurturance as a result of their biologically based role in reproduction. This makes them ideally situated for ‘expressive’ roles that involve care for the physical and emotional needs of the family. Men on the other hand undertake ‘instrumental’ roles providing economic support and links with the world outside the family. These gender-specific patterns of behaviour tend to be reflected in language, school, media, church, and in all forms of interaction. As the children grow up, they learn more about how males and females are expected to behave, and they use this information to guide and monitor their own behaviour.

Several feminists including Kate Millett, Betty Friedan, Mary Wollstonecraft and Judith Butler have criticized this gender role orientation as biased against women. Values generally rank males higher than females, and norms generally support male privilege. Females are treated as a minority (although they are numerically the majority) and therefore regarded inferior to men. Men’s successful performance of tasks, for example, is attributed to superior ability whereas women are perceived as succeeding because of luck, extra effort, or ease of task (McGinnies, 1994:88). On the whole, cultural values that apply to women encourage them to depend on men, and provide them with no independent basis of social power. The feminist concept will be discussed in detail later in section 2.10 of this chapter. The discussion in focus at the moment is on gender roles.

Traits that describe the psychological and cultural roles attributed to masculinity include courage, dominance, strong, independent, unemotional (stoic), daring, adventurous, progressive, rude, severe, stern, robust, wise, enterprising, forceful, autocratic, active, and
aggressive. Those pertaining to femininity include; fearful, soft-hearted, submissive, weak, dependent, sensitive, emotional, sentimental, superstitious, affectionate, and attractive (Williams & Best, in Franzoi, 1996:132). It is however noted that gender roles are far more complex and overlapping, and are increasingly becoming less distinguishable than previously thought. Status differences have become less crucial, and with this, it seems, the young persons will require guidance to enable them find their place in society.

Nevertheless, despite decades of societal change, expectations about male and female behaviour are still prevalent, and still influence children’s development (Beal, 1994:5), and many cultures have prefer to maximize sex differences rather than reduce them. Although some of today’s sex differences may disappear, others may arise as men and women invent new techniques for polarization (Roseberg and Sutton-Smith, 1972:90). This needs to be watched out for, as the events of history unfold.

2.5.1 Universal Historical Trends in Gender Roles

The disciplines of history and anthropology indicate that from the first appearance of man until the discovery of cultivation, both men and women were engaged in hunting and gathering to provide food. Women gathered small plants and hunted small animals while men pursued larger animals. Nursing children was a shared job but women undertook cooking since they stayed closer to the home. The family performed all major roles (economic, educational, religious, protective, and recreational), which were not separated. Tasks were on the basis of age and sex, but lines were not extremely rigid. When pre-industrial horticulture was discovered, the status of women and the extent of sex typing also changed.

Plant cultivation meant more dependable food supplies and a more stationary society, leading to extended family forms. Apart from growing vegetables, women developed skills in food preservation, pottery making, and weaving. Division of labour between sexes became rigid. Boys and girls were separated early and prepared for different
initiation rites and subsequent roles. This period was followed by expanded agriculture and domestication of animals that began in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

The use of the plough and knowledge in irrigation led to increased economic surplus, greater specialization, and more economic inequality. Conquest, subjugation and occupation became common and the status of women declined. Social classes began to appear. Men undertook work that required physical strength. This however was to change during the industrial times when factories replaced the family as the basic economic productive unit. The widespread use of machines rendered physical strength relatively unimportant. Yet, gender roles between males and females remained highly differentiated (with males’ roles acquiring a superior status). This role differentiation is what the researcher refers to as ‘traditional’.

Traditional gender roles are associated with a clear distinction between male and female behaviour. From an early age, we come to expect girls to be girls, and boys to be boys. Girls should play with dolls and be passive; boys should play with trucks and be active. Adult men should be strong and independent, and head the household. Adult women should be warm and small-framed and take care of the children (cf. Cejka & Eagly, 1999; Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Parents, especially fathers, are seen to encourage gender-typed activities in their children. They provide gender-typed toys even, for toddlers (cf. Eisenberg, et al., 1985; O’Brien, & Huston, 1985). This does not happen because children ask for such toys. When examining the toys children requested and received for Christmas, Etaugh and Liss (in Unger (2001:130)), found that they were less likely to receive requested gender-atypical toys. Unger (ibid) concludes that parents who report more traditional gender-role socialization practices, or whose children perceive them as encouraging and modeling gender-typed behaviours have children who are less flexible in their own gender-type attitudes and preferences. Girls tend towards femininity, while boys tend towards masculinity.

There is evidence to support the value of reasonably sex-typed parenting in which mothers are ‘responsive’ and fathers are ‘firm’ (Popenoe, at al., 1996:261). Structural
functionalists would argue that clearly defined gender roles provide specificity for behavioural expectations and promote efficient family functioning while diminishing ambiguity in social relationships (Dickinson & Leming, 1995:106). But there are contrary thoughts about gender-role identity. Weiten and Lloyd (2003:293) posit that strong identification with traditional gender role expectations is associated with a variety of negative outcomes. High femininity in females is correlated with low self-esteem, and increased psychological distress. High masculinity in males has been linked with poor health care and greater likelihood of committing physical and sexual aggression in relationships. As people become aware of the possible costs of conventional gender roles, much debate has occurred about moving beyond towards androgyny and gender-role transcendence.

While most people expect gender-related attributes such as roles, traits, and physical appearance to form one coherent package, an individual can have some of the stereotypical characteristics of both sexes. When one scores high on measures of both masculinity and femininity, he/she is seen as androgynous. On the other hand, males who score high on masculinity and low on femininity, and females who score high on femininity but low on masculinity are seen to be gender-typed. Conversely, men who score high on femininity and low on masculinity, and females who score high on masculinity but low on femininity are cross-gender typed. Males and females who score low on both masculinity and femininity are gender-role undifferentiated (vide Sigelman & Rider, 2003:328-329; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:293). A number of writers have argued that masculinity and femininity are not opposites, but that there is considerable overlapping in the qualities regarded as characteristic of a given sex (cf. Bem, 1958, 1974; Ferguson & Maccoby, 1966; Sears, Rau & Alpert, 1965). Gender roles therefore, are becoming more complex and less distinguishable from one another than has been the case in earlier generations, as people transcend the strict boundaries of just male or female roles.

Increase in economic opportunities for women through education has helped make roles between the sexes less distinct. Women also no longer need to depend on men for their
livelihoods making marriage a choice. By 1994, for example, about 40% of households in Kenya were headed by women (Kenya Country Gender Profile, 1994:17). Those who marry have greater authority if they work, than those who do not work. With all these developments, traditional sex typing has been on the decline, even in parts of rural Africa.

A traditional male role where masculinity was validated by physical strength, aggressiveness, and emotional inexpressiveness is fast being replaced with modern male roles where economic achievement, organizational power, emotional sensitivity and self-expression (to women) are upheld. In modern societies therefore, traditional male roles have to co-exist with new expectations. This tends to create role inconsistencies among the men. Perhaps it is due to the ‘new’ requirements that men communicate personal feelings, nurture children and share in housework, integrate sexuality with love, and curb aggression (Levant 1996 in Weiten & Llyod, 2003:284) that they have become inadequate as contemporary models of masculinity to their sons. This notion will be pursued further by means of questionnaires to sons during empirical data collection an analysis (see chapter 5 of this text).

Even with the noted changes, many of our social structures remain binary in terms of gender, sustained through male and female roles. Stereotypes concerning the right behaviours for boys and girls still exist, though in different forms in different societies and cultures. Kimbrell (1995:14) observes that ‘it is in human femaleness and maleness that we all have our personal origins, our hope of the continuance of family, community, and the human species itself’. The female and male roles are passed to the young generations through various ways examined in section 2.6 below. The immediate next section will focus on roles, as perceived in the Kenyan society.

2.5.2 Gender roles in Kenya

Under this section the researcher discussed gender roles in the Kenyan context, with the intention of underscoring what is typical and what is atypical for each sex. At a later
stage, circumcision which is briefly mentioned, will be elaborated when the aspect of
gender construction is highlighted in the next chapter. It is worth mentioning here that a
lot of the information contained in this section was based on personal experience as well
as observation, which was one of the tools used in gathering the data.

Kenya is largely a religious and conservative society where ‘traditional’ gender roles are
typical. With a population of 34, 707,817 people, 78% is considered Christian (45%
Protestant & 35% Roman Catholic); 10% Indigenous beliefs; 10% Muslim; and 2% Other
(http://trocaire.org/wherewework/countryprofile.php?id=50). Most of the families reflect
a pattern of gender roles where the father is the head of the home, although there are an
increasing number of female-headed homes (about 40% households). Amutabi and Lutta-
Mukhebi (2001) in their article Gender and mining in Kenya: The case of Mukibira mines
in Vihiga District, argue that traditional female-male roles are deeply ingrained and in
fact glorified in all Kenyan societies, languages, in education, mass media, advertising, in
the arts and other public places.

The man is also the breadwinner, disciplinarian, and decision maker. According to an
article on gender roles in Kenya by Adams, entitled Males and females: Gender and
marital relations (vide www.sagepub.com/upm-data/4948-Adams-chapter-1-Families-in-
Kenya.pdf-supplimentalResult), household decisions among the Akamba and Mijikenda
Kenyan communities are made by either husband or wife but in separate domains. The
wife generally is responsible for child-rearing and few household decisions, except when
the husband is away. Iona Mayer, cited by Adams, explains that division of labour among
the Gusii (another Kenyan Community) is clearly demarcated. Traditionally, men and
women are seldom allowed to play the same roles or even play them in the same way.
Though both build houses, for example, men put up the framework and women do the
plastering. This seems to support the view of interdependence and complementation, as
argued by Beall and Sternberg (1993:133) earlier cited under Gender roles.

In most communities, male family members are responsible for security, ploughing the
fields, and herding animals. Females are home-keepers with duties like childcare,
collecting water and fuel-wood, cooking, and in some communities, building shelters. A man can engage in female jobs only with sound reasons like illness of the only female that could do the job or absence of a female member altogether. Regardless of the conformity to gender stereotypes, there are exceptions as Kenyan communities increasingly show substantial deviation from the strict traditional occupational roles.

However, having a stable home is one identity of a man, and proper control over the family is a requisite for being entrusted with leadership in any Kenyan community. Men without wives or with deviant children are rarely entrusted with traditional leadership. Children are the first important family ‘asset’. From as early as when they gain cognizance, children are taught by their parents to know they are boys or girls. Apart from differences in the type of clothing and hair dressing which are common domains of sex-typed behaviour, small boys are encouraged to stay in the company of older male relatives in order to learn their roles. Little girls on the other hand are helped by their mothers to learn female roles (vide Sobania, 2003). At puberty (ages 12-14 years), the children undergo rites of passage during which their expected behaviours are made explicit through instruction by selected individuals. In communities where boys are circumcised, the initiates are taught to avoid feminine roles to demonstrate that they are ‘real men’ and no more children (cf. section on circumcision under gendering masculinity in Kenya in the next chapter). Once they go through this, it becomes difficult for the boys to receive any form of discipline from females, be they their mothers or their teachers. The fathers are expected to take keen interest in the behaviour of the boys from this stage on. They are to guide the boys to find their place in society as they take onto more complex male roles, such as solving family disputes.

However, two issues seem to hamper the continued socialization of boys into gender roles from this stage on. One is the general feeling that on initiation they become adults. Fathers therefore trust the boys to behave responsibly and so almost completely withdraw guidance. Unfortunately this is the time the boys need parental guidance most. Melgosa, (1997:27) notes that although adolescents can give the impression of having enough autonomy to be able to face up to life’s difficulties, they are aware of their limitations and
often feel confused and insecure. Deep down they are open to help from parents and other adults. It therefore follows that if the boy fails to find security in the father, he will find it elsewhere, often in the social group where conformity with group norms is emphasized at the expense of family or society requirements. It is important to understand at this point that socialization is a lifelong process which does not only apply to children but to all people in the development of gender roles and stereotypes. That is the reason changes in roles are observed in order to fit situations.

The other issue stems from urbanization and modernization, resulting in a lot of changes evident in parenting behaviour. Fathers are either absent from home for long periods of time, are too busy or disinterested all together. Women on the other hand, are becoming more vocal and powerful. The stereotypes held about being male or female are continuously subjected to challenge while the youngster finds himself in the mix, craving for guidance. This so much describes the situation in Kenya, and is prevalent of many other similar societies, especially in Africa. Regardless of the impediments cited, among many others, the process of socialization is nonetheless on-going in Kenya, just like in all societies. In the next section the researcher proceeded to examine the different theories that explain how gender is acquired, generally universally, as well as specifically in Kenya.

2.6 GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION THEORIES

The researcher here discussed the mainstream theories of socialization in a bid to obtain more grounding on popular explanations of how the process takes place. This contributed in assisting the researcher to identify gaps in the gender typing of young male adults that constitute the major subjects in the study. Of great interest was contribution of all concerned parties in the final acquisition of proper roles as society defines them, and an identification of probable causes of a ‘failed’ socialization. Contemporary theories will be examined in the next chapter together with gender reconstruction.
Gender role development results from sex designation at birth and the subsequent imposition of a number of training practices and modeling experiences on the child that are intended to result in shaping his or her behaviour, so that specific masculine or feminine qualities will emerge. This means that learning is directional, based on the unique predispositions of the male and the female child. In what follows, the various ways in which children learn gender-specific patterns and behaviours, according to different theorists, will be discussed under the broad classification of Role Theory.

2.6.1 THE ROLE THEORY

According to the Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GenderRoles), the Role Theory is based on the following assumptions:

- People define roles for themselves and others based on social learning and reading;
- People form expectations about the roles that they and others will play;
- People subtly encourage others to act within the role expectations they have formed for them;
- People will act within the roles they adopt.

As emphasis to the above assumptions or as an addition, Brittan contends that the following arguments underpin the theory:

- That gender and gender identity are acquired in early childhood. From the beginning of a person’s life there is a systematic attempt on the part of parents and other child minders to reproduce the existing gender divisions of society;
- that there is a clearly demarcated sexual division of labour which shapes male and female roles, and how men and women define themselves is based on their roles;
- It does not allow for deviance, that is, it treats anomalies as if they were irrelevant, or as being due to some biological defect or psychological problem (1989:21-22).
Such versions of the role theory come close to completely encapsulating gender and sexuality in social strait-jackets, not allowing people to be anything other than the internalized roles. It is assumed that one will conform to these requirements, either because not to do so would have negative consequences (ridicule, punishment, ostracization, etc.) or because he imitates models and identifies with other men (fathers, etc.). Various relevant role theories, namely Social Learning, Psychoanalytic, and Social Cognitive Theories will now be discussed below.

2.6.1.1 **Social Learning Theory**

Proponents of this theory argue that children learn gender roles directly through reinforcements and punishments, and indirectly through observation and imitation. They learn gender-related behaviours when they are rewarded or punished for gender-appropriate or gender inappropriate actions, from their parents and later from other agents of socialization. Differential treatment by parents helps them to know that they are ‘boy’ or ‘girl’ and therefore to behave accordingly as gender identity is established. Parents enhance the differences through dress, play activities, toys, haircut and the simple chores they assign their boys and girls; which are distinctly different. Children also learn by observing others and imitating appropriate gender-role behaviours. This especially happens when those they observe (models) are reinforced. Beal (1994:70) observes that children copy those whom they admire and would like to resemble.

A widely held view suggests that children acquire their preference for sex appropriate activities by imitating the same sex-parent. Bussey and Bandura (1984, in Bandura & Bussey, 2004:692) posit that when children observed models of their sex collectively exhibiting stylistic behaviours that diverge from those displayed by other-sex models, they patterned their behaviour more after same-sex than they did after other-sex models; and that this occurred irrespective of children’s level of gender constancy. Studies (cf. Bussey & Bandura, 1984; Bussey & Perry, 1982; Perry & Bussey, 1979) show that children will copy a new behaviour if they see several people of the same sex demonstrate it (Beal, 1994:71).
Contradictory research however (cf. Hetherington, 1967; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; and Maccoby, 1980), indicates that children tend to imitate persons who are available for observation, dominant, warm and nurturant toward them; and this need not be the same-sex parent. All they need is some reassurance that a particular model is appropriate. Contemporary social learning theory recognizes that children are not passive imitators of behaviour as traditionally assumed. They pick and choose what to copy such that if a same-gendered adult is doing something different from other adults, the children are unlikely to imitate the behaviour, even if their parent is the ‘odd person out’. Selective cognition and probability assessment by the child go along with imitation (Bussey & Bandura, 1985 cited by Jacklin & Reynolds, 1993:200).

Observing models is seen as a powerful force impelling children to adopt gendered behaviours. Accordingly, boys will model after their fathers if the latter are not only available, but also demonstrate warm emotional relationship with their children. In the absence of this, they may turn to peers or even characters from print or visual media, often a sharp contrast of family or societal expectations. The social learning theory was relevant to this study as it helped underscore the significance of proper role models for children, especially boys, the absence of which may explain the formation of behaviours that are socially regarded atypical.

2.6.1.2 Psychoanalytic Theory

This theory is based on the work of Sigmund Freud. It maintains that a child’s awareness of the differences in boys’ and girls’ genitals is of crucial importance in the development of gender identity. Freud explains that through the process of identification, a child acquired either masculine or feminine behaviours by identifying with the same-sex parent. This, he says, happens during the oedipal (phallic) period (three-six yrs). Of vital importance at this age is the difference between having and lacking a penis. The boy and the girl desire an exclusive relationship with parents of the opposite sex.
The boy views his father as an all-powerful rival for his mother’s affections. He feels hostility toward his father and fears retaliation-castration at the hands of his father for desiring his (father’s) wife. (In Austria of Freud’s time, parents often made explicit threats of castration to prevent masturbation) (vide Siegler et al., 2003:352). The boy resolves the conflict by identifying with his father instead of challenging him. As he strives to be like his father, the boy internalizes his father’s values, beliefs, and attitudes. Conversely, the girl identifies with the mother, though the road is rockier since the mother is not an attractive model, as she lacks a penis.

According to Freud, identifying with the father meant that the boys had to overcome their oedipal fixations on their mothers by internalizing their father’s threat of castration. The male gender identity was therefore one in which identity was achieved at the cost of giving up one’s mother (Brittan, 1989:29). But with father absence having become more common, mothers were left to act on behalf of fathers. Thus instead of a real father-figure, boys identified with the symbolic representation of the father, as interpreted and defined by the mother. In reality, the boy is expected to identify with the abstract qualities associated with masculinity. A mother therefore has a duty to force her son to reject any kind of identification with femininity. In the process, the boy comes to resent woman’s power for forcing him away from his safe ‘habitat’. Based on this argument, it would be unlikely that would boys to pick up female-associated traits and female-associated physical appearance, as defined by their specific societies. In Kenya, plaiting hair, and wearing nail polish, jewelry and other forms of body make-up for example, are regarded exclusively feminine. This points the researcher back to the main question of the study; an investigation of reasons for masculine-atypical behaviour traits among Kenyan boys.

Nevertheless, the psychoanalytic version of the role theory has been most influential in providing the essential ingredient for the socialization thesis, maintaining that gender identity is the product of a developmental process which has its roots in early childhood. Freud’s views have been seen as an important historical backdrop to more contemporary
perspectives. This is regardless the fact that no empirical support was produced, making the theory to be termed as an intriguing misstep.

Whiting in Biller (1974:12), explaining his Status-Envy theory, expounds on the Freudian hypothesis of identification with the aggressor. He contends that the boy will have a masculine identification of the envied parent (father) whom he perceives as having access to more privileges and attractive activities and objects. Through this identification, the child develops a super ego, as well as a masculine identity.

The concept of identification however, does not seem to fully explain the acquisition of gender roles. Maccoby (1980:242) says that if the mother of the child was extremely feminine or the father extremely masculine, the child should be more strongly sex-typed as a result. But she indicates that there is little correspondence between the sex typing of parents and that of their children. Also implicit in Freud’s theory was the notion that identification with same-sex parent occurs in the context of a stable marriage between the biological father and mother (Russell, Mize, & Bissaker, in Smith & Hart, 2004:210), thus failing to account for gender role acquisition in other family types. But more importantly for this study, if all children resolved their identity problems by identifying with parents of the same sex as Freud purports, then this research would be invalidated. However, it is the observation of boys with feminine physical appearance of their own making that drew the interest of the researcher.

2.6.1.3 Social Cognitive Theories

Imitating same-sex models, which is a basic mechanism for sex-role acquisition in social learning theory depends upon their knowing what sex they are in the first place. Two theories that attempt to explain how this comes about, Kohlberg’s Cognitive Developmental Theory, and the Gender Schema Theory form the basis of the next discussion.
Kohlberg’s Cognitive Developmental Theory

This theory reflects a Piagetian framework, based on the idea that children need to possess the intellectual capacity to label themselves as female or male (Lips, 1988:46). Kohlberg (1966) proposes that children actively construct gender knowledge in the same way they construct knowledge about the world (Siegler, et al., 2003:357-358). The argument is that just as children’s understanding of the physical world is limited, so is their understanding of the social world, including their knowledge of the meaning and immutability of gender. Kohlberg specified three stages in the development of a mature understanding of gender:

Stage 1: Young children establish gender identity. By 30 months of age, they learn that they are members of one gender category or the other and begin labelling themselves as either a girl or a boy (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989 in Siegler et al., 2003:358). However, they do not realize that gender is permanent.

Stage 2: The children gain gender stability. At around age three or four years, they realize that gender is stable over time (I am a girl, and will always be a girl). However, they are still not clear that gender is independent of superficial appearance and think that a boy who dons a dress and now looks like a girl has become a girl.

Stage 3: They achieve gender constancy. They get the understanding that gender is consistent across situations between ages five and seven (I am a girl and nothing I do will change that). Kohlberg noted that this is the same age at which children begin to succeed on Piagetian conservation problems.

Once gender constancy is attained, according to Kohlberg, children begin to seek out and attend to same-sex models in order to learn how to behave. Thus, imitation of same-sex models is an important component in cognitive developmental theory, just as it is in social learning theory, but modeling occurs as a result of cognitive change. Based on the cognitive developmental theory, children categorize themselves as male or female as they cognitively mature. Once children have categorized themselves as male or female with
certainty, they will use this as an organizing focus for attaching value to behaviours and thus developing the self concept of gender (Louw, et al., 1998:293). Thus, they are not portrayed as passive, as is the case in the social learning theory, but are seen as actively searching for cues for competent and correct behaviour rather than being passively shaped by environmental forces (Mwamwenda, in Mosetse, 2005:34).

What can be gathered from the explanation is that children should first understand themselves as male or female in order to develop ‘appropriate’ gender roles. The contradiction is the fact that young children begin showing gender based preferences for toys, activities, and playmates long before they have a mature understanding of gender constancy or have begun attending selectively to same-sex models (Siegler, et al.,2003:358).

2.6.1.3.2 Gender Schema Theory

According to this view, sex-typing is derived mainly from gender schematic processing namely, readiness on the part of the child to encode and organize information according to the cultural definition of gender roles (cf. Basow, 1992:125). Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981; Martin, 1993; Martin & Halverson, 1981 in Siegler, et al., 2003:359) offers the view of gender development that is similar to Kohlberg’s but also different in various specific ways. It proposes that children’s intrinsic motivation to acquire gender-consistent interests, values, and behaviour emerges as soon as they can identify their own gender, sometime in the third year - much earlier than Kohlberg thought. It also proposes that children’s understanding of gender develops through their construction of gender schemas - mental representations incorporating everything they know about gender, including memory representations of their own experience with males and females, gender stereotypes transmitted directly by adults and peers, and messages conveyed indirectly through the media. It is worth noting that these schemas are dynamic, changing constantly as children acquire additional gender-related concepts (Ruble & Martin, 1998 in Siegler, et al., ibid).
In accordance with this theory, Sandra Bem (in Baron 1998:331) explains that if a culture emphasizes distinctions between men and women, then children growing up in that culture will learn to process information about themselves, other people, and even things and events according to their perceived gender associations. They develop a gender schema (cognitive framework) that organizes and guides their understanding of information relevant to gender. In the process, children learn the distinctions between males and females as well as the importance attached to these distinctions by their society, and base their own behaviour on their understanding of social expectations.

Siegler, et al., (2003:359), explain that young children begin with a simple in-group gender schema that they use to classify other people as being either ‘the same as me’ or not. A natural motivation for cognitive constancy leads them to prefer, pay attention to, and remember more about others of their own sex. As a consequence, an own-sex schema is formed, consisting of detailed knowledge about how to do things that are consistent with their own gender. Siegler, et al., (ibid) maintain that strong evidence suggests that children tend to prefer and to learn more about entities designated as appropriate for their sex. Simply learning that an unfamiliar object is ‘for my sex’ makes children like it more. Below (fig. 1) is an adopted illustration to show the process of gender self-socialization through which children’s bias to behave in accord with their gender identity leads them to acquire greater knowledge and expertise with gender-consistent entities.
Depending on whether they have strong schema for masculinity or femininity, gender schema theorists opine that children tend to spontaneously organize incoming information about themselves around the notion of gender rather than around other notions, which could lead to stereotypes (Lips, 1988:44).

The socialization thesis seems to assume that gender acquisition is smooth, harmonious and consensual, which is not the reality. This point is well illustrated by Connell who argues that:

“The entire discussion of socialization in the social sciences has been supported by two occupational blindness; the inability of sociologists to recognize the complexities of the person, and the unwillingness of the psychologists to recognize the dimensions of social power. Both groups have been willing to settle for a consensual model of intergenerational transfer - playing down conflict and ignoring violence - for a consensual model of the psychological structure produced” (Connell, 1987:194).
Besides finding it almost impossible to explain exceptions, the socialization thesis cannot account for change, either at the individual or social level. It cannot explain why some males feel uncomfortable to play the game according to the rules.

*It is interesting to note here that this study was confined to individuals who seemed to have developed ‘normal’ gender roles and acted ‘appropriately’ only to change on becoming relatively free young adults.* The following questions can be posed in this context: Could this mean fixation in the identification process, development of a new gender schema, or an inadequate environment? The researcher pursued the last probability. Agents of gender role socialization are a great determinant of the environment offered for individuals to construct their gender. The next immediate discussion therefore, will be on these agents, pointing out specific aspects that would possibly make learning of gender a confusing endeavour.

2.7 SOURCES/AGENTS OF GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION

The major socializing agents in our society seem to be found in the home, school, and church environments. Social scientists consequently believe that the environment shapes the gender differences of our children. These scientists also agree that the process of socialization begins at birth, having greatest influence in childhood, and continues throughout life. During this time we learn the more specific versions of gender role requirements and responsibilities as we change social positions. In addition, we learn to succumb to pressures to conform, even when we do not accept the role definitions that others have for us. This is based on general assumption that gender roles beget societal order. The entire process of socialization is facilitated by language, both overt and covert.

The various agents of socialization, discussed individually in the section that follows, serve to clarify to the child what behavioural norms he or she is expected to adopt. The examination of these agents will help the researcher to understand their influence regarding the roles that children adopt, especially as relates to the Kenyan situation. The
problem arises when the agents fail to play their roles effectively, or when the messages conveyed by the different agents seem contradictory, thus confusing the children.

2.7.1 Parents/Family

The family is the basic unit of society and therefore constitutes the primary socialization of the child. Parents play a key role in the gender development of their children, both by differentially reinforcing their daughters and sons, and by acting as models of sex-typed behaviour (or otherwise). According to Reynolds (1987: 31), parents are influenced in the way they bring up their children by many factors such as:

(a). *Their own childhood and the way they were treated* - if a parent had a happy secure childhood, he/she was likely to be successful in dealing with own children. But if he/she suffered neglect and was ill-treated, he/she was likely to treat the children the same way, or sometimes the reverse overprotecting and spoiling them. Children may decide to rebel against the parents’ values if they perceive that the parents do not love them. Under such circumstances, the socialization process suffers.

(b). *Influence of grandparents or relatives* - if parents are young and unsure about their parenting skills, they may be unable to overcome the interference of well meaning relatives determined to bring up their grandchildren in the way they think best. The interests of parents and those of other relatives may differ, sending mixed messages to the children. This may result in an identification problem especially when the differing issues touch on behaviour expectations for the child.

(c). *Traditional/cultural values* - some parents bring up children trying to maintain the culture they grew up in themselves, expecting them to follow the same way of life that they themselves had. If there is a difference between behaviour expected at home and that expected at school, then the children may develop dual standards.

(d). *The expectations of the community in which they live* - society exerts great pressures upon the way in which we all live and many parents conform to the pattern of those living around them. Outdated behaviour norms may cause resentment and rebellion among the children who are seeking life skills to function properly in the modern society.
(e). *Their own personality traits* - quiet, thoughtful, introverted people tend to produce children who are the same; noisy, extrovert parents often have children with the same characteristics. In cases where the father is quiet and the mother extrovert, boys specifically may have problems defining their masculinity.

(f). *The media* - programmes on television, stories and articles in magazines, and advertising can often give way to a very distorted picture of family life. Parents may strive for unrealistic standards shown by the media leading, to disappointment and ambivalence, especially among the children.

(g). *Practical factors* - things such as family income, housing conditions, working conditions, and state of health, can contribute to the way in which parents treat their children. A boy who feels that his needs are not adequately met at home, for example, or who misses out on the absent father, due to the demands of work, may develop socially disturbing behaviours for lack of a guide, protector, and mentor.

Regardless of which factor has greater effect on the upbringing of children, a great deal of gender-role socialization takes place in the home (McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003 in Weiten, 2007:462). Messages about gender roles continue to be communicated and perpetuated in all families, sometimes in very subtle ways. From the names parents give the children to clothes, toys, games, and hairdo, children learn to associate specific behaviours to different sexes, and thus conceptualize the meaning of boy and girl. Often there is an established set of rules for the child based on sex (sex role) and the aim of the parent is to provide those reinforcements that conduce to the adoption and assimilation of that role. This is necessary in the sense that conception of the self as ‘male or female is important, not only in our interactions with others but also as a central part of our self concept’ (Beal, 1994:11).

Weisner & Wilson-Mitchell (1990 cited by Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:284), posit that parents’ attitudes about gender roles have shown to influence gender roles their children acquire. Parents react negatively to gender-inappropriate behaviour in their children, and fathers are especially likely to punish gender-inappropriate behaviour in their sons. Generally, boys have less leeway to play with ‘feminine’ toys than girls do with
‘masculine’ toys (Weiten, 2007:462). Kite in Unger (2001:222) confirms that both gender-associated traits and gender-related physical appearances are more rigidly defined for males than for females. In concurrence with the argument, Maccoby (1980:239) states that parents provide distinctive environments for boys and girls. She further says that a very young boy who tries on his mother’s high-heeled shoes or puts on a dress or lipstick may be regarded with amused tolerance or gently ridiculed, but such behaviour in an older child is regarded outrageous rather than funny, and that fathers react especially strongly to any such signs of feminine tendencies in their sons. Even the mother’s reaction to a child’s behaviour from an early age gives the child an idea of what the wider world will eventually expect of him or her (stimulus generalization). When the children are old enough to help with household chores, the assignments depend on sex (Cunningham, 2001 in Weiten, 2007:462).

Critics of social learning theory however argue that although parents treat their sons and daughters differently, it does not mean that differential reinforcement is responsible for the behavioural differences between boys and girls. Instead, parents might simply be reacting to sex-typed behaviour of their children rather than causing it (Golombok & Hines, in Smith & Hart, 2004:129). After examining the role of modeling in children’s development of sex-typed behaviour, Maccoby and Jacklin (vide Golombok & Hines, ibid) concluded that the imitation of same-sex parents does not play a major part in this process. They contend that children observe a wide variety of role models in their daily life, not just parents, and that friends in particular appear to be important role models. Basing on the cognitive approach where children are seen to play an active part in their own socialization as male or female, some scholars argue that parents are only one source of gender-related information (Golombok & Hines, ibid).

Criticisms regardless, research has also revealed class and racial differences in the way parents socialize their children. Reid & Paludi (1993 in Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:284) found that middle class parents may allow children to deviate more from traditional gender roles than low class parents. According to Binion (1990 in Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:284), African American families seem to place less emphasis on traditional gender
roles than White American families. Hispanic families encourage traditional gender role behaviour (Weiten & Lloyd, ibid). The next section will discuss the effectiveness of parents in terms of gender socialization of their children.

### 2.7.1.1 Effectiveness of parents/family in gender role socialization

Even as parents endeavour to guide their children to learn appropriate gender roles, it would be wrong to assume that the process is smooth sailing. In the Kenyan context, various family variables such as literacy level, religion, economic income, parenting styles, and family type interact to enhance, impede, or better still, confuse the entire process as they determine how and what is passed on, and the responsiveness of children. These variables affect gender role socialization as discussed briefly below:

- **Literacy level** – based on observation, families in which the literacy level can be termed as low according to Kenyan standards (i.e. do not have high school education) are very keen about societal prescriptions of behaviour. They work to perpetuate traditional gender roles through their children and those others on whom they exert control. More often than not, children from such families are strongly gender-typed. Conversely, children from literate families have greater latitude in the choice of behaviour as parents exude feelings of liberalism. Besides, such families tend to have more exposure to cultures other than their own through travels and work environments which makes them more accommodating and less strict with regard to stereotypic gender roles. Children take advantage of this freedom to enact behaviours that would otherwise be unacceptable in their own cultural settings.

- **Religion** - the family beliefs and religious values too determine what, and the extent to which gender roles are learned. With a population of 34,707,817 people, 78% is labeled as Christian (45% Protestant & 35% Roman Catholic); 10% Indigenous beliefs; 10% Muslim; and 2% Other (http://trocaire.org/wherewework/countryprofile.php?id=50), statistics reveal that
almost the entire population is religious and their interactions with others are
determined by their various beliefs. Christians for example believe that God made
males and females different (Genesis 1:27) for different roles. Strictly religious
families (cardinal faiths) reflect gender typed behaviours which they subscribe to
without question, as doing so would be challenging God. Due to their internalized
faith states, children from such families easily agree with family tradition.

- Economic status - the amount of family income also determines learning and
  enactment of gender roles. Poor rural dwellers adopt traditional gender roles
determined by their parents, while the urban poor at most adopt less distinct
gender roles, especially due to the tough living conditions and the influence of
peer gangs. Because of the unstable living conditions, many poor urban
youngsters take on odd jobs for survival. This may sometimes mean performing
roles culturally not of their own gender. There is more peer influence and less
parental influence among the urban poor living in Kenyan cities slums than the
rural poor. The rich, on the other hand exhibit ‘modern’ gender roles which are
not stereotypical because they have the advantage of choice.

- Parents’ demonstration of authority and leadership - reminding a child that you
  are a benevolent boss emphasizes that you expect to be obeyed. In underscoring
this point, Dobson (2001:233-234) quotes from a letter by a friend who stresses
that ‘…the main thing is that the kids have to know right from the start who’s in
charge’. In many (especially rich) families, children run the show. They
manipulate parents who fail to demonstrate mastery of situations. Parents may
therefore resort to screaming or other indications that they are frustrated and out
of control. Those seeking to sound ‘democratic’ prefer to say that their children
are ‘active’. Such failure to lead may make imparting gender roles difficult for the
family, much as it is the most important institution of gender role socialization. In
an environment devoid of leadership, children often begin to challenge social
conventions and common sense.
• Discipline with love - children need to learn that ‘love can frown’ (Dobson, 2001:232). Many parents today find it difficult to exercise effective and loving discipline. They have moved from punitive rigidity of yesteryears to boundless permissiveness, and now expect their children to be self-disciplined. Only the illiterate and poor parents in rural Kenya still exercise rigidity but with little success. While it is thought that children may reject the influence of their overly strict parents and seek peer support even by breaking family rules (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2001:466), as the case is with the majority of the rural poor in Kenya, lack of parental discipline is not the option. Dobson (2001:229) observes that self-discipline is a worthwhile goal, but it rarely develops through its own initiative. It must be taught. Discipline must be packaged in love to avoid the child interpreting it as hate. When a child insists on breaking the rules, he should be disciplined just enough to make him uncomfortable. In other words, the child must find the discipline unpleasant and aversive. Thereafter, the parent should explain the meaning of the punishment and encourage the child to avoid trouble in the future. Indeed, every child needs the comfort and consistent discipline of rules and consequences (Allender, 2003:35).

According to Melgosa (1997:67), the aim of discipline is not merely to avoid certain behaviour but to promote good behaviour so that young persons can reach self-discipline. Such an environment in the home enhances learning, even of the gender roles. This kind of a balance between punishment and love is a ‘preserve’ of only a few Kenyan families, due to the more immediate and important life issues that demand attention in the clearly capitalistic society.

• Freedom with boundaries - children, especially adolescents crave for freedom and autonomy. They may give the false impression that they are ‘able to face up to life’s difficulties but they are aware of their limitations and often feel confused and insecure. Deep down they are open to help from parents and other adults’ (Melgosa, 1997:27). It is important that as the adolescents are allowed freedom, parents should clearly indicate the confines of this freedom. This helps the
children to know that their parents love them and care for their wellbeing. An environment of trust is thus fostered, making the whole process of communication within the family productive. It is only then that the parents can instruct the children with fair responsiveness expected. Contrary to Beal’s (1994:247) argument that fathers become more controlling and competitive as the boy enters puberty, the situation in Kenya is different. Most communities set boys free on becoming ‘adults’ (e.g. after initiation/circumcision). Unfortunately this is the time they most need guidance as they search for identity in society. According to the researcher, a good number of young Kenyan males are devoid of paternal control, and have generally gone off course in their behaviour displays.

- Firmness and consistency - when parents are certain that their demands are fair, they should remain firm and be consistent to avoid confusing the children. Some parents however, are afraid to make their child uncomfortable or unhappy when misbehaviour has occurred for fear of ‘permanent emotional damage’. Others simply fear to lose the child’s intimacy and respect (Allender, 2003:34). Parents’ tentativeness only works to make the children to push them further. This will result in frustrated, irritated, and ineffectual parents and rebellious, selfish and willful children (Dobson, 2001:232). When goalposts for behaviour are firmly established, children see the seriousness of the instruction given by their parents. They also trust parents to be certain about what they are doing, and become more responsive to parental demands. In this way they are able to adapt to gender roles as the family may prefer.

- Parental modeling - according to Melgosa (1997:29), boys and girls close their ears to advice and open their eyes to example. This is especially true for the adolescent. At this stage in life, they hate insincerity and inconsistency more so from parents whom they always thought were infallible. Russell, et al., (2004:210) posit that children have the power to accept or reject parental behaviour and efforts at socialization or relationship formation. They argue that some of this acceptance and rejection can be best conceived in terms of children
displaying reciprocity, i.e. showing similar behaviour (negative or positive) to that of parents. Thus, what parents show to the children, the children will in turn show to the parents. Parents must therefore be fair and honest, matching their ideas with behaviour.

Furthermore, marital harmony is seen as very important for adolescent discipline (Melgosa, 1997:69). Garbarino (1999:45) for example argues that ‘the abusive father teaches sons some very dangerous lessons about being a man, often lessons that are unconsciously learned’. Unhappy relationship between the husband and wife has largely been related to emotional instability among the children. Emotional instability especially among boys makes them prone to bad influence from peers (Garbarino, 1999:46) and rebellious to the parents. The result may be a display of gender roles atypical to the specific family norms.

- Family type - whether the family is a both-parent or single parent household, too has an effect on the gender role socialization of the children. A single parent household by its structure fosters a parent-child alliance from which the other parent is excluded (Popenoe, et al., 1996:219). In the case where the father is absent, children (especially boys) often do not view their mother as forceful enough to get them doing her bidding (Garbarino, 1999:56). Furthermore, mothers in such families show lower supervision and control over their children than mothers in both-parent families (Hay & Nash, 2004:243). This makes the boys susceptible to external influence from people of their own sex, especially peers. The influence may go against the desire of the parent with regard to the gender role of boys. On the other hand, children from one-parent families are expected to be less stereotyped because the remaining parent probably provides a more androgynous role model (Beal, 1994:81).

From the foregoing, it is evident that the role of parents as a source of socialization is challenging, yet it has increased exponentially, especially due to individualism which has made the extended family system less effective. But with both fathers and mothers now
working outside the home, secondary socialization involving the school, peers, church, media, and in some cases, correctional institutions, has important impact upon children’s understanding of gender roles and personal identity. In extreme cases, secondary socialization has completely replaced primary socialization, thus altogether subsuming the role of parents. It is the observation of such a situation that may have prompted Harris (1995, 1998 & 2000) cited by Parke, et al., (in Smith & Hart, 2005:156) to propose that parents have little influence on children’s behaviour beyond a biological or genetic contribution. He asserts that the peer group is largely responsible for children’s social behaviour. But Rubin et al., (1998 cited by Parke et al., in Smith & Hart, ibid) counter the argument and state that although peer influence increases as children develop, parents continue to play an important regulatory role as gatekeeper and monitor of children’s social choices and social contacts throughout middle childhood and into adolescence. This viewpoint gave strength to the study (though focusing on the father), considering that experiences in childhood have great bearing on adult behaviour.

While most findings are based on societies in the West, parents’ role in socialization in Kenya is equally important, only less documented. Gender-typed roles are more evident in the rural areas where boys and girls are expected each to express themselves thus. Children of less literate parents are seen as more stereotypically gender-typed than of those who are schooled and dwell in urban areas. The explanation is that literate parents often find jobs in places where people from different cultures converge, creating multi-cultural communities. This makes it difficult to instill behaviours that are exclusively of their specific cultures. Besides, the employed parents often do not have much time with their children as much of it is spent at work. Thus, when guidance of the children in socially desired ways is not sufficient, the result may be more disturbing than can possibly be ignored. This is the apparent situation in Kenya. In areas where HIV/AIDS related diseases have wiped out parents, children are also increasingly vulnerable to socially unacceptable behaviour for survival, what with contraction of ‘family’ to nuclear classification only. Such children tend to spend more time with peers who may be experiencing similar difficulties, and so adopt each others’ behaviours (both good and bad).
It is therefore apparent that the family is only one of the sites that form male individuals’ subjectivities and practices. People learn how to become men from a wide range of social environments and practices. The influence of peers will be discussed below.

2.7.2 Peers

Many gender-role stereotypes as well as gender-appropriate and gender-inappropriate behaviours are learned from peers, either in school or any other places of their meeting. Children play and identify more with same-sex peers. Boys often play in large groups and roam farther away from the home while girls prefer small groups and stay near the house (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:284). Boys achieve high status in their groups by engaging in dominant behaviour while girls express their wishes as suggestions. Apparently, boys perceive that acting ‘manly’ among peers will often result in increased social validation or general competitive advantage. The paradox in the current situation is that peer influence seems headed not for the ‘manly’ behaviour manifestations, as society defines them, but for the opposite, thus the investigation.

Boys are more influenced by peers than girls because adult males spend most of their time away at work and so consequently the boys spend more time with females. They therefore rely on male peers to obtain information about the male role in the absence of adult male models (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987 cited by Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:285). The girls however, have greater access to information about the female role from female adults and thus do not need to rely on same-gender peers in the same way as boys do. It is worth noting that some gender peers may be even more influential than parents (Maccoby, 1990 cited by Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:283).

The researcher’s experience with primary school children in Kenya led to her understanding that the younger children were very gender sensitive. Girls, for example, could not hold hands with boys during Physical Education (PE) time when the instructor required them to make a circle. There were always two gaps in the circle, between the group of boys and that of girls. When the children were asked to form groups of twos or
threes, the groups were distinctly boys’ or girls’, not unless the instructor insisted on a mix, to which they complied with observable discomfort. Ordinarily, girls keep the company of fellow girls and boys that of fellow boys, and there are exclusively girls’ games and boys’ games.

Peer influence is also evident in many Kenyan high schools that are single-sex and especially, boarding. In such institutions, students spend more time with their friends than parents, and even teachers, and in the process gender-related information is exchanged. Interestingly, the information learned (a blend) does not represent any specific cultural group, due to the multi-cultural school setting. Moreover, not only peers influence formation of roles in schools. There are other factors too, examined in the next section that looks at the school as a whole.

2.7.3 Schools

More often than not, schools perpetuate social gender roles. While it is tricky for schools to provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls, as most education policies stipulate, it is even more difficult to give equal treatment to the two sexes. The books that children read have likely influence on their ideas about what is suitable behaviour for males and females (cf. Diekman & Murnen, 2004; Schau & Scott, 1984). Males and females are portrayed in different ways, for example male characters are shown as clever, heroic, adventurous, while females are depicted as victims in the male dominated world, performing domestic chores. Teacher treatment of boys and girls also tends to emphasize the differences, giving the impression that sex is a relevant basis for classifying people. Teachers have been found, without being conscious, to give more attention to boys as girls remain less visible (cf. AAUW Educational Foundation, 1992; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). As youngsters progress through school, they are often channeled into career directions considered appropriate for their own sex (Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:285).

In the Kenyan situation, these differences are evident at different levels. In co-educational primary schools, chores are assigned according to sex, for instance, girls sweep and mop
the classrooms while boys pick up rubbish or weed flower beds. There is also observed
difference in the punishments given to boys and girls, for example, before caning was
outlawed, boys would be caned on the buttocks but girls on the palms. In high schools,
girls may keep long hair with minimal adornment but boys must keep their hair short and
wear no adornments. At the high school which our son attends, for example, girls are
allowed to wear small studs on their ears but boys with pierced ears are practically not
admitted.

Schools therefore help, not just to teach the children that boys and girls are different (i.e.
acknowledge beauty for girls and not for boys), but also indirectly perpetuate inequality
between the two sexes (through school activities and career orientations). Both sexes
learn that boys are superior (strong) while the girls are inferior (weak). With this kind of
background, it is surprising that information acquired on some general variables that
distinguish boys and girls is not fully internalized and some male youngsters take on
female variables as soon as they get the freedom to do so. This may indicate discontinued
reinforcement upon leaving school.

2.7.4 The media

The media, both visual and auditory, play a major role in socialization of children,
especially in the fast-paced economy where parents are quite busy making money at the
expense of time with their children. Various kinds of media have replaced the parents in
the children’s lives, taking on not only the role of entertainment but information as well.
Differential treatment of the sexes in the media is not limited to numerical
representations. Portrayals of males and females tend to be highly stereotypical in terms
of appearance, personal characteristics, occupations, and the nature of the roles they play
(Siegler et al., 2003:355). With time, even these portrayals have become increasingly
confusing. Initially the TV signalled clear messages of what it meant to be male or
female, irrespective of negative stereotypes against women. What was shown basically
reinforced messages that the children got about gender roles from other sources. Males
tended to be assertive, tough and aggressive while women were weak, dependent and
physically attractive; and the roles of presenters, directors, producers, sound recordists and camera operators were dominated by males (Garrett, 1987:34). TV commercials were even more stereotyped, showing women worrying about trivial matters like laundry and cleaning products. Men appeared as bold outdoorsmen or energetic sports fans (Weiten, & Lloyd, 2003:286). Overall, women were depicted as inadequate, if they were not beautiful or attached to a man.

Most video games continue to reflect a hypermasculine stereotype featuring search-and-destroy missions, fighter pilot battles, and male sports (Lips, 1997). A great majority of those few directed at girls are highly stereotypic (shopping and Barbie games). Also music videos frequently portray women as sex objects and men as dominating and aggressive. Currently however, there is increasing acknowledgement that women are no longer what they were in the past, and the film industry is slowly yielding. One such recognition is depicted in the action game series *Tomb Raider* (i-iv) where the star, Lara Croft, a woman, is the most popular character. On the screen she wields amazing physical prowess and multiple firearms, and is capable of any physical activity demanded by the game’s incredible situations. Flanagan (2007:126) describes her as having superhuman traits. Teenage and youthful boys enjoy the game a lot. Since observation is a powerful method of acquiring information and these portrayals appear to influence viewer’s attitudes about gender, it can rightly be stated that it is no wonder that the males are getting mixed messages about the women who are traditionally believed to be weak.

The current portrayal of the male gender in the media is no less confusing, considering the outward physical appearance. Spotting all kinds of hairstyles (most being feminine) and heavily adorned, these are the models that dominate TV as successful in their careers, especially sport, music, and theatre. Youths get the feeling that success is a product of that kind of appearance, ‘so go for it’. It is the ‘in-thing’ and quite attractive. This sharply contrasts the other media messages, and those from family and school, which are often stereotypic, hence the call to appreciate that the male gender identity is in crisis. Nevertheless, one would expect boys to exhibit behaviours that outwardly portray them as men, at least, and to avoid association with the negatively portrayed gender, not unless
by so doing they wish to defy the stereotypes and show sympathy with the female person. Next is an examination of how the church impacts on the gendering process.

2.7.5 **The church**

In its role in socialization, the church helps to perpetuate the submissive nature of the female person. Christian, Muslim or any other religious organizations support power and leadership in the hands of men. However, when it comes to other aspects of gender roles, religious groups do not follow one script. Even among the Christian congregations that allegedly constitute about 80% of the entire Kenyan population, for example, many differences exist as much between as within them.

When the expectations of the church agree with those of the other agents of socialization, it becomes a lot easier to give direction to the developing individuals. In reality, the opposite is true. Even more complex is the differing expectations within the single religious organization in response to the changing social roles. Some churches invalidate and counter the traditional gender norms while others, especially those with traditional African inclinations, extol them. The easily observed difference within and between churches is the dress code. Individuals to be socialized find themselves in the mix and out of frustration take to behaviours that are neither here nor there. In addition, most youths find some church doctrines pertaining to outdated behaviour. It is the male group of these individuals that constitutes the researcher’s interest in this study.

2.7.6 **Language as a source of gender role socialization**

Values of any given culture are perpetuated by, and among different generations through language, either overtly or covertly. This is affirmed by Davies’ description of how a child learns as follows:

“Much of the adult world is not consciously taught to the children, is not contained in the content of their talk, but is embedded in the language, in the discursive practices and the social and narrative structures through
which the child is constituted as a person, as a child and as a male or female” (in Jackson & Scott, 2002:281).

Basically, adults require children to adopt their linguistic practices, not just for the child’s own benefit, but as a way of confirming the rightness of the world as they understand it. There is specific language reference to males and females, although masculine nouns and pronouns have traditionally been used in situations where the gender of the subject(s) is unclear or variable, or when the group being referred to contains members of both sexes. For example, “...all men are created equal...”, ‘men’ is used in the context to include both males and females. In recent decades however, scholars have considered the way they express gender identities and relationships in response to feminist outcry. Most English language readers now no longer understand the word ‘man’ to be synonymous with ‘people’, hence gender has to be expressed clearly and accurately in specific ways. ‘He’, ‘she’, and ‘it’ are pronouns used to designate masculine, feminine, and non human (neutral nouns) respectively, while the use of masculine pronouns (he, his, him) as the ‘default’ in situations where the referent could be either male or female, as was the case in the past, is now considered unacceptable. This is because that kind of language is viewed as gender biased.

Consequently, children are socialized into language that is gendered and by it know how to refer to a male or female subject. Waksler contents that until children have accepted the terms of reference embedded in the language, they are potentially a disruptive force, undermining what adults claim is ‘obvious’ and ‘known’ to ‘everybody’ (vide Jackson & Scott:280).

Nouns such as ‘chairman/chairlady’, ‘policeman/policewoman’, ‘steward/stewardess’, ‘sir/madam’, ‘businessman/businesswoman’, etc. are used in reference to males and females respectively. These seem to be largely in use, regardless of the effort to use more inclusive terms such as ‘chairperson’, ‘police officer’, ‘business person’, and the like in a bid to reflect gender equality. Nevertheless, language is clearly seen to portray differences between females and males, and children learn to behave likewise. As Hare-
Mustin and Marecek (in Herrmann & Stewart, 1994:51) rightly argue, language, although a medium of cognitive life and communication, is not simply a mirror or a neutral tool. Instead, it imposes a point of view not only about the world to which it refers, but toward the use of the mind in respect to this world. In appropriating their specific language therefore, children acquire gender roles may be classified as ‘traditional’ or ‘modern’.

What emerges from the discussion of sources of gender role socialization, is a picture of a social situation depicting contest between what has been (or should be), and what is. What the family and the media portray, for example, are in contradiction at times, and most of what the school portrays is outdated. Construction of ‘appropriate’ gender roles is difficult, due to the contradicting messages available to the young individuals. The result is a semblance of identity disorder.

All along, the discussion has tended to bring out how both male and female children know and adopt their gender roles. But as has been mentioned earlier, there is an observation of failure of the male youths to uphold even the most ordinary variables of that identify males, thus prompting this research. This is especially based on the already alluded to social view that masculinity is superior to femininity. In the next section, masculinity which is of main interest in this study, will be examined.

2.8 **MASCULINITY**

Stated simply, *masculinity* is male character. The adjective ‘masculine’ means ‘manly’. The term refers to more than just the biological sex of a male person. It also entails specific characteristics and roles which are culturally determined, and which are different from those prescribed for females. But Williams (1995:109) asserts that masculinity is an extremely elusive concept (as femininity for that matter). She contends that the outpouring of interest in the subject has seen the formation of the ‘men’s movement’ that offers seminars, literature, and ‘wildman’ retreats to help men get in touch with their masculinity. But this has not helped, and masculinity has become an increasingly
confusing and obscure notion. Worse still, there is little consensus among social scientists about what it means (Williams, 1995:111).

Arguments abound that masculinity is a term that refers to a specific gender identity, belonging to a specific male person, and that there are several masculinities determined by prevailing circumstances. Connell (1995:214), for example, has argued that “there is no single or monolithic form of masculinity and different forms of masculinity do not name fixed types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships”. Morrell (2001:7) in apparent concurrence, adds that “masculinities are fluid and should not be considered as belonging in a fixed way to any one group of men, rather, that they are socially and historically constructed in a process which involves contestation between rival understandings of what being man should involve”. According to a journal article by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:835) entitled, Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept, international research has strongly confirmed the initial insight that gender orders construct multiple masculinities. Even in a culturally homogeneous country such as Chile, there is no unitary masculinity, since patterns vary by class and generation. Even in Japan, another famously homogeneous country, the concept reflects the “emergence of diverse masculinities”, (vide http://www.usm.maine.edu/crm/faculty/jim/hegeminic.pdf). Departing from these arguments, masculinity continues to be identified with certain specific characteristics. The fact that there are many between and within cultural differences does not invalidate cross-cultural similarities. Anthropologists hold the view that there is a core set of activities or traits which are transculturally associated with men, and these define masculinity. A good illustration is by David Gilmore’s work, Manhood in the making (1990).

Levine (1998:13) identifies seven areas of masculinity in general culture as described by Chafetz. These widely used cultural and psychological characteristics associated with men are as outlined:

- Physical - virile, athletic, strong, brave. Unconcerned about appearance and aging;
• Functional - breadwinner, provider;
• Sexual - sexually aggressive, experienced. Single status acceptable;
• Emotional - unemotional, stoic;
• Intellectual - logical, intellectual, rational, objective, practical;
• Interpersonal - leader, dominating, disciplinarian, independent, individualistic (applies to western societies);
• Other personal characteristics - success-oriented, ambitious, proud, egotistical (applies to some societies), moral, trustworthy, decisive, competitive, uninhibited, adventurous.

A study by Michael Galbraith (vide Williams, 1995:112) who administered the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (measures masculinity and femininity based on thirty personality traits) on men in predominantly female occupations, found that men in nontraditional work retain traditional components of their masculinity. This study discredited the stereotypes about men in female occupations that held otherwise. Simply put, the men were found to be no less masculine. Findings of the study by Galbraith further confirmed the suggestion that the study of masculinities is a study of power relations, and the different masculinities only stand in different relations to power (Pease, 2000:32). What the study did not reveal however, is the reproduction of masculinity in society, or the meaning of masculinity in men’s lives (Williams, 1995:112-113).

Although masculinity may have roots in genetics (hormone testosterone) as earlier discussed (cf. section 2.4.1 on biological gender differences), and justified by some common aspects to its definition across cultures, its expression is really culture-determined in time and space. According to sex role theory, men take on characteristics required of them by their occupations and by their role as father in the family; they are moulded by society to conform to expectations embedded in these positions. This theory underscores the fact that society (not the individual) produces masculinity (Williams, 1995:113-114), although men participate in that process. Masculinity therefore is an aspect of male individual character or personality that is institutionalized in the social structure.
Research also shows that masculinities are not simply different but also subject to change. In South Africa for example, Morrell (2001:3) notes that the changes in the political and economic systems since the 1990s have also seen changes in gender relations, even in masculinity. The achievement of majority rule signalled a form of black masculinity different from the ‘violent masculinity’ of the apartheid period. Circumcision among black communities of South Africa, for example, places young men on the path to marriage, homestead, headship, and fatherhood; a new masculinity defined by different functional and interpersonal characteristics. But in areas where living conditions are deplorable, young men develop some sort of ‘gang masculinity’ to fulfil needs for economic livelihood, affirmation and identity. Thus, masculinity in South Africa can be construed as constructed in the context of class, race and other factors which are interpreted through the prism of age.

Masculinity seems affected by the ‘multiple self’ that is invented at various levels of interaction with others. Current observations and research indicate that there are differing conceptions of masculinity among various ethnic/racial groups (Levant, Majors, & Kelly, 1998), religious groups (Brod, 1987), age cohorts (Cournoyer & Mahalik, 1995), affectional/sexual reference groups (Harrison, 1995), and geographical regions (Good et al., 1995). Doyle (in Cleaver, 2002:188) rightly observes that one cannot effectively evaluate masculinity without the broader social structures and institutions within which individuals operate. The point already made and being emphasized here is that masculinity is so culturally variable and so context dependent to the extent that Morrell (2001:7) believes ‘only its connection to physical possession of male genitalia is uncontestable’. But in one way or another, male individuals are expected to develop a masculine identity within the context of their social-cultural environment. The process has to begin early in life. The next section will explore how masculinity is understood to develop.
2.8.1 Development of masculinity

We seem to live in a male-oriented society where ‘tomboys’ are at least tolerated while ‘sissies’ are ridiculed and rejected (cf. Garrett, 1987; Johnson, 1986; Maccoby, 1980; Weiten & Lloyd, 2003). The male role is more clearly defined than the female role such that the boy faces greater pressure to learn what is, and what is not, expected of him. Social scientists Deborah David and Robert Brannon (in Levine, 1998:145) give the following four rules for establishing masculinity:

- **No Sissy Stuff** - anything that even remotely hints of femininity is prohibited. A real man must avoid any behaviour or characteristic associated with women;
- **Be a Big Wheel** - masculinity is measured by success, power, and admiration of others. One must possess wealth, fame and status to be considered manly;
- **Be a Sturdy Oak** - manliness requires rationality, toughness, and self reliance. A man must remain calm in any situation, show no emotion, and admit no weakness;
- **Give ‘em Hell** - men must exude an aura of daring and aggression, and must be willing to take risks, to ‘go for it’ even when reason and fear suggest otherwise.

But learning this role is no mean task. Jungian psychologists Guy Coerneau and Eugene Monick argue that the establishment and maintenance of the male identity is more delicate and fraught with complication than that of the establishment and maintenance of the female identity (vide [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculine-psychology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculine-psychology)). This group of psychologists suggests that this may be because males are born of the female body that is a different gender from themselves. Females on the other hand, are born from a body that is the same gender as their own; therefore experience a smoother identity establishment. In apparent harmony with this view, Camille Paglia is quoted to have said:
“A woman simply is, but a man must become. Masculinity is risky and elusive. It is achieved by a revolt from woman, and it is confirmed only by other men” (http://www.masculinevirtues.com/).

According to Paglia, masculinity is not something that is granted by birth but is something that must be earned in adult life. In most African cultures, boys endure painful ordeals in the name of rituals that transform them into men. In recognition of the significance of these rituals, Bly (in Pease, 2000:103) posits that their absence in Western culture is the major reason why men have such difficulty achieving ‘true manhood’; the kind that demands suffering in silence and being brave. In endorsing this position, Arthur Flannigan states that “masculinity is a ‘becoming’, a process as opposed to a perceived feminine ‘being’ or state… it is something to be achieved…” (Brod & Kaufman, 1994: 241). Paradoxically, this process, even within a given cultural setting, is historically variable.

Men in colonial Africa, for example, had to develop a masculine identity in line with the ideals of the colonial masters, which were propagated through institutions like churches, schools and workplaces. As they intervened in politics, religion, legal systems, agricultural regimes, and labour markets, Lindsay and Miescher (2003:13) explain that these European actors in colonial Africa worked to remake men. The types of masculinities promoted by foreign institutions conflicted with those promoted by local institutions, resulting in anxiety. In emphasizing the anxiety, Lindsay and Miescher (ibid) refer to a scene from T.M. Aluko’s novel, One man, One wife, about a church member who reluctantly agreed to send his son to the mission school and exclaimed, ‘But—TEACHER—YOU MUST NOT TURN MY SON INTO A WOMAN!’ Another case of historical variability is that mentioned about masculinity in South Africa during and after apartheid (cf. 2.8 above).

Regardless of the historical period and happenings, one thing seems clear; men, especially of African descent, fear to be women and there is seemingly a constant struggle against any such tendency. If this is the case, then the researcher had a
justifiable task; to try and understand the motive behind the behaviour of young Kenyan males who clearly put the appearance that is generally regarded feminine.

Unfortunately, there is no set or prescribed procedure to become a man, but the determination is a powerful feature of masculinity. Men are not taught so much to be manly but rather not to be feminine. Besides, boys and men are not entirely free to choose what images of masculinity please them. Cultural prescriptions hold sway.

According to psychoanalytic theorists, fathers especially encourage their boys to replace their identification with their mothers in favour of a ‘masculine’ identification (cf. psychoanalytic theory of gender role socialization discussed in the preceding chapter, section 2.6.1.2). Boys come to define masculinity as whatever is not feminine. The greater power of the father makes the boy understand that to be masculine means to be different from and better than women. At this point it is fair to emphasize that a father is important in reproducing and defining masculinity. Thus, if he does not reflect the power, coupled with new challenges to the institution of men, then the boy’s understanding of masculinity may be distorted altogether. And the competing definitions of masculinity have not made things better for the youngster seeking identification. This is the setting in which the entire research was conceptualized.

2.8.2 Masculinity, Expectations, and Risk

Most men feel pressured to act masculine. It seems that there is a pervasive fear among males that the worst possible insult is to be labeled a female. This is because society has taught them that male is superior and to act female, therefore, is inferior. The men feel that they have to prevail in situations that require physical strength and fitness, just like they should in other male-oriented roles. To appear weak, emotional, or sexually inefficient is a major threat to their self-esteem. Standards of masculinity sometimes create stress as men tend to use the schema of what is an acceptable masculine response rather than what is objectively the best response in the situation. It appears that the only
option is to act in a ‘manly’ way regardless of one’s feelings, since acting differently could attract social ‘punishment’. Young men (subjects of this research) behaving like women in the Kenyan context do so at the expense of social comfort.

The need for men to show strength, aggressiveness, and experience is encouraged in boys as they grow up. As a result, coupled with genetic predispositions, more men than women are likely to drink and drive, not to wear seat belts, and to drive fast. These obviously put their lives at greater risk than women. The media also celebrate ‘male’ activities such as admiring guns, fast cars, and the like, which entail certain health risks.

Because men are expected to be strong, they are also less likely to visit their physicians to receive preventive health care examinations, and therefore are more likely to be diagnosed in a later stage of a terminal disease. They visit physicians less because of fear, denial, embarrassment, and a dislike for situations out of their control. Thus, men between ages 25 and 65 are four times more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than women (vide http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculinity).

The pressure brought to bear on men to avoid any behaviour characteristics of the other gender has resulted in homophobia which is expressed in different ways. Masculine psychology (in Wikipedia cited below) describes homophobia as an intense fear and intolerance of homosexuality which is more prevalent in males because male role is rooted in the fear of appearing feminine; and feminine characteristics are mistakenly associated with gay males. According to Kimmel (in Brod & Kaufman, 1994:131), homophobia is a central organizing principle of cultural definition of manhood. It is the fear of men that other men will unmask them, emasculate them, and reveal to them and to the world that they do not measure up; that they are not real men, thus humiliate them. Every year, American men, for instance, die from gay bashing. The victims of such attacks are most often self –identified homosexual males, or those who display what are commonly perceived as effeminate mannerisms often associated with homosexuality. The attacks are perpetrated by self-identified heterosexual males. Guy Corneau, a French-Canadian psychologist, explains that despite Kinsey’s research results (cf. section 2.3.2.1
on homosexuality above); attitudes towards homosexuality have remained hostile. Corneau presumes that Kinsey’s research may have even exacerbated homophobia in the American society (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masculine_psychology).

Another expression of homophobia is noted in heterosexual males being uncomfortable with the idea of appraising the attractiveness of other members of their own gender due to the fear he might be perceived as a latent homosexual. The fear of being seen as a sissy or homosexual dominates the cultural definition of manhood. This starts early in life and comes with a price.

In the need to measure up to the prevailing images of manhood, men have tended to firmly establish, protect and perpetuate their beliefs about what they think man should be and how he should behave. This is regardless the inherent risks, including those mentioned above. The result has been the reinvention of the whole concept of masculinity into patriarchy - a hegemonic form of masculinity. As has become evident throughout the discussion, it is difficult to have a discourse about masculinity independent of femininity, given that the whole issue is a reflection of gender relations. To this Ratele confirms, declaring that:

“Masculinity is, of course, not only about male things, and it is not only about men’s relationships to their bodies and sexuality. Masculinity also constructs the social reality of institutions and the identities of women” (in Morrell, 2001:245).

Unfortunately, this reinvented masculinity instigated feminist reactions, as will be seen in the sections that follow. In the next immediate section, patriarchy will be described and discussed.
2.9 PATRIARCHY

Against the background of a fragile masculinity, the researcher found it necessary to discuss the concept and ideology of patriarchy. This was in view of the fact that patriarchy, which is a facet of hegemonic masculinity, is what stirred up feminist reactions and in the process put the identity of the male individual on the line. It is a ‘facet’ because, as Connell cited by Wetherell and Edley (in a draft paper, 1999) argues, although hegemonic masculinity is centrally connected to the subordination of women, “it is a way of being masculine which not only marginalizes and subordinates women’s activities but also alternative forms of masculinity such as ‘camp’ or effeminate masculinity”. Typically, it also involves the brutal repression of the activities of gay men and their construction as a despised ‘other’ gender. Thus, although large numbers of men benefit from patriarchy, they do not all benefit equally.

Because of the feminist impetus for equality between males and females, the male gender role has become increasingly unclear, causing anxiety and confusion termed ‘masculinity crisis’. The researcher perceived this to be the problem stalking the male youngsters in the Kenyan society, due to the seemingly ‘helpless’ position of adult males at large. The purpose of an exposition on patriarchy in this study was a deliberate endeavour to move beyond just recognition of a plurality of masculinities; which in itself, fails to address the social and political dominion of men over women. Discussion of the facts about patriarchy was meant to highlight the relationship between the ideology and the feminist movements, since these movements were seen to have a bearing on the negotiation of new types of masculinities.

2.9.1 DEFINITION OF PATRIARCHY

The concept and widespread use of the term ‘patriarchy’ grew out of feminist debates about gender in the 1960s and 70s (vide Cranny-Francis et al., 2003:15). According to the paper by Edley and Wetherell (1995), patriarchy replaced the earlier term ‘sexism’,
emphasizing the importance of institutions in gender oppression, rather than individual prejudice. The term can be traced to anthropology when it referred to a kinship system in which the eldest male, sometimes literally the father or patriarch, was vested with authority over other men and over women. Thus, the original meaning of patriarchy was simply ‘rule by fathers’, which implies that, as well as men dominating women, older men could dominate younger men (Pease, 2000:64). But Cranny-Francis et al., (2003:15) posit that in this model, old men held authority, younger males were subservient, and women were excluded. In a similar argument, the term can be traced from a time in history when social scientists used the concept to refer to a system of government in which men used their position as heads of households to rule societies (Walby, 1990:19).

Early feminist theorists used the term strategically to highlight men’s dominance of women in the private (the family) and the public (work, politics, culture) spheres. Now however, it is generally used to refer to the systematic structural differences in the cultural, economic and social position of men in relation to women (Cranny-Francis et al., ibid). Like masculinity, there is no singular form of patriarchy, since it manifests itself differently in different social and historical contexts. This implies different definitions of the term. But for the purpose of this study, patriarchy was taken to mean a social system in which structural differences in privilege, power and authority are vested in masculinity and the cultural, economic and/or social positions of men (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003:15); or simply, a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby, 1990:20). According to Pease (2000:14), there is a distinction between the institutionalized patriarchal system in which men gain benefits through their structural advantages in employment and control over social institutions; and the personal patriarchal system in which men actively make various types of claims upon women at home or elsewhere. This study considered patriarchy from both angles.

Patriarchy is reflected in various forms at both individual and corporate levels of gender interaction within society. Walby (1990:5) identifies six structures that underpin the operations of patriarchy as the following:
• The mode of production that allocates household duties to women;
• Structures within the economic sphere that discriminate against women by giving them less opportunities than men for equal, or allocating them only low-paying and unattractive work;
• The state as an institution that enforces and maintains patriarchy;
• Male violence against women practised at an individual level and reinforced through lack of intervention;
• Cultural institutions such as religion, educational institutions and the media that create particular roles for women; and
• Sexuality as a form of female control by men.

Through the above structures, patriarchy becomes a social arrangement in which men hold economic and material power (Basow, 1992:98). It would appear that women experience patriarchy in all sectors of their lives, owing to its many faces. Examples of domains in which women in Kenya experience patriarchy include the following:

• Social - socialization of boys and girls in the family is different. Boys and girls are taught to behave differently, and society is keener on boys than on girls.

• Sexual - men and women are expected by society to behave in ‘manly’ and ‘womanly’ ways. Men in the Kenyan society are allowed by culture and religion (Islam) to take on several sexual partners but not women. Bigamy is an offense only enforced in the favour of men. Sexual abuse is a common way men use to affirm their power over women.

• Religion - religious practices often restrict women to subordinate positions. Religion underscores the requirement that women be submissive to men.

• The economy - most allocation of jobs differs on the basis of gender, and so the wages. Employers are hesitant to hire women in key positions due to higher
likelihood of absence from job for maternal-related and nurturance-related reasons.

- **Politics** - there are fewer women in politics than men, and those who manage an entrance often occupy subordinate positions. Of the 210 members of parliament of Kenya, only 17 are women, this being the highest number in the country’s history. Of the current 33 ministries, only two women hold full ministerial posts. (General elections at the end of this year might see a change due to increasing appreciation of women contribution in development).

- **Traditional** - women endure mistreatment in the name of culture and tradition. In some Kenyan communities, for example, wife beating is hailed as a form of ‘discipline’ and the woman cannot complain about it. She is expected to stay in an abusive relationship because moving out is anti-culture. She often bears the stigma due to the assumption that she is responsible for a broken marriage.

- **Within the family** - the extended family (in most Kenyan communities) largely determines and controls what constitutes a wife, mother, and woman. In the event that her husband dies before her, for example, the family invokes traditional mores often to deny her rightful say on matters of inheritance. Furthermore, even though it is legal that girls have the right to inheritance of family property, male members of the family often collude to defraud them of this right. This is on the premise that they get absorbed into the families of marriage.

It is apparent that patriarchy is entrenched at all levels of human gender relations, and that it is accepted as the norm; making awareness of its oppressive effects almost completely impeded. Thus, gender relations are intertwined with the operation of power, that masculinity and femininity can best be understood from that point of view. The safe camouflage of patriarchy in the societal euphemisms, of masculinity and femininity, ensures enduring oppressive power practices by dominant groups, and acceptance by subordinate groups. In fact, the concept is so rooted that it appears to have assumed
ideological status. In the section that follows, the researcher illustrates through discussion, how patriarchy manifests as an ideology.

2.9.2 PATRIARCHY AS AN IDEOLOGY

The term ideology is used in different contexts to mean philosophy, beliefs, principles, ideas, creed, dogma, or line of thought. Considering patriarchy as an ideology, the term was used in this text to refer to the way in which ‘relations of domination between social groups are structured by means of various strategies’ (Visagie, in Mosetse, 2005:41).

An ideology may be developed to pursue a necessary goal. But when the ideology assumes a greater significance than the goal, problems arise. For example, one may have an honest ideal to balance the relations of power by fighting against women’s subordination. But when the idea becomes an obsession, it is likely to blur the very purpose for it. The implication is that once this happens, any measure will be undertaken to pursue the idea. Van der Walt (in Mosetse, ibid) argues that by so doing, “the idea is now no longer in service of man - man is in service of the idea”. Nothing has been so true about hegemonic masculinity, the wider sense of patriarchy.

Trigiani, in her article titled, Masculinity-Femininity: Society’s Difference Dividend (http://web2.airmail.net/ktrig246/out-of-cave/mf.html), clearly points out that hegemonic masculinity and subordinate femininity are not conspiracies, but rather result from widely accepted ways of thinking that define male dominance as fair, reasonable, and in the best interest of society. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005:832), in apparent agreement, argue that hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities in the sense that “it embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men”. What can be seen therefore, is a deliberate effort to normalize the hegemonic type of masculinity through different applications. Hegemony does not mean violence, although it could be supported
by force; it means ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell & Messerschmidt, ibid).

From its original meaning, (the term ‘patriarchy’ is ‘father right’ in Latin language (cf. Mackenzie, 1992:22), that gave men a position of leadership as fathers of society; the concept appears to have reinvented itself, subordinating all the other forms of interaction. As men assumed leadership roles, they firmly established themselves in (and did everything to protect) what became a superior and prestigious position in society. Women were ordinarily relegated to the subordinate alternative. In the process, patriarchy has achieved the status of a hypernorm as seen from the characteristics of an ideology summarized as follows:

- An ideology assumes an almost ‘religious status’, as it serves its idolized norm or idea.
- Reality is viewed by those in the grip of an ideology in a reduced manner-part of reality is seen as the ‘total reality’, ultimately leading to a ‘tunnel vision’, which ignores a certain state of affairs whilst making use of methods of coercion and oppression.
- It adversely affects every aspect of human existence, every facet of human culture, every structure of society, which implies that it brings about the domination of some people by others.
- The ideological justification of an idea or objective ignores other valid claims and interests and does not tolerate criticism.
- It uses every means of power (end justifies the means) in its pursuit of supremacy.
- It adjusts norms to suit its purpose; and
- It uses certain strategies to sustain its structures of domination (vide Mosetse, 2005:41-42).

For their direct relevance to this study, only the last two characteristics, i.e. *adjusting norms to suit its purpose* and, *use of certain strategies to sustain structures of domination* will be discussed. This will be done as an illustration of the operations of patriarchy that
have attracted opposition in the form of women’s movements and feminism. Specific highlights regarding application to the Kenyan context will be made.

2.9.2.1 **An ideology adjusts its norms to suit its purposes**

It is important to remember that gender constructions are embedded in a dialectic. Lindsay and Miescher (2003:2) rightly argue that the way men and women see and represent themselves, and the manner in which gender relations are organized and promoted, are shaped by larger social-economic, cultural, and religious transformations, which have their course and receptions directed by the notions of gender. In a patriarchal system, these transformations are induced to secure the underpinnings of the system; and coated with socio-economic, cultural and even philanthropic arguments, to legitimate them. This is an undertaking meant to regulate the behaviour of gendered groups (within the patriarchal system), in order to suit its ideal.

Under normal circumstances, patriarchy gives the impression that it subscribes to the norms of fairness, impartiality, tolerance, and absence of prejudice. However, all are based on the understated representation of patriarchy where use of selective legislation and administration against women is institutionalized and hence justified. Although Kenya had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women way back in 1984, for example, traditional forms of discrimination had persisted. The committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against women only found a window of hope when the new government came in place in December 2002. In other words, patriarchy ensures that whatever threatens to reduce the privilege of the dominant power - the man, is not implemented even though it may be legislated. The dominant group makes superficial changes to accommodate the demands of marginalized groups, but in essence works to hold onto its privileges. It only adjusts its relationship but does not reform it, thus nothing really changes.
One of the most contentious issues in the Draft Constitution published by the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) in 2002 was the intent to repeal the provision in the constitution that reserved the right to discriminate women in matters of customary and personal laws. The draft provided that girls be given inheritance by their parents, including land. The Draft Constitution was however rejected by majority vote in the referendum held in November, 2005. It became evident that patriarchy has such ardent followers (beneficiaries) who would do everything to retain its institutionalization, both on paper and in practice.

It would ordinarily follow that considering the powerful position of the men and the ‘protection’ of it through systems of political and social government, boys (privileged by birth) would be only too happy to model the hegemonic masculinity and perpetuate patriarchy. However, this is not completely the case with the research subjects who flout crucial tenets of masculinity. Meanwhile, those who are subordinated have started to speak up for their rights, resulting in apparent cracking and caving in of walls that initially shielded and made secure the male person and identity. The previously superior gender has therefore been thrown into panic.

Besides shifting goalposts for its own benefit as discussed above, patriarchy also has specific strategies that are used to perpetuate domination in Kenya, as may apply wherever the system is in operation. The next section therefore will examine the various strategies and their relevance to the Kenyan situation.

2.9.2.2 Patriarchy and strategies to sustain structures of domination

In a patriarchal system, men seem particularly resistant to the idea of adapting to the changing role of women. To rationalize this position, certain strategies are put in place in an effort to secure and establish male power. Such is the nature of an ideology; and the strategies used include legitimation, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation, and externalization, which are discussed below.
• **Legitimation**

The domination of women by men is perpetuated and portrayed as legitimate, and in the best interests of society. This is based on rational, traditional and charismatic grounds (Mosetse, 2005:47). A male leader, for example, is presumed to be divinely ordained and to have God-given abilities (vide Poponoe, 1998:350). Viewed in that regard, the leader’s activities cannot be questioned even though they be oppressive, much so to the women. In this context it is thus legitimate that women take their positions below those of men, where their abilities are not acknowledged. Issues that are headed by women are, in general, termed less serious.

Legitimation of women to subordinate positions is also pegged on the Christian norm of ‘total commitment’, and justified through the use of social relations and institutions. Since women are expected to be totally committed to their families, and submissive to their husbands (according to scriptures - Ephesians 5:22-23), it is only natural that they be responsible for family welfare. This requirement limits women’s chances for employment. Many employers in Kenya, for example, would prefer men to women employees for the mere fact that women have a higher probability of being absent from work, due to childbearing, childcare or other family nurturing-related reasons. They are more likely to ask for leave to take their sick family members to hospital, and so on. Given the nature of a capitalistic system to which Kenya strongly subscribes, people want to make money at the expense of everything and anything else. This state of affairs technically locks many employment doors in the face of qualified women, a far cry from the acknowledgement that women tend to perform better on certain jobs. Quantity, not quality time input, seems to hold sway. It is the way things work in a competitive economy.

• **Dissimulation**

This term refers to the use of domineering strategies to deceive, conceal, and obscure the truth. An example of such a strategy is displacement, where women are portrayed as
possessions of men because men pay bride price (therefore in a way buy the women). The UN Settlements Programme (UN Habitat 2003) report holds that the commercialization of dowry has contributed to the treatment of women as men’s property. On personal levels, some women endure all sorts of abuse without telling. The buyer of an article has authority over it, and knows how best to use it. Besides, the portrayal of women as mothers, nannies, cooks, queens, fairies and witches indoctrinates children about the role of the woman; one that is not too complicated and sometimes not profitable to society. The contribution of women to the society is consequently downplayed. In various ways, patriarchy makes all to believe that women do not have the ability to handle serious society issues. The Affirmative Action (2001) in Kenya, for example, drew mixed reactions, which mystified men who complained that ‘serious political functions were in danger of being hijacked by a small minority of noisy women’ (Daily Nation report, Nov.5, 2001).

Language too is a tool of patriarchy. On the whole, it has a way of exerting domination of men over women, describing the former as active and the later as passive. Women are frequently compared to plants and food (e.g. flower, petal, wallflower, honey, sweetie pie etc). It could appear that the men appreciate the beauty in the women, but underneath is the idea that women are just fragile consumables. Men and women are both compared to animals, but men are invariantly compared to strong, aggressive animals like lions or tigers, while women are compared to domestic or baby animals like cows or chicks, suggesting their helplessness and need for protection (Garrett, 1992:36). Spender (in Garrett, ibid) argues that language in many societies is not neutral, but man-made: the deliberate creation of males. Underlying this kind of language is euphemisation, another dissimulation strategy. Coetzee, (in Mosetse, 2005:48) further observes that the idea that women are perceived as the best teachers due to their nurturance, is used to make them accept the role of an ordinary classroom teacher and not aspire to be a leader in society. Given all the presented arguments, it would be unnatural that women rise up in opposition if the underlying meanings of certain actions and language, which are inherently patriarchal, are not understood. These meanings are slowly being unveiled, therefore protests, even though they are still on a minimal scale.
• **Unification**

This term is used in the context in which a collective male identity excludes all women. In Kenya, for instance, the council of elders, among the communities that have this social ‘institution of government’, comprises men only. When decisions have to be made pertaining important matters of the community, their own needs (namely male) are well taken care of over those of women. These are the very same people who locally arbitrate between disagreeing couples. It is highly unlikely that fair judgements can be handed down. Even in cases where aggrieved women choose to take matters to court, for example, the courts often prefer that ‘domestic cases’ as they are called, be settled outside the courts. In many disputes, only women who are well informed about their rights, and have financial backing, may move a notch higher, hire lawyers and therefore obtain fair hearing. Such women are ordinarily few. The remaining majority lose their cases before they are actually launched, basically because they are women. This state of affairs is encouraged by the traditional setting in which all resources belong to the men, including the women themselves together what they earn. However, this strategy is fast losing ground, as many females gain education, economic empowerment, and emancipation from many social practices that initially served to restrict and constrict women’s lives for the benefit of the men.

• **Fragmentation**

Sometimes fragmentation is also used to perpetuate power relations in society. An example is the use of negative (near abusive) expressions to describe groups that effectively strive for the rights of women. The Kenya Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), a body which articulates the rights of abused women and children and sometimes offers them free legal representation, was once referred to by a renown leader as ‘women without husbands; hell bent on breaking homes’. It is no wonder that the Equity Bill and the Affirmative Action Bill (first tabled in 1999 and 1997 respectively) were both rejected during this time. The reason given was that women were well represented on all forums by men. Besides, those who advocate against female genital mutilation (FGM) are
considered by practising communities as people with loose morals, since women are seen to have no control over their sexuality. Further still, the Ministry of Gender and Sports is regarded as the least important because it was established to deal with gender issues (which have been misconstrued to mean women’s issues), apart from sports.

From the foregoing paragraph, one comes face to face with examples of occurrences within a patriarchal society where sexist pronouncements by leaders (read male) are the norm rather than the exception. One recent remark that stood out as sexist, drawing loud denunciations from women across the country, was made by a cabinet minister in an outraged (and out of context) response to an envoy’s allegations about corruption in government. According to the minister, the mention of corruption was not a discovery. It was like ‘raping a woman who was already too willing’. Behind such a statement is the replayed misuse of power to silence and subjugate women, a key characteristic of patriarchy.

- **Externalization**

Externalization occurs when power relations are portrayed and kept intact through the use of customs, traditions and history to guarantee rigidity that is unlikely to be disrupted. In some traditional Kenyan communities for instance, women were forbidden to eat certain parts of an animal (which happen to be the most nutritious and delicious), chicken or eggs. The modern woman has gone against the grain, but not without constant reminders from her male counterparts that it was taboo. It appears that the main idea was to ensure that the women remained weak and therefore dependent on the men, a clear recipe for domination. In some church organizations in Kenya today, women do not hold leadership positions, and they are not allowed to speak in the congregation. The best they can do is pray, and do so in secret and silence, or better still, in their homes. Among the Muslim communities, married women are required to cover the better parts of their bodies, head to toe, allowing only the eyes and nose out. The common reason given is that covering prevents the woman from being admired by other men, other than her husband. This is regarded as in order because the religion sanctions it, tropical weather conditions not
withstanding. Thus, women are nothing of their own, and can do nothing for their own benefits and in their own rights. Often, they are portrayed as (and forced by society to be) powerless objects for men’s gratification.

All the strategies to sustain patriarchy are so subtly employed, coated with religious, cultural or organizational reasons to make them appear not only normal and harmless, but also ‘beneficial’ for society at large. Recognition of the use of institutions to oppress women is slowly increasing, summoning friction and instabilities in gender relations. Masculine anxieties are due to men waking up to the realization that some aspects of gender relations that had become givens, ordinary, and therefore taken for granted, are now being interrogated.

There is an undeniable shift in the perception of ‘taken-for-granted’ gender relations. Women appear to demonstrate that they have taken in enough subjugation, leading to a rebound. The reaction to patriarchy - feminism - will be examined in the section that follows below. The researcher presumes that this reaction that began in the West has something to do with the changing gender roles among men and women in Kenya.

2.10 FEMINISM: A REACTION TO PATRIARCHY

After discussing the concept of patriarchy, highlighting the various ways in which domination by the men over the women is sustained, it is important at this point to examine the reaction to the system. This is in agreement with the view that wherever there is power, there is resistance (Foucault, in Pease, 2000:33). The aim of discussing feminism is to assess the contribution of this reaction to the crisis in masculinity. The general historical view is that the new feminism of the 1970s not only gave voice to women’s concerns; it challenged all assumptions about the gender system and raised a serious problem for the men. Over the decades since, the disturbance in the gender system caused by the women’s movement has been felt by very large numbers of men (Connell, 2000:3).
According to Rosalind Delmar (in Herrmann & Stewart, 1994:5), a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social, economic and political order. Barrow (1982:56) describes a feminist as anyone who consents that women suffer from systematic social injustice. Feminism refers to the belief that women and men are equal and should be equally valued, as well as having equal rights (cf. Basow, 1992: 329). It is further taken to mean a movement that creates an awareness of the fact that women are oppressed or dominated by men and that the structural arrangements that initiate, support, and legitimate that systematic oppression constitute patriarchy (Adamson, Briskin & McPhail, 1998:9). Johnson (1986:422) sees it as an ideology that directly opposes sexism by supporting gender equality and portraying women and men as equal. According to Pease (2000:37), feminism is a counter-discourse that resists the hegemony of male domination, and utilizes the contradictions in these hegemonic discourses in order to effect their transformations. On the whole, the objective of feminism is consequently to constitute itself as a social and political movement to undo the domination of patriarchy (Mosetse, 2005:52). The researcher conceptualized feminism as consisting of all movements that run counter to male domination.

One of the key aims of the feminist movement, born after the publication of Friedan’s book *The Feminist Mystique*, in the early 1960s, was to raise the status of women (Popenoe, 1995:302). Although this movement had actually begun in the 1840s in the U.S with women seeking enfranchisement (Popenoe, ibid), it was not until the late 20th C that there were world wide efforts by women to gain rights that they had previously been denied (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988:109). This period coincided with the time when the young people (baby-boomers) arose to challenge the capitalist values such as competition, inequality and consumerism. Women too arose to question the kind of lifestyles they were forced to live in.

The state of women in France at the rise of the feminist movement, for example, can be captured in the following quote by Sylviane Agacinski:
“Throughout our history, women have not been considered ‘different’ beings embodying humanity on the same grounds as men. They have been defined as incomplete and inferior to men. From Aristotle to Freud, a woman was always lacking something in order to be a man ‘like any other’. She has been humanity’s weak figure, its minor form, and not one of two legitimate forms” (in Celestin et al., 2003:17).

The onslaught of feminism could at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination (Kate Millett in Thornham, 2000:44). Friedan, writing about the ‘Feminine Mystique’, argued that the problem of women was the never-ending difficulty of being defined by one’s relationship to men rather than having an identity of one’s own. She called for a reshaping of the cultural image of femininity in order to permit women to reach maturity, identity and completeness of the self (Thornham, 2000:48). Women needed to be admitted to full participation in society. The writings provided an inspiration for women’s liberation movement.

The particular rights sought by the women varied across society and class, although economic rights, educational opportunities, and access to adequate healthcare were common. Social freedom and political participation were also widespread goals. Issues related to fair employment practices, education, and political participation united women, but family, and sexually related concerns, especially abortion and lesbianism polarized women (Encyclopedia Americana, 1988:110). Due to the different demands by different groups of women, several feminist approaches emerged which are briefly outlined below:

(a). Liberal Feminism - the feminists here argue that the liberation of women consists of their freedom to choose their lives, to be able to compete with men on equal terms in the professional and political worlds, and in the labour market. They claim that women, like men, are endowed with reason and had equal capacity as men to make choices (vide Evans, 1995:13). However, they identified constraints such as laws that discriminate against women as well as informal beliefs that women were not suited for certain kinds of jobs. Their view was that nobody
benefits from gender inequalities and advocated for gradual change in the political, economic and social systems. They sought for reform through democratic means such as changing legislation, and were willing to work with any members of society who support their beliefs and aims. Proponents of this type of feminism were criticized for advocating for changes that are too limited to free women from oppression (Haralambos, 2004:105).

(b). Radical Feminism - feminists here blame men for exploitation of women and see women as an oppressed group that needs to struggle for their own liberation against their oppressors. They also see society as patriarchal where men comprise the ruling class and women the subject class, and this male-centredness perpetrates all other forms of oppression, including racism and economic exploitation. According to these feminists, the family is seen as the key institution oppressing women. They argue that only revolutionary change can offer the possibility of their liberation. Even among these is a very radical group that argues that women are no just equal to men but are actually superior to men and wish to see patriarchy replaced with matriarchy. They see men as not only responsible for the exploitation of women but also for many other problems like conflict, war, destruction of the environment and abuse of science; so it fails to meet human needs, etc. (Haralambos, 2003:103). For this reason, men cannot be reliable allies with women in challenging patriarchy because they have too much to lose (Pease, 2000:15).

(c). Marxist Feminism – these feminists blame capitalism rather than patriarchy as the primary source of oppression (Haralambos, 2003:104). They see the relationship between capitalists and the working class as that of exploitation and struggle. According to Marx, only the working class could challenge the capitalist system, since they are the ones that were sufficiently aggrieved. Within the capitalist society, women were subjected to a special form of oppression rooted in the sexual division of labour. Because of their primary responsibility for the household and childcare, women were condemned to seclusion in the home. This
exclusion from public life and particularly the work place meant that they were excluded from participating in collective action to change their own lives as members of the working class. They question why they and not the men did the domestic work in the home.

(d). Socialist Feminism - these feminists argue that freedom can only be achieved when people are released from the slog of work by technology or the appropriate development of the productive forces and when alienation and exploitation are eliminated by the changes in social relations in society. They argue that sexism is functional for capitalism as it is supported by the unpaid labour of women (Mosetse, 2005:56). They also advocate for freedom in sexual and procreative activity calling for no coercion such as rape or sexual harassment. Other feminists criticize this approach citing that women in socialist and communist regimes (e.g. China) rarely attained highest positions of power.

Regardless of the differences in perception of the causes of oppression and what they thought was the best way to bring about emancipation of the female lot, the feminist movements ushered in an awakening of attention to the subordinate position of women in many societies resulting in a lot of implications for the gender relations.

Generally, women took greater control of their lives, challenging many assumptions about relationships between men and women and family roles. They insisted that men take on more responsibilities of caring for the children and maintaining a home. They argued that sex differences were small in number and size, trivial in type, and irrelevant to the equality of women and men (Evans, 1995:3). Men faced a difficult time as the assumptions they took for granted were being attacked, leading to increased marital tensions. However, evidence indicates that marriages where dads try to become moms, as a result of role reversals, are not happy either, resulting in a high likelihood of divorce (Popenoe et al., 1996:261-262).
Given that rights, status, resources and rewards were ascribed by society on the assumed capacity of an individual to reason, feminists argued that women’s reasoning was similar to men’s. They scoffed at the hierarchical structure that was allowed to continue, based on women’s physical properties rather than intellectual capacities (Eisenstein in Saulinier 1996:11).

The feminist movement seems to have had its positive effects. The position of women received a new perspective across the world. In Kenya for instance, girl-child education is suddenly being emphasized, almost at the expense of the boy who has no formal special attention. University entry for girls is one point lower than for boys, so that many girls can acquire higher education. More women are penetrating the initially male-dominated political sphere, besides other managerial posts. The country’s laws are undergoing amendments to include women’s rights. A Sexual Offenses Bill recently became an Act of Parliament. It aims at the protection of women and children from sexual harassment. However, these gains have had their downside, especially in the social setup of Kenyan families.

Women are increasingly becoming independent and confident, far from the stereotypic dependent and passive ones. They now choose the lifestyle they wish, free from most of the constraints that limited their opinions in the past. It would appear this new found freedom has been pushed overboard, almost using it as retaliation to the subordination suffered under men. A section of a Kenyan newspaper article entitled, Where are all the good housewives, by Oyuga Pala (2003) emphasizes this concern with regard to women within that society:

“Women are not what they used to be anymore…. They take no pride in their femininity and seem to have relentless obsession with putting on the pants as well. They are saying it is subservient to be a wife. Why can’t the man do his share of the housework?”(Daily Nation, 26th April, p.9).
When the women are asserting themselves, the men in Kenya seem to be losing out. This is depicted by Malanda’s (2007) article titled; *Chicken politics and the devolution of men.* He is outraged at what is happening to the male species as he observes that:

“These days man is gentle, beautiful, loving and compassionate - like a woman. He even wears perfumes and earrings. Next thing you know the idiot is chasing chickens across the busy highways and cooking it for his wife all in the name of Valentine’s Day….Man is gone, His power devolved forever!” (The Standard. Crazy Monday, 5th Feb, p.3).

A further implication of women empowerment for gender relations in Kenya is seen by the increasing number of women choosing to move out of abusive marriage relationships - something they would not do in the past for fear of ostracism - and opting to keep their children (children in most Kenyan communities belong to their fathers). But children of single mothers lack male role models, hence a high likelihood of turning to the media image as the ideal definition of masculinity. There are often no close links with the cultural backgrounds, which, according to their mothers, are inherently oppressive to women, and which the modern woman views as retrogressive. In the process therefore, the children fail to learn the important values upon which society is founded.

Furthermore, working women in marriage demand to be heard, and in cases where their earnings are more than of their husbands, they tend to dominate the home. It is power reversal similar to what Yorburg describes in the quotation below:

“Married women who work, have more authority in the family than those who do not work…they have higher self esteem, typically than women who do not work. And if they out earn their husbands, they tend to become dominant in their relationship with their husbands” (1974:67).

Boys, as earlier discussed, tend to identify with the strong parent. Parke (1981:76) maintains that sex typing of boys is affected, whether the mother or the father is more
powerful in family decision making. He argues that where mothers make decisions while fathers are passive, boys are less likely to use their fathers as role models, thus they exhibit fewer traditionally defined masculine behaviours. Besides, boys tend to be more responsible when the father rather than the mother is the principle disciplinarian (Bronfenbrenner, 1972:540).

In the meantime, feminist ideas that sex assignment is irrelevant and could be overridden (vide Barrow, 1982:28), and that people should be free to move into and out of existing gender roles according to their preferences, seem to be getting engrained in our cultures. They are being perpetuated in various forms today. The so-called modern men are flocking to spas to have treatments like massages, facials, manicures and pedicures, previously the domain of women. With these kinds of happenings, Dobson (2001:16) opines that many parents are reluctant or ill equipped to teach their boys how they are different from girls or what their masculinity really means. This seems to undermine the aspects of gender constancy and stability, causing confusion to the children. But masculinity, in particular, is an achievement that does not just happen, but requires good parenting and societal support especially from the father (Stroller in Dobson, 2001:122).

The feminist movement appears to have achieved greater authority and space for the women but at the expense of men. Men, either in support of women’s rights, or due to fear to fight for the dignity of their lot, have responded by relinquishing more of their authority to the women. It is therefore not difficult to envisage that boys have tended to have great admiration for the women (symbols of power). Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand why, in the process, they have forgotten that they are men and that certain characteristics hold true to their sex.

Collapsing traditional structures, the emergence of new unstable situations, new social roles, norms and values have affected male and female gender identity and relations between sexes. Literature indicates that men’s roles and identities have been challenged and undermined, whereas those of women have, in some ways been strengthened (cf. Edwards, 2006; Horrocks, 1994; Morrell, 2001; Silberschmidt, 1999).
Based on the understanding that the gender differences serve to maintain the relations between men and women, one can easily see the varied motives of behaviour between the two sexes. It is possible that specific conduct ordinarily acceptable for females may be termed unacceptable if, at the time, it threatens the social position of the man as strong, powerful and privileged. While the behaviour of men is largely to guard their privileged status, that of women is seen as a reflection of discontent with the status quo; one that has reduced them to subservient roles. Therefore, as the men haggle to make secure their masculinity, the women on their part are rejecting femininity which is less valued and bargaining for equality. What can be seen are two sexes, not complementing one another, but engaged in a gender-relations struggle, with the off-spring caught in between. It becomes tricky for a young male seeking what to identify with. This kind of a situation is a sure recipe for gender identity disorder or confusion among those seeking to find their identity.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (2000:576) uses the term gender identity disorder (GID) to refer to individuals whose anatomy and psychology move in different directions. This is a situation where individuals cannot quite identify with the biological sex. They feel, from an early age, that they were born with the wrong sexual identity. They identify strongly with the other sex and show preferences for cross-dressing and for stereotypical games and pastimes of the other gender (Baron, 1998:570). Such people experience distress and in extreme cases (transsexuals) may chose to undergo a sex-change operation. However, most engage in cross-gender behaviour, which other people may see as disturbing due to the inconsistency with social stereotypes.

Boys with GID have marked preoccupation with traditionally feminine activities and have preference for girls’ or women’s clothes. Adult males may be preoccupied with intense desire to adopt the social role of females (DSM, 2000: 576-577). Longitudinal studies have shown that there is a high correlation between feminine behaviour in boyhood and adult homosexuality (cf. Dobson, 2001; Green, 1982; Zucker, 1985).
It is easier to link cross-sex behaviour in children with early signs of an inherent gender disorder. But in this study, the researcher dealt with adults hence the explanation does not hold relevance. The operationalization of GID therefore does not emphasize a genetic (or pathological) condition but a socialization disorder resulting from a host of confusing environmental factors. Thus, this study looked at the atypical behaviour of boys from the view of improper socialization, with emphasis on the guiding and modelling role of the father. It got impetus from research by Rekers, Crandall, Rosen and Bentler (vide Rekers, 1995) on seventy boys referred for evaluation and treatment for gender disturbance. A complete physical examination and medical report found them to be normal, with the single exception of one boy with one undescended testicle. The social environment of child-rearing was primarily implicated in the etiology of the psychosexual disturbance. Needless to emphasize, this was the position taken by this study.

At this point in the discussion it is important to emphasize, from earlier discussions, that the father in the home plays a significant role in children’s acquisition of gender roles due to his differential interaction with the children. But in the circumstance where the male individuals are increasingly forming a gender identity more similar to that of the opposite sex, it can rightfully be asked, ‘where is the significance of their fathers?’

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, the researcher concentrated on making an exposition of major aspects of gender. Specifically, what gender is; how gendering takes place; the meaning of masculinity; and, gender relations exemplified by patriarchy and feminist reactions, and the implications for development of masculinity prior to the postmodern era. Possibility of developing a masculine-atypical identity was related to environmental factors, with the implied role of the father highlighted. In the next chapter, more light will be shed on the construction of masculinity by specifically considering contemporary views of gender construction within the context of the postmodern area.
CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MALE GENDER IDENTITY IN THE POSTMODERN ERA

Aim of the chapter
The purpose of this chapter is to bring out three main ideas; one, that gender is not learned but rather it is constructed by individuals themselves; and two, gender construction is an on-going process; and three, in line with postmodernism, there is not just ‘an identity’ and ‘a role’ but multiple identities and multiple roles thus rendering the conception of gender as a fixed category fallible. Given the changing environment within which gender functions, deconstruction of the past stereotypes has become necessary for construction of ‘new kinds’ of genders that fit the demands of time. Factors, parties, and processes involved in creating a new male gender are discussed. The exposition of these processes will help the researcher to better understand and classify this emerging male gender identity, as well as determine the implication on the general social structure. Of specific interest is the appearance of this new male gender on the Kenyan scene, given the traditional stereotypic and patriarchal setting.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is actually an overflow of the previous chapter. It is a continuation of review of literature that details the concept of gender in society as dynamic and the people as continuously involved in its creation and recreation. Masculinity particularly is in the spotlight as it seems to experience greater crisis than femininity in the changing circumstances, probably due to the fact that it stands to lose in some ways as femininity stands to gain. The helplessness of society to maintain the status quo apparently aggravates the whole matter.
As earlier mentioned, it is worth emphasizing that society determines what it means to be male or female. It has its own definitions of, roles and expectations for each gender which it ensures are passed on to later generations by way of socialization. Social culture therefore provides the ‘lenses’ through which people perceive the world in male and female categories. The biological man sees the world from the masculine angle while the biological woman sees it from the feminine angle, and both are able to distinguish between what constitutes masculinity and femininity, and relate with each accordingly. Masculinity and femininity are therefore conceptualized in the context of the dominant paradigm of socialization.

Traditional masculine norms as described by Levant in *Masculinity Reconstructed*, are ‘avoidance if femininity; restricted emotions; sex disconnected from intimacy; pursuit of achievement and status; self reliance; strength and aggression; and homophobia’ ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual)). This social order has been contested by women who see the ‘social lenses’ as skewed in favour of the men. The thrust of feminism has successfully resulted in what Margrethe Silberschmidt (in a paper on *Changing Gender Roles and Male Disempowerment in Rural and Urban East Africa*, 2001) calls disempowerment of men through challenging their identity, and the strengthening of women. This has left the young male in a vulnerable position as he tries to find his identity. He may be imagining either the folly of identifying with the losing side of his like gender, or the vanity of embracing a gender role that will be difficult to maintain, given the changing circumstances. Worse still he is compounded with a new type of male identity, the creation of media, which is increasingly warming up to the customs and attitudes once deemed the province of women. It can rightly be asked; just where should he settle; masculinity, femininity, or midway? If masculinity, what form, given the various manifestations? And who will show him where it is safe? Surely none of the identities seems, appealing given the consequences. This brings the researcher to the point examining the Masculine Crisis Theory and the Social Constructionist View, both which form the theoretical framework for this study, in an attempt to understand the situation.
3.2 MASCULINE CRISIS THEORY

The theory is founded on the observation that both men and women deviate from the master stereotypes of their society, suggesting that gender identity is tentative and fragile, especially in the case of men (Brittan, 1989:25). Pease (2000:56) recognizes that sons can construct their masculine subjectivity through dis-identification with patriarchal fatherhood, and through empathy with the experiences of their mothers. This observation negates the socialization paradigm which, according to Jackson and Scott (2002:269), perceives individuals as passively programmed to accept an inevitable gendered fate, and which allows no room for understanding how they might renegotiate or resist dominant definitions of gender. Instead, the socialization theory explains exceptions only as pathological or deviant, as biological aberrations or as a failure of the socialization process.

Based on the literature and research findings related to male gender identity, Pleck (1981 in Brittan ibid) argues that ‘male sex role identity’ is a concept which focuses on the crisis of masculinity prevalent in Western industrial societies. The crisis is presumed to have been caused by erosion of male power in the workplace and in the home. In the past, men supposedly knew who they were; their roles were well specified, and they also knew who women were supposed to be. However, all this has changed. Men have lost their gender certainty, their sense of place in a world in which women are challenging them at all levels, resulting in insecurity and anxiety. The crisis has tended to increase with time.

The masculine crisis theory is based on the acknowledgement of these events. In Kenya, for example, women are getting empowered through education and through the support from many non-governmental organizations that work to improve the economic conditions of the women (there are no such NGO’s exclusively for men as there are for women). With high literacy levels and economic power for women, men are finding it difficult to keep monopoly of their position as leaders and owners of valued resources.
Basically, the problem is that young men find it difficult to identify with appropriate male role models. A healthy gender identity requires a proper identification with some kind of father-figure. If such models are absent, or partially absent, the young men suffer from an acute sense of gender confusion. The fragility of the male gender identity is depicted by Pleck (1981:3-4) in the following quotation:

“Sex role identity is the extremely fragile outcome of a highly risky developmental process especially so for the male. An individual’s sex role identity ideally derives from his or her relationship with the same-sex parent. A man’s efforts to attain a healthy sex role identity in this way is thwarted by such factors as paternal absence, maternal over-protectiveness, the feminizing influence of the schools, and the general blurring of male and female roles that is occurring now in society…the failure of men to achieve masculine sex role identity is a major problem in our culture, one obvious expression of which is homosexuality. A man also reveals his insecurity in his sex role identity by phenomena such as delinquency, violence, and hostility towards women. If we understand the factors that cause role identity problems in men, then we can prevent or reduce these problems in the future and perhaps even provide help now” (Brittan, 1989:25).

The key arguments of the masculine crisis theory is the amalgamation of role learning, psychoanalytic and cognitive approaches to gender acquisition, and the recognition that the emergence of masculinity is not simply dependent on the repression of castration anxiety and the resolution of the male oedipal complex, but on the way in which male infants experience their mothers. This is because, as earlier discussed, mothers are more often the symbolic representation of the generally absent fathers whom they do not adequately represent. This puts the identity formation of the male children at risk (cf. gender socialization theories earlier discussed). The theory acknowledges male gender identity as problematic and emphasizes the role of the father in contemporary child-
rearing practices. Its proponents argue that the historic domination of child-rearing by women has led to an asymmetrical dichotomization of gender (Brittan, 1989:32).

The role confusion and experiences of uncertainty around identity, sexuality and work that characterize the crisis in masculinity, as explained in this theory, have a lot of parallels in Kenya, given the increasing number of female-run families. In many Kenyan families, the father is often away from home as he works to maintain his family economically. Those who live in their work places without their families (and many do), have their roles in child-rearing obscured, as women take onto more inclusive roles. But given the internalized understanding that their boys are just ‘young men’, they may not be effective in gendering them. Only their fellow men can. And in the absence of these men, the chances of deviating among the boys are high.

The masculine crisis view offers a plausible solution to the happenings among the male gender; that fathers should be more involved in parenting. The theory explains the continuation of the cycle of subordination of women (patriarchy) as due to the reaction (or perhaps revenge) of males to maternal hostility and separation (that had to be) they experienced in childhood; and the confusion in the formation of a male identity for lack of a proper model.

However, the masculine crisis theory offers no explanation for gender-atypical behaviour among boys within families that are father-headed full time. Perhaps even in such cases proper role models may still be missing. But more probably, the presence of role models is not forceful enough to counter the wave of change with regard to gender identity among young male adults who are watching many other presentations of male identity in the postmodern era of multiple ‘realities’. *This is the crux of the matter in this investigation; to identify causes of the ‘deviation’ as this theory calls it – a deviation from what constitutes maleness as the Kenyan society defines it.*

The crisis signals the need to move away from traditional theories and deal with the reality. The theories require that males fit in their socially constructed classification; but
reality helps us to see that while gender is constructed by individuals, the reference point has largely shifted from the traditional social framework as the only basis making it an alternative among many others, thanks to the freer social space. The pity however, is that a large part of the society operates on the traditional script, oblivious of the boundary shifts. In the next section, the constructionist view of the whole concept of gender will be explored.

3.3 A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEW OF GENDER

This view holds that gender has no fixed form, and that gender identity is what one constructs at a particular moment in time. It means that one can display various identities, depending on the circumstances. The model also presupposes that gender has to be accomplished (e.g. doing maleness) rather than be seen as a finished product, contrary to socialization and masculine crisis theories. The manner in which it is accomplished also differs across the cultures. In a sense, doing gender, just like doing maleness, is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is held hostage to its production (West & Zimmerman, in Jackson & Scott, 2002:42). Masculinity and femininity are literally gender projects; dynamic processes of configuring practice through time, which transform their starting points in gender structures.

According to Beall (1993:128), people often ‘construct’ gender, and this socially constructed gender influences how they perceive men and women. Using cultures as their guides, people actively construct their perceptions about gender, and use them (perceptions) as ‘reality’ to understand the world around them. Four assumptions are identified by Gergen (1985 cited by Beall, ibid) in the application of this view:

- *There are many different ways that the world can be understood.* Different cultural experiences mean different understandings of the world, hence none of the experiences reflects the absolute ‘reality’. In support of this view, anthropological treatises show that some cultures understand the world to be orderly and logical, while others see it as arbitrary and governed by whims of
spirits. (Gender is therefore perceived from the point of view of different cultural experiences).

- **One’s understanding of the world is a social product.** A group of people, active and cooperative, determines what constitutes reality. This differs across cultures and time. Ideas about the self have been found to vary across cultures (vide Beall 1993:128). While some cultures view the self as an entity, others conceptualize the self in relation to others or in terms of social roles. (Gender is perceived from the point of view of meaning as constructed by a given people within a given time frame).

- **An understanding or conceptualization of the world may be particularly popular or persistent only because it is useful.** Views or stereotypes about a group of people may persist even though they are not valid, but just for the purpose of rationalizing differential treatment or the existing social order. (The meaning of gender serves a specific purpose. In the case of this study, both reasons i.e. to rationalize differential treatment and to maintain the status quo of the social order, apply for the persistent gender stereotypes about males and females).

- **Understandings of the world are related to all kinds of social actions.** The structure of a society and the interactions among its people are influenced by the society’s explanations of the world. For example, associating sickness with evil spirits will determine how the sick are treated and how they interact with the rest of the people (The manner in which gender is understood influences how the men and women are related to).

The social constructionist perspective therefore argues that human beings are actively engaged in ‘constructing’ their view of the world (culture), which provides the ‘lenses’ through which to see this world; and socialization teaches the children how to use these lenses. It is in the process of ‘learning to view the world through the social lenses’ that a gender identity is developed. This construction model therefore questions the validity of gender identity (and gender) as a real object analysis. It maintains that both children and parents together construct gender by giving it a sense of reality, and it is both parties to the interaction who sustain the belief in the naturalness of gender. That men and women
become gendered at the moment they begin to define themselves in terms of sexual attributes, partly explains why most members of our society accomplish gender in more or less the same way (Brittan, 1989:39).

With the understanding that the relations between the two genders are basically social relations; and that the gender distinctions are maintained by cognitive and cultural factors (Beall, 1993:136), it follows that culture influences beliefs and social practices; while people actively use cultural ideas about gender to perceive and understand the social categories of male and female and how these categories relate with each other. Brittan (1989:38) argues that even though we take our own gender identities for granted, even though we naturalize sexual differences by giving them the status of facts, we are nevertheless always in the business of putting together our sense of gender.

West and Zimmerman support the argument by explaining that 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. They further add that gender is an emergent feature of social interactions rather than a property of individuals – both an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society (Jackson & Scott, 2002:42). What is emphasized therefore is the fact that every gender identity constructed is rooted in the interactability of the dichotomous gender system (Brittan, 1989:42), such that when there is discrepancy between self-attribution and the attribution of others, difficulty arises.

The acknowledgement that gender is constructed within different cultural settings helps in the understanding of the happenings within the masculine domain. In this constructionist view of gender where masculinity is necessarily a configuration of gender practice, three things are underscored that are worth noting for this research:

- The multiplicity of masculinities; - it is clear that there is no one pattern of masculinity found everywhere. We therefore speak of masculinities, not
masculinity as different cultures, and different periods of history construct gender differently. Some societies for instance treat homosexual practices as a regular part of the making of masculinity (cf. Elkind, 1979), while others (e.g. Kenya) regard homosexuality as incompatible with true masculinity. The diversity, it is important to add, is not just a matter of difference between communities. Diversity also exists within a given setting. Within one society (cf. discussion on different masculinities in changing South Africa in the previous chapter), school, or workplace, or ethnic group, there will be different ways of enacting manhood, different ways of learning to be a man, and different ways of using the male body.

- Hierarchy; - there also are social relations involved between the different masculinities, with some being dominant (hegemonic) and others marginalized. The dominant ones may be quiet and implicit, or vehement and violent, as in the case of homophobia (cf. masculinities in chapter 2 of this work).

- Collectivity; - the patterns of conduct our societies define as masculine may be seen in the lives of individuals, but they also have an existence beyond the individual. Masculinities are defined collectively in culture, and are sustained in institutions. Thus we can speak of a certain kind of masculinity being embedded in the gender regime of an institution such as an army, a corporation or a school. On a larger scale, the state helps to constitute gender relations and the social categories they define, as well as regulate the existing gender relations. By implication, the state alludes to what being man or woman entails and the people’s responsibility is to observe the law. A good example is the husband and wife categories which are partly constituted by state action (through marriage law), and their meanings and relationships shaped by a wide rage of state policies like the labour market policy, welfare policy, population policy, among others. In such a case, masculinity is state-defined and exists impersonally as a subject position in the process of representation, in the structures of language and other symbol systems.
The role of bodies; - not to be overlooked is the issue that bodies are the arenas for the making of gender patterns. Masculine conduct combined with a feminine body is felt to be anomalous or transgressive, like feminine conduct combined with a male body. The latter anomaly is the focus of investigation in this study.

Both the masculine crisis and the social constructionist views agree on one matter; that gender exists, or happens within the confines of social boundaries. This is the assumption that comprises the paradigm in which this research was designed. The researcher acknowledges that gender is rather constructed than learned, and that social prescriptions may limit the construction of true gender identity. The researcher also takes note of the possibility of deviating from the master stereotypes of gender, as conceptualized by society.

It would therefore be appropriate to conclude that adult masculinities are produced through a complex process of growth and development involving active negotiation in multiple social relationships. The process is not as simple as portrayed by the role socialization theories. Instead it involves reversals and dialectics of confrontation and denial, where masculinities are formed in opposition to institutional pressure, as well as through conformity.

At this juncture, it is imperative to bring to attention the fact that while Africans enhance gender construction among their children in a similar manner as Whites do, through differential treatment and general involvement as explained earlier (cf. theories of socialization, and parents as agents), most also undertake second-stage enhancement of gender construction through initiation rites. However, initiation only happens to mark the start of the complex process of adult masculine construction. We now turn our focus on how this initiation is done in Kenya.
3.3.1 Gendering masculinity in Kenya.

As implied at the end of the foregoing section, socialization of masculinity among boys in Kenya occurs basically at two major stages; when the child begins to identify himself as a boy at a very young stage (between ages 2-3 years), and at puberty when initiation takes place. During these different times, agents of socialization, particularly the parents, help the child to find the meaning of his biological classification as male.

The essay on Double Standard of Masculinity in Gender Role Socialization cites Witt (1997) affirming that a child’s burgeoning of self or self-concept is a result of a multitude of ideas, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs to which he is exposed (http://www.freesays.cc/db/44/smu72.shtml). This is in perfect agreement with the discussions in the preceding chapter of this thesis, and applies fully in the Kenyan situation. From the outset of a boy’s life he is socialized into the belief that he should be ‘tough’ such that when the child is hurt, he is told that boys don’t cry. The boy internalizes this and many other gendered messages from parents like, what games to play, toys to play with, type of clothes to wear, and kinds of chores to help around the house, such that by their third birthdays they are able to appropriately use gender stereotypes to negotiate their world. Boys of this age often play with others of their gender and consciously avoid girls’ company and pastimes. Such a boy gets angry and cries if teased that he is a girl. In essence, he has begun to construct his gender.

Boys easily get away with aggressive behaviour but rarely do girls. When a boy comes to the parents crying that his peer has hurt him, parents often tell him to ‘fight back like a boy’. This serves to teach the boy that aggressiveness is acceptable for him. Coupled with the kind of toys parents buy for him such as guns, and the male-dominated violence on television that the boy watches; the belief that aggressive behaviour is necessary to establish his masculinity is legitimized. Further, the discouragement from engaging in feminine activities and display of feminine behaviours causes the boy to learn to define masculinity as ‘not being feminine’.
The stereotypes can be observed in all male children regardless of their cultural or economic backgrounds. Then at puberty, as if to remind them of the significance of gender differences and the value attached to biological maleness, initiation takes place under the supervision of their fathers and male adults. Initiation takes different forms, depending on the community, but the researcher singles out circumcision which is the major form practiced by many Kenyan communities. Let us therefore examine circumcision.

3.3.1.1 **Circumcision: A form of gender construction in Kenya.**

Circumcision does not play a similar role in the gendering of boys among Western communities as it does among the African. For this reason, discussion of the practice as an important gendering activity is given a wide berth by gender socialization literature that mainly emanates in the West. The researcher however recognizes the significance of this activity in her society, and allots space to its discussion.

Most indigenous Kenyan communities, with the notable exception of the Luo and Turkana, practice circumcision. Some of them circumcise both girls and boys, but for the purpose of this study, focus is only given to the boys.

Circumcision as a physical (sexual) act of cutting off the penis foreskin is a social act as well. It takes place anywhere from the age of eight or nine to seventeen or eighteen, depending on the specific tribe. Boys to be circumcised generally go through a ceremony before the actual cut. The ceremonies run from August through to December, the length again depending on the tribe. The ceremonies are important, especially for the boys as they signify the child’s acceptance in the tribe and his place in the adult community of his tribe (Daigle, African Culture Site). They are also significant to the entire community which often puts other activities on hold to ensure the success of the ceremonies. Parents of initiates invest some fair amounts of their economic resources in them through providing animals for slaughter and other foods and drinks (the mood is festive and all are welcome to partake of); and payment for the circumciser.
In most circumstances, many boys are circumcised together using one knife, although this is being discouraged in the advent of the HIV virus. Sharing of one knife was symbolic of brotherhood, a belongingness of some sort. This encouraged bonding even among non-relatives hence perpetuating a sense of social cohesion. Individuals who were circumcised at the same time saw each other as brothers, and belonged to one age-set. They shared (and still do) a common responsibility for one another.

Circumcision is traditionally a public affair and complex ritual. It emphasizes to the adolescent male the awesome journey he must make in leaving the embrace of his mother in order to enter the sterner male world, where he will be required to carry out the arduous tasks allotted to men (Horrocks, 1994:91). When it is performed, the boy is expected to show bravery by not flinching or crying. Doing any of these would bring shame and disgrace to himself and his family and show that he is not as manly as his age mates. The shame that surrounds flinching would remain with him throughout his life, that he would not be able to find a wife except among the handicapped, elderly, or those with illegitimate children (The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality: Kenya). Circumcision is such a public symbol that it is not unusual to hear a man say ‘I have been to the river’ meaning ‘I know what I am doing’; or ‘I didn’t go to the river to fetch water’ meaning ‘I can put up a fight’. This is because the initiates are taken to the river in the wee hours of morning and dipped in the water to deaden the senses prior to the cut. All call for endurance.

After circumcision, the boys who have undergone the rite are allowed to rest (in a specific common place prepared for them) and heal. During this time they are taught the tribal history and traditions which includes rules and regulations of their community, and their responsibilities within it. As fully accepted members of the male gender, they will be expected to demonstrate those social and cultural ascriptions of their gender that portray them as ‘real men’; not boys or women.

Among the Kikuyu community, Jens Finke, in a paper about Kikuyu Circumcision (http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/kikuyu/circumcision.htm), makes observation
that the relatively simple physical act is in fact of crucial importance, with complex meanings that affect the entirety of society. On the basic level, circumcision marks the passage of a child into adulthood. However, complex responsibilities accompany this rite of passage. The boy is deemed ready to assume adult responsibilities, both social and cultural, including the right to procreate and become a warrior (then, the institution is now defunct). It is taboo for an uncircumcised man, who is seen as a boy regardless his age, to father a child as this is believed to invite the wrath of God and the ancestors resulting in a consequence like drought suffered by the whole community. Thus, apart from other responsibilities such as qualifying to sit on the council of elders, the Kikuyu community views circumcision as a means of maintaining relations with ancestors and God.

Lately, the rituals are slowly waning, being replaced with more modern techniques such as having the operation done in hospital or clinic under anesthesia. However this is still not very popular as those who are circumcised at hospital are regarded ‘lesser men’ by those who undergo the ritual at home. Thus for their own pride, many prefer to go the traditional way.

A keen look at what goes on during the whole circumcision ceremony across the Kenyan communities indicates the older men trying to direct the young men to construct a kind of socially accepted male role. The requirement that they should not cry during the operation underscores the social expectation that males should be strong, unemotional, and fearless to protect their families and community at large. Issues of parenting, together with added responsibilities also come with circumcision. Marriage is therefore more a demonstration of maleness rather than love.

The initiates do not question the teachings given but silently accept to incorporate them in their behaviour as soon as the rest period is over. Even the communities that do not practice circumcision have their own way of guiding the boys into manhood through alternative means. We can visualize a group of hapless boys (made to think they were victors) who apparently have no idea what kind of adults they will (or desire to) become,
under the apprenticeship of the all-knowing societal ‘gurus’. The whole concept is gender construction at the behest of societal norms. Whether the young individuals understand this is beside the point.

Involvement of the community notwithstanding, the sustainability of this traditional mode of gender construction is now in question. This is due to exposure through education, urbanization and Western influence, which are now playing a role in the creation of individuals; products far different from the traditionally certified ones. With these new opportunities, increasing numbers of initiated boys are turning round, abandoning the norms they consider insignificant and outdated. The changes seem to be spurred on by the ‘human rights’ slogan and the broad idea of a ‘global village’, terms that are fast gaining ground among the schooled. The young adult males- no more boys- have realized that they belong to more than just their communities and need to adjust accordingly; and that they now can chose to do what they deem fit for them (exercising their rights). The International Encyclopedia of Sexuality: Kenya wraps up the goings-on in the society accurately by stating that; “traditional cultures (initiation, courtship, and marriage customs), colonial imports (Christian and Islamic values, and education), and contemporary Western influences (consumerism, and the media) are economic and social factors that together impact upon sexual patterns” (http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/IES/kenya.html). These really determine gender construction. Political structures only come in to guard and provide some order in the entire process.

The researcher is interested in the new beings who seem to be a product of the multi interactions between the above mentioned factors, because they (beings) are different. She gives them a new label, the ‘rebel male’ who seems to defy social convention as he curves out some kind of a ‘new masculinity’ that overlooks social ascriptions for his gender. At this point of the research, the new male gender type will be described as representing some kind of deconstruction on the one hand but reconstruction of the whole concept of gender, in the advent of postmodernism. These terms will be discussed below.
3.4 Deconstruction of gender

Deconstruction, according to Royle (2000:1), is ‘a method of critical analysis applied especially to literary texts which, questioning the ability of language to represent reality adequately asserts that no text can have a stable and fixed meaning, and that readers must eradicate all philosophical or other assumptions when approaching a text’. A further definition from the internet encyclopedia of Philosophy indicates that deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction’ but rather, it means to ‘analyze’ or ‘undo’. Given this understanding, deconstruction seeks to expose, and then subvert, the various binary oppositions that undergird our dominant ways of thinking. Literally, it restricts itself to distorting already existing narratives, and to revealing the dualistic hierarchies that they conceal (vide http://www.iep.utm.ed/d/derrida.htm).

Jacques Derrida, a poststructuralist who coined the term, finds it difficult to define the term. He however explains that deconstruction is ‘neither a school nor a method. It is not even a discourse, not an act, nor a practice. It is what happens, what is happening today in what is called society, politics, diplomacy, economics, historical reality, and so on and so forth…’(in Royle, 2000:7). According to Derrida, the existence of deconstructions implies that there is no intrinsic essence to the text, merely the contrast of difference. This is analogous to the scientific idea that only the variations are real, that there is no established norm to a genetic population, or the idea that the difference in perception between black and white is in the context. Thus, deconstruction involves the dissolving of orders and hierarchies which allow for new structures to be composed and recomposed (http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/postmodern-literature-criticism/109264).

From the above definitions, the researcher conceptualizes deconstruction as aiming at undermining the frame of reference and assumptions that underpin a ‘text’, thereby proving that there are multiple meanings to the text. In the context of the study, the ‘text’ is the masculine gender, or broadly, its construction. The established frame of reference and assumptions on which male gender construction was based are all being interrogated.
This in turn results in the whole concept of gender as an important category also being challenged.

Since deconstruction is neither a method nor a tool but an occurrence within the text itself, as Derrida explains, then the changes within the masculine gender are indeed intrinsic. More importantly, these changes are technologically instigated; and are subtly gradual as Gergen points out:

“Changes that come with new technologies reverberate throughout the culture, slowly accumulating until one day we are shocked to realize that we’ve been dislocated – and can’t recover what has been lost” (1991:3).

This demonstrates the complexity of the gender category than we may have ever initially envisioned, given that the definitions may sometimes be very broad, or very narrow.

Nonetheless, the term deconstruction is used in this thesis in its more general way; as pointing to contradictions between the intent and surface of a work and the assumptions about it. Specifically, males passing as the opposite sex are seen to ‘deconstruct’ gender identity because of the conflict they cause between the superficial appearance and the reality of the person’s gender. The researcher’s interest in the perceived disconnect between social understanding of masculinity and the current manifestations, is captured as follows by Wikidedia:

“As long as a person’s perceived physiological sex is consistent with that person’s gender identity, the gender role of that person is so much a matter of course in a stable society that people rarely think of it. Only in cases where, for whatever reasons, an individual has a gender role that is inconsistent with his/her sex will the matter draw attention”. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_role).
This deconstruction is often in opposition to social constructionism which purports that reality is fixed within the province of social order. Gender deconstruction presents itself in different ways, such as in transvestitism which deconstructs gender dressing, homosexuality which deconstructs the straight culture (both discussed in chapter 2 of this thesis); as well as metrosexuality which deconstructs the general physical appearance and demeanour (discussed in section 3.4 below). As the roots of deconstruction can be traced to the age of postmodernism, this era will be the focus in the next section.

3.4.1 Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a wide-ranging term which is applied to literature, art, philosophy, architecture, fiction, and cultural and literary criticism, among others. According to Glossary Definition (http://www.pbs.org/faithandreason/gengloss/postm-body.html), postmodernism is largely a reaction to the assumed certainty of scientific, or objective, efforts to explain reality. This stems from the recognition that reality is not simply mirrored in human understanding of it, but rather, is constructed as the mind tries to understand its own particular and personal reality. In postmodern understanding, interpretation is everything; reality only comes into being through our interpretations of what the world means to us individually.

The US History Encyclopedia defines postmodernism as ‘a movement in art and ideas which challenges the aspirations to unity, purpose, and order’ (http://www.answers.com/topic/postmodernism?cat=technology). It can effectively be concluded that, it is a movement of ideas arising from, but also critical to elements of modernism (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism). Given these definitions, the question to ask is how the movement is connected with the masculinity that is labeled ‘rebel’ by the researcher. The connectedness is pursued immediately below.

One’s identity or the self, is fundamentally social (Ward, 2003:118). As we enter the postmodern era, all previous beliefs about the self are placed into jeopardy, and with
them the patterns of action they sustain. With postmodernism, the very concept of personal essence is thrown into doubt, and selves as possessors of real and identifiable characteristics - such as rationality, emotion, inspiration, and will - are all dismantled (Gergen, 1991:7). The fairly stable self of the pre-modern and modern eras becomes more elusive, and the struggle to find the real innate self (different from the pre-modern self when identity was not an issue) and be true to it as characteristic of the modern era is no more the agenda. This identity instability seems to afflict man continually as Berger, Berger, and Kellner point out in *The Homeless Mind*:

“Modern man is afflicted with a permanent identity crisis, a condition conducive to considerable nervousness” (Gergen, 1991:73).

According to scholars such as Jameson, Baudrillard, and Debord; selves achieved under modernity have vanished in the wake of consumerism, mass culture, and growing bureaucratization of life (Ward, 2003:120); the kind of life that is seen to steer towards inclusiveness, simply called ‘diversity’ (Wilber, 2000:159). It is a time marked by the plurality of voices vying for the right to reality - to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and the good. As the voices expand in power and presence, all that seemed proper, right-minded, and well understood is subverted. We therefore become increasingly aware that the objects about which we speak are not so much ‘in the world’ as they are products of perspective (Gergen, 1991:7). And gender is one such object. This has profound implications for research on gender identity and the impact of role modeling in a primary, secondary, and tertiary education context.

Three issues singled by Wilber (2000:163) stand out as the assumptions that sustain postmodern approaches:

(a) Reality is not in all ways pre-given, but in some significant ways is a construction, an interpretation. This view is called constructivism.

(b) Meaning is context-dependent, and the contexts are boundless. This is often called contextualism.
(c) Cognition must therefore unduly privilege no single perspective. This is known as integral aperspectivism.

With postmodernism therefore, identity is not natural or God-given but a human construct that is constantly changing; and value is assigned to multiple meanings and multiple voices rather than the single authoritative voice and predetermined rules for action. The implication is that the social structure that has always been the centre for negotiating gender fails to hold, and the truth of the fragility and historical pliability of our current beliefs and practices gets exposed. Gender, as one of the traditional categories of self identification is threatened with deterioration as individuals acquire multiple identities, each identity mattering at different times. The significance of the whole issue of gender as a distinctive form of identity seems to lose credibility. As Gergen succinctly puts it:

“\text{"If there are multiple voices, each proclaiming a different reality, whose reality is to be privileged? On what grounds? And as one approaches the state of indeterminacy brought about by these plural realities, one confronts the possibility that the distinction is not essential at all"}” (1991:144-145).

Thus, while social constructionism views one’s identity as being constructed by the self, as determined by various socially institutionalized factors, postmodernism suggests in various ways that self identity is something that we more or less freely fabricate since we have a degree of choice about how to represent ourselves. And so the same goes with masculinity, such that we talk of masculinities instead. Indeed the various masculinities are constantly being protected and defended as well as constantly breaking down and being recreated. Today we see a wide range of masculinities from the violent criminal type, the macho sports male, to the etiquette-led CEO, and all rationalize their behaviours. With this kind of situation and argument, postmodernism becomes an attractive way of explaining the manifestations of the ‘rebel male’. He has undergone a qualitative change, especially in the world of fashion, where clothing and dressing has become a central means of creating himself. Unfortunately, this fashion world has
obviously no stable features to talk about. The best the ‘rebel male’ can do is to frequently and successfully reinvent himself alongside it.

With the radical changes in masculine behaviour and the expectations of the males to keep up with fashion, stores have learned to conveniently stock what sells. Many businesses are also spruced up to make the kill, even as masculine identity becomes more elusive. Gergen (1991:155) argues that ‘it is not the world of fashion that drives the customer into a costly parade of continuous renewal, but the postmodern customer who seeks means of ‘being’ in an ever-shifting multiplicity of social contexts’. And media have played their grand role in ensuring that the ‘fabrication’ of the male identity, just like that of females, continues – the difference being the male’s inclination to the fashions that identify with women.

Accordingly, the media are so powerful in their well-wrought portrayals that their realities become more compelling than those furnished through true experience. Gergen rightly points out that it is to the media, and not to sense perception, that we increasingly turn for definitions of what is the case (1991:57). Thus, a lot of masculine-atypical behaviour that we observe which is foreign to our cultural contexts, is really an attempt by the young adult males to enact media models. In the postmodern world, there is surely no single reality, and the reconstruction is a never-ending process either! Postmodernism seems to have plunged the world into eternal transition, with masculinity as the greatest casualty. Enlightenment about rights, freedoms and alternatives to reality, as well as money and friends make up a potent recipe for violation of, and alienation from, cultural norms which are considered restrictive. In the next section, reconstruction of a new gender product (of masculinity) will be discussed.

3.4.2 Gender Reconstruction

Deconstruction and reconstruction cannot be divorced from each other as they happen simultaneously. While the former dents the establishment, the later works at its
improvement. Reconstruction implies working with what exists rather than starting over. In reconstructing masculinity, Levant reminds us that not all aspects of the traditional male code need to be jettisoned. However, he adds that men do not need to head to the woods for drumming and dancing in order to find their core manhood. Levant makes it clear that there is more than one way for a man to be a man (http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3658/is_199704/ai_n8764571). His suggestion to reconstructing a masculinity that does not sacrifice the original male identity does not appear to be what is happening among the males that constitute the subjects in the empirical section of this study. Nonetheless, the researcher uses the term reconstruction to mean the process of gradual change in the typical male role and behaviour; and subsequent emergence of a new (atypical) male gender that is characterized by different behavioural displays. Because of this steady unending change, the researcher is uncertain of the kind of masculinity to expect as ‘typical’.

In general, gender reconstruction is creating, as Richard Trubo observes, ‘an emerging wave of men who chafe against the restrictions of traditional male roles’. They can be characterized as men who ‘do what they want, buy what they want, and enjoy what they want – regardless of whether some people might consider these things unmanly’ (http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=52190). Examples of this new gender are the ubersexuals and the metrosexuals. What follows is an exposition of what characterizes these categories of gender, the frame of reference for the construction of the identity, and the response of society to these individuals. Specific reference to the Kenyan situation will be highlighted.

3.4.2.1 The Ubersexual

The word ‘ubersexual’ which comes from German ‘uber’ meaning ‘above’or ‘superior’ and Latin ‘sexus’ meaning ‘gender’, was claimed coined by O’Reilly, Matathia, & Salzman, 2003) who are the authors of the book Future of Men (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%9Cbersexual). According to them, the term means a
‘return to the positive characteristics of the Real Man of yesteryear (strong, resolute, fair)’. They claim that the metrosexuals risk being seen as ‘sad sacks’ since they seem incapable of retaining their sense of manhood. According to their judgment, that the ubersexuals are confident, rugged and influential (http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2005/11/13/LVGDMFKH741.DTL&hw=j...). They perceive the ubersexual as an evolved species of a man, different from the metrosexual. O’Reilly and colleagues perceive the metrosexual as, ‘the primped and waxed boy who wowed the world with his nuanced knowledge of tweezers and exfoliating creams’ (Wikipedia, ibid). This is the new kind of guy - a less gay metrosexual - who however, as Salzman has admitted herself, failed to catch on. Due to limited information available on the ubersexual, the researcher preferred to deal with the metrosexual as the latest reconstructed gender, observably causing ripples in traditional Kenya. An exposition of this classification term will serve the purpose of contextualizing it within the ambit of three tenets of philosophy of education, namely cosmology, anthropology, and axiology.

3.4.2.2 Metrosexual: The emerging male gender identity.

Metrosexual is a word that describes ‘men who have a strong concern for their aesthetic appearance, and spend a substantial amount of time and money on their images and lifestyle’ (Wikipedia). Originally, the term meant a heterosexual man who appeared or acted as if he were homosexual or bisexual. But with the increasing integration of gay men into mainstream society and a corresponding decreased taboo towards deviation from existing notions of masculinity, the term has become popular. Current trends have seen the term used for males who, under the spell of consumerism and desire to be what is portrayed in magazines, embrace practices that are usually perceived to be feminine. Metrosexual is seen to signify gender deconstruction as well as strong associations with consumerism (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metrosexual).

Mark Simpson, in Metrosexual? That rings a bell... (Independent on Sunday, 22/6/03), describes the metrosexual as typically a young man with money to spend, living within
easy reach of a metropolis - because that’s where all the best shops, clubs, gyms and hairdressers are. Further, that he might be officially gay, straight or bisexual, but this is utterly immaterial because - having an interest in fashion and beauty - he has clearly taken himself as his own love object and pleasure as his sexual preference. Also, the metrosexual seems to be attracted to professions such as, modeling, waiting tables, media, pop music, and sport, all which generally get the individual conveniently exposed. ([http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html](http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html)).

While invention of the metrosexual appears to have been the work of capitalism, acceptance of effeminate characteristics and lifestyles of the gay community by the society has given him comfort, and the media has played its fair share in popularizing him.

The interest of capitalism (consumerism) was to create a man who shopped more. The stoic, self-denying, modest straight male didn’t shop enough since his role was to earn money for his wife to spend. This old-fashioned (re)productive, repressed, unmoisturised masculinity had to be replaced with the kind in which the man was less certain of his identity and much more interested in his image (Simpson, ibid).

The media on the other hand through displays in newspapers, magazines, billboards and TV advertising persuades other men to aspire to the same level of corporate-sponsored exhibitionism which they can only achieve by parting with their cash. Simpson equates all this indulgence by the metrosexuals with narcissism. This is the tendency to regard oneself as grandiosely self-important. It is also defined as an exaggerated view of one’s importance, influence and entitlements (Weiner, Millon & Lerner, 2003:334). Weiten & Llyod (2003:128) describe narcissistic individuals as people who passionately want to think well of themselves, are preoccupied with fantasies of success, believe they deserve special treatment, and act aggressively when they experience ego threats. With this kind of feeling about himself, Trubo (op.cit.) has this to say about the metrosexual:
“He may have a standing appointment for a weekly manicure, and he probably has his hair cared for by a stylist rather than a barber… and his appearance probably gets him a lot of attention - and he is delighted by every stare”.

The researcher perceives the metrosexual as an epitome of the ‘postmodernity’, which, although Wilber (2000:59) perceives as ‘modernity’, and defines as ‘marked with the death of God, the death of the goddess, the commodification of life, the leveling of qualitative distinctions, the brutalities of capitalism, the replacement of quality by quantity, the loss of value and meaning, the fragmentation of life world, existential dread, polluting industrialization, and a rampant and vulgar materialism; all summarized by Max Weber as “the disenchantment of the world”’.

Simpson believes that gay men provided the early prototype for metrosexuality. He explains the relationship between the two identities in the following quotation:

“Decidedly single, definitely urban, dreadfully uncertain of their identity (hence emphasis on pride and the susceptibility to the latest label) and socially emasculated, gay men pioneered the business of accessorizing – and combining – masculinity with desirability. After the rise of feminism and the fall of the nuclear family, straight men too were increasingly single, uncertain of their identity, and socially emasculated in a world where women were still regents of the private sphere but also competition in the public world… straight men begun to adopt the neurotic strategies of gay men, both as a survival technique but also as a way of advancing themselves in an increasingly visual, aestheticized world where women were not only more discriminating but also more likely to be your boss”. (http://www.marksimpson.com/pages/journalism/metrosexual_ios.html).

The capitalist world engages repeated reassurances that the metrosexual is actually a ‘straight, sensitive, well-educated urban dweller who is in touch with his feminine side’;
reassurances which however, aim at maximizing profitability. Given this ‘clean bill’
backing against the backdrop of a generally fragile masculine gender, young men are
increasingly turning to the lifestyle shopping which is characterized by a heightened
sensitivity to appearance. The metrosexual seems to obtain as much satisfaction from
consuming the images attached to goods as they do from the practical functions that the
goods might serve. This is an identity that is transcending territorial borders at an
untamable pace. Kenya too is experiencing its effects, as will be elucidated in the next
section.

3.4.2.3 The Kenyan metrosexual

The metrosexual is a relatively new identity in the visibly traditional and formal Kenyan
society. Wearing braided hair, ear studs, conspicuous jewelry and carefully manicured
polished fingernails, the man can easily pass for a woman. The appearance of such kinds
of males on the scene has received reactions ranging from amusement, appeal, surprise,
pity, to disgust among different ages and orientations. For the researcher, this male type
led to several questions such as ‘why’ (when society celebrates the hetero-normative
male)? ‘Where are the fathers or father-figures and what have they to say?; and, ‘what
kind of male role models do these new breed of men intend to become’? All these
questions are encapsulated in one major question, ‘what really is happening’? Desire to
find answers to these questions led to this investigation, as has been pointed out in
Chapter One, and elsewhere in this thesis.

Truly, at the onset of this study, the researcher had no idea that the new identity has a
documented reference at all, much as the reference was coined in the early 90s in Britain.
People in Kenya who manifest behaviours that fit the definition of the term are young,
college-going students who appear to have money to spend, and artistes, especially music
and theatre celebrities. A good number are also to be found in the corporate business but
few in public employment, usually as sports anchor men. Metrosexuals seem to violate
social order with impunity, causing social discomfort among the typically traditional
Kenyans. However, they are just expressing their individual and constitutional rights. Therefore, the Kenyan society as a whole has a task to find ways and means of adjusting to the impact of postmodernistic trends that have not only crossed their borders, but have also come to stay with or without the welcome of the society. The tide of this new identity cannot be stemmed in an open society that is becoming globally connected by the day, with Kenya as one of the players.

While arguments abound that the metrosexual male is merely rebelling against tradition rather than forming a distinct role, he really epitomizes a changing masculinity. Research by a global advertising and marketing agency network (Euro RSCG) shows that men no longer find pursuit of achievement and status as important as in the past; nor restriction of emotions and disconnection of sex from intimacy as traditional gender role expects. A shift in masculinity has yielded a different man from the ideal man of the previous eras. These changes can be perceived to be a means of establishing greater equality between the sexes through transcendence of gender roles into androgyny.

In the traditional Kenyan society, the metrosexual is seen as repugnant. Men with an appearance of women are not a welcome feature, and given the formal British style of dress that is embraced since colonial times, the metrosexual risks a lot to keep his lifestyle. He is likely to be understood as gay in a society where gay practices are not legalized. His job opportunities as well as circle of associates are fairly limited by the suspect appearance, which is also seen as shameful or rude. Regardless of this negativity, the ‘bug’ is steadily catching up, especially in the urban areas and among the affluent. The manifestation of this gender identity among university students in the researcher’s workplace drew her attention and interest to discover more about them. Wondering about the happenings in society, one specific question was what fathers of these individuals were doing in helping their sons to develop a ‘proper’ masculine identity. This question led to investigation about fathers tackled in the next section.
George Rekers, a professor of Neuropsychiatry and Behavioural Science at the University of Southern Carolina underscores the significance of a father in the normal gender identity development of children (file://F:\GenderIdentityDisorder.hmt). He argues that although television programmes and book revisions have been used by social forces in the attempt to normalize father-absent families as well as households of various combinations of unmarried adults, as simply alternate family forms with no inherent adverse social consequences, two developments emerged within the same decades that allude to the contrary. First is the mass of research that has led to the recognition of the often detrimental effects of father absence on several critical aspects of child development, including normal sex role development and sexual adjustment (vide reviews by Biller, 1974; Hamilton, 1977; Hetherington, Cox & Cox, 1979; Lamb, 1976; Mead & Rekers, 1979; and Rekers, 1986b, 1992, for example). Second is the clinical and research data accumulated to a sufficient degree to enable the mental health professions to officially identify a newly recognized form of psychopathology- ‘Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood” (vide Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, 2000).

Further studies indicate that fathers have a very important role to play in the gender development of their children as they are more concerned about gender-appropriate behaviours in their children, than mothers (Dickinson & Leming, 1995; Hetherington, 1967; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby, 1980; and Ruble & Martin, 1998), and put more pressure on boys to behave in gender-appropriate ways than they do on girls (Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995 in Weiten, 2007:462). Fathers are disturbed by any of their sons’ behaviour that is not typically masculine. It therefore appears that father absence adversely affects boys more than girls.

Robert Bly (cf. Dickinson & Leming, 1995:103) emphasizes that father-daughter relationships are extremely important, but that men need to help raise their sons, who learn male relationships and living behaviour by example. Dobson acknowledges this by
arguing that boys are inherently more volatile and less stable emotionally, and are more likely to get off-course when they are not guided and supervised carefully. Left unchecked, display of non-masculinity in boys sets the children apart from their male peers and contributes to a distortion in the development of their normal gender identity (Dobson, 2001:119), a situation which is more complicated where the father’s role in parenting is lacking. He emphasizes this by adding that:

“When boys begin to relate to their fathers, and begin to understand what is exciting, fun and energizing about their fathers, they will accept their own masculinity. They will find a sense of freedom - of power - by being different from their mothers, outgrowing them as they move into a man’s world” (2001:121).

Corneau in Pease (2000:57) argues that lack of fatherly attention leads to the son’s inability to identify with his father as a means of establishing his own masculine identity and, consequently, such a son is unable to advance to adulthood. Slightly contrary to many research findings cited above and elsewhere in this thesis, yet in support of the underlying fact of internal insecurity and susceptibility to external pressure, Hite (in Pease, 2000:66) found that boys who are without a father, or closer to their mother, are psychologically and emotionally healthier, adhere less to patriarchal stereotypes, and are more responsive to change. It appears then, that the father-child relationship seems to hold the answer for the gender identity crisis in boys. In this context, the relationship denotes failure. Consequently, the probable reasons for paternal-role failure in reference to the Kenyan society were briefly discussed below.

The phenomenon urbanization is one important factor. Many young adults are moving to towns in search of jobs. When the jobs are not forthcoming, a number of them resort to crime and drug abuse. Meanwhile, ties with their families are weakened, and the childhood instruction is forgotten. Their new-found freedom (‘city air sets free’, as an old saying goes) drives them into activities that agree with their cliques. Once involved in crime and drugs, they choose to stay away from their families to keep their new habits
secret. Under such circumstances, the role of the fathers in the boys’ socialization can barely be felt; hence the former may not be made to bear the entire blame. The Kenyan society experiences much of this.

The second phenomenon, father absenteeism, is another factor. This may be physical (due to death, divorce, or work commitments, especially migrant labour) or psychological. The economic and cultural setting in Kenya requires that men work hard to provide for their families and so they are away from home for most of the time. When the husband is away due to work, the wife becomes used to making decisions regarding property, finances, discipline of children, and the like. According to research by Kayongo-Male & Onyango (cited by Adams, 2001), women taking over the authority of the home may find it difficult relinquish it to the man when he returns home (cf. www.segepub.com/upm-data/4948_Adams_chapter_1_Families_In_Kenya.pdf-SupplementalResult).

As a consequence of absenteeism also, boys become greatly influenced by their mothers with whom they spend more time, than by their fathers. Research shows that these boys develop aggressive protest against social rules (cf. Dobson, 2001; Garbarino, 1999; Rosenberg & Sutton-Smith, 1972) since their mothers are not strong deterrents with regard to social behaviour. The boys therefore may be inappropriately gendered. After all, women only have a vague notion of how to go about rearing boys, since they themselves have not been boys (Dobson, 2001:56). The situation in Kenya has not been made better by HIV/AIDS that has left many orphaned children in the care of female relatives who become their role models.

From a psychological perspective, it is believed that boys, especially adolescents, need a strong authority figure to steer them away from negative peer influence (Garbarino, 1999:56). Boys need to feel that they belong to someone positive and strong, to help them find their place the world. Moreover, this strong person should also be loving, in order to bond with the child. Inability to connect with children emotionally causes them to feel abandoned, even in the presence of the father. Dobson gives an example of a boy child
who cross-dressed to obtain the father’s love. The specific father had rejected him (wanted a girl) but doted the daughter, that by the age of two years, the boy was wearing dresses and playing with a doll collection (Dobson, 2001:122). The child learns to demonstrate behaviour that earns him rewards. Such behaviour is internalized and gets reflected in adult life, in different ways.

The entry of mothers into the labour market has also some effect on the parenting quality of the father. Grych and Clark (1999:893) found out that fathers whose wives did not work outside the home or worked part-time were more sensitive and responsive to their children than those whose wives worked full-time. Other studies (cf. Belsky & Rovine, 1988; Chase-Lansdale & Owen, 1987) reported a higher proportion of insecure attachments between fathers and sons (but not daughters) in dual- compared to single-earner families. It was concluded that fathers whose wives are not employed have more flexibility to take part in child care tasks as they feel able and willing, whereas dual-earner fathers may have to take an active role in care-giving independent of their perceived skill or desire (Grych & Clark, 1999:894). Thus, fathers whose wives were in full time employment displayed poor quality parenting, due to less involvement with their children in their formative years. The aspect of parenting quality by the father based on mother employment is not so evident in Kenya where a lot of women undertake traditional roles of childcare and housekeeping. However, lack of emotional attachment between fathers and some of their sons is a fairly common feature in families that are polygamous, which impacts greatly on father involvement in children’s gendering with boys being the worst affected by this ‘father-absence’.

If the father commands respect in the family based on how he successfully fulfills his role, then the son will want to identify with him. However, if he is a ‘no-body’, he has no respect and the son would not want to be like him. Dobson (1987:160) argues that the ways in which boys view their fathers is largely a product of his relationship with their mothers. He cites Lewis Yablonsky’s account in which the wife verbally abused the husband, in the presence of the sons, for his failures as a man. The man did not fight back, creating an image of one crushed and without control. According to his son, his
inability to fight against the criticism only confirmed its validity. In effect, the son was motivated not to assume the role of husband and father from his observations of his whipped father. Paternal attachment may thus be influenced by the gate-keeping role of the mother. Her verbal and non-verbal stance towards the father (whether present or absent) and his role, subtly defines the child’s perception and internal working model of the father.

Another factor that affects father-son relationship is abuse. If the father is abusive, the mother will tend to turn to the son for intimacy and protection. Such responsibility on the child is too big, and the mutual dependency unhealthy. In such a circumstance, the boy does not see the mother as an authority figure who can discipline him (Garbarino, 1999:56), and he resents the father whom he may choose to rebel against. Kitzmann (2000:5) established that marital conflict lowered the quality of parents’ general conversation with their sons, increased fathers’ use of confusing and threatening commands, and lowered sons’ compliance with fathers’ commands. Outright rebellion by sons towards their fathers may mean certain basic principles of compliance have been overlooked. Baron (1998:649) considers these to be *friendship, commitment/consistency, reciprocity, authority,* and *scarcity.* For the purpose of this study, the researcher briefly highlights the first four based on Baron’s explanation.

People are more willing to comply with requests from *friends* or from others they like, more than from strangers or those not liked. It follows then that boys will comply with, or rebel against their father’s views on account of the existing relationship between them. About *commitment,* we are likely to agree to requests for behaviours that are consistent with a position that we have committed ourselves to. Boys should have been assisted to commit themselves to behaviours that the family is comfortable with from the very beginning. Then based on *reciprocity,* we are more willing to comply with requests from someone who has previously provided favour to us than from someone who has not. This points to how much the father has been responsible for provisions for the boy. It is likely then that a boy will rebel against his father who fails to provide for him. Lastly on
authority, we are more willing to agree to requests from someone who is a legitimate authority or who simply seems to be one.

When the father fails in his duty as the authority figure in the home, is there any wonder then that the boy rebels towards him? As earlier established, boys tend to respect and identify with strong models (cf. sections 1.2.1; the beginning of this section 3.5). It is unfortunate if this model happens to be the mother. These principles of compliance as discussed, affect the relationship between boys and their fathers in different ways, depending on the family parenting style, as well as the economic situation and cultural beliefs of the specific families.

On the whole, the absence of the father in the life of the boy child could have serious implications for the ultimate identity of the child. Parke and Locke (1975:608) confirm that when fathers are permanently gone owing to divorce or death, when they are temporarily absent or unavailable due to occupational demands or wartime service, and when they simply show little interest in their children, young boys especially, may have problems with gender identity and gender role. The disruptions are even more severe in pre-adolescent boys. That fathers present to their boys what it means to be men cannot be overemphasized. Mothers closely bonding with boys than fathers are regarded as inevitably emasculating boys. Masculine identity, it is believed, is reproduced by repressing the feminine. It is therefore important that boys break free from their mothers as this helps them reject feminine qualities within themselves (Silverstein & Rashbaum, in Pease, 2000:67). But discussion about the role of the father cannot be sufficiently concluded without considering the pressure resulting from changing gender roles. These are examined below.

3.5.1 **Changing gender roles and paternal contribution to boys’ gendering**

Feminism is based on the argument that males and females are equal, yet the structural arrangement of society allows men to dominate and oppress women. As a movement,
feminism therefore creates awareness of this ‘legitimate’ and institutionalized oppression which helps to perpetuate patriarchy. Based on this understanding, many movements have been in place, at different times and space, with the sole purpose of emancipating the female gender from their subordinate position. The good goal however has its downsides underscored by the new gender relations.

According to Silberschmidt (1999, 2001), the socio-economic change in Kenya that has resulted from women’s empowerment policies has seen the roles of men challenged and undermined (http://iussp.org/Brazil2001/s70/578_01_silberschmidth.pdf). On the one hand, men are the acknowledged heads of households, and they have formal authority. On the other hand, lack of employment or low/insufficient income prevents them from fulfilling their expected roles as men, husbands, and in particular as providers of family needs. In the process, men have been reduced to figure-heads of households. Meanwhile, women have more opportunities opening up to them both in the economic and political fields. Even those based in rural areas have their lives made better by the involvement of non-governmental organizations. It is a given fact that the demasculinizing effects of poverty and of economic and social change are eroding men’s traditional roles as providers and limiting the availability of alternative, meaningful roles for males in families and communities. Frustrated by the inability to live up, their characteristics of aggressiveness, competitiveness, dominance, strength, courage and control certainly drive them to affirm their masculinity in other ways such as alcohol and wife abuse.

In Kenya, as everywhere, the global economy and the rising long-term unemployment have changed men’s roles and challenged their identity as breadwinners. According to Kimbrell, men from their earliest years have been enculturated to see their identity as synonymous with being a worker, being a provider, and being independent. Unemployment only leads to their shame (1995:194). Parallel changes in women’s roles such as increasing participation in the public arena and in paid work, and recognition of women’s rights are also challenging the traditional division of labour and modes of femininity. Since femininity and masculinity are determined in tandem and to some
extend in opposition, such changes in women’s roles also challenge concepts of masculinity. The male identity is indeed in a crisis.

Given the situation just described above, men find themselves powerless to teach their sons what it means to be men. The boys on their part see little good about being male, if power and authority are increasingly shifting to females. The whole concept of fathers gendering their sons is now restricted to the families where men have something to show, and these are relatively few. Even where the father is doing economically fine, the requirement that he puts more hours to his job (to prove his worth) make his socialization responsibility difficult, thus complicating his performance in gendering his sons. His function is reduced, in Kimbrell’s (1995:107) words, to ‘the family’s wallet’. This provides fertile ground for influence of other agents, especially the media, on the gender identity of the boys.

**Conclusion**

Chapter Three has comprised a reflection of current views regarding the construction of gender, with emphasis on formation of masculinities in the face of challenges brought about by postmodernism; resulting in ‘ubersexual’ and ‘metrosexual’ types. Specific reference to masculine construction in Kenya was been made, highlighting the contribution of fathers in the entire process. Various factors were acknowledged, including the changing patterns in gender roles, for their contribution to masculine gendering process. Empirical data will help evaluate the extent to which factors discussed in this chapter, as well as those alluded to earlier, determine the formation of socially atypical behaviour of young adult males. In the subsequent chapters therefore, a critical discourse of the qualitative research undertaken to this effect will be described and discussed.
CHAPTER 4

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION INTO GENDERING OF BOYS IN KENYA; AND PATERNAL ROLE IN THE PROCESS.

Aim of the chapter

With the research topic and objectives clearly set out, the researcher needs to be clear how the required information would be obtained. This includes selecting the sample and determining the instrumentation. This chapter discusses the research design and the various techniques that were used to gather data that would go towards meeting the goal of the project and the specific research objectives. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how the actual investigation was undertaken and why the specific methods of data collection were used.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding two chapters provided a theoretical and historical perspective on the concept of gender and gender construction within the Kenyan society. From the information, it is clear that differences between the male and female genders are upheld and encouraged within the framework of social structure. It is also evident from the literature that a lot of premium is given to the initiation of the boy child into an adult male, given the patriarchal setting where males are rated with more significance. However, historical developments also allude to the challenges to the absolute power of Kenyan men, and a weakening of their formally naturally prestigious social position in the advent of both formal and non-formal organizations that address the plight of women. This disempowerment of men and empowerment of women appears to push the pride of masculinity into a crisis, and the brunt of this is felt by the young males who do not have any firm grounding for their own masculinity. In the given uncertainty, the young males are compounded with media images of what in ideal man looks like. The result has been
a gender transcendence that seems to undermine the binary social underpinnings. Courage with which the social norms are defied within the same social space gave impetus to this investigation.

The empirical data seeks to give an explanation to the happenings in the Kenyan situation with the view of identifying specific reasons, and sensitizing society in a bid to enhance understanding of both the state and construction, and a redefinition of the gender concept of masculinity. This chapter offers an exposition of where and among whom (participants), the procedure, and the measures used to obtain the required data. In other words, it discusses what was done to realize the goal of the entire project, thus answering the intriguing questions that the researcher had on mind.

4.2 RESEARCH AREA AND SUBJECTS

This study was undertaken at Moi University, one of the seven public universities in Kenya. This institution was chosen because it is where the behaviour under investigation was ‘discovered’, thus drawing the researcher’s attention. Also being an institution of higher learning, the information to be collected might represent a cross-cultural view on the understanding of gender. This is supported by the fact that the university is located just 36 kilometres east of Eldoret, the fourth largest and fastest growing industrial town that has a diversity of employment opportunities, hence attracts people from all corners of the county. The cultural mix is observed among the students, teaching and non teaching staff of the university.

Data pertaining to attitudes and perceptions on gender appearance transcendence issue, which was the main focus of the study, was collected from among both male and female university students, as well as from university staff and other parents who formed the research population. Preference for university students was also based on the fact that the university is not restrictive on the mode of physical appearance of the students. This is unlike in high schools where rules and regulations on behaviour apply. With this kind of
background, the researcher expected that students’ behaviour at the university would be
guided, at least, by the norms of their families, apart from the influence of peers and
media perhaps. The assumption was that the students have a choice of maintaining or
rejecting what was taught in high school due to lack of reinforcement, but that they had to
comply with the requirements of their homes to which they always returned. This
assumption made them a good group for research on the perceived paternal role on
behaviour. It was also assumed that the respondents would express themselves freely
owing to their personal level of development in communication and general
understanding of phenomena.

4.3 DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Putting in mind the fact that this study, which investigated behaviour, would benefit from
information that might be regarded personal, the choice of methods was made with the
hope of obtaining data that would lead to resolution of key issues of the research
problem. At the centre of the investigation was why the young adult males were defying
social convention with regard to physical appearance. Study objectives had to be revisited
in order to come up with methods. These objectives were:

a) To establish the differences between males and females and the significance of
   these differences within the Kenyan society.
b) To evaluate gender roles in the Kenyan context.
c) To establish the causes of gender-atypical behaviour among boys in Kenya.
d) To evaluate the significance of Kenyan fathers and their influence on gender
typing of their sons.
e) To explain the effect of the changes in the Kenyan society on boys’ gender
   roles.
f) To highlight the implications for education and make suggestions following the
   findings.
The researcher felt that the objectives could best be realized by undertaking a qualitative study. This research therefore has an exploratory-descriptive qualitative study design. It provides for an exploratory survey of opinions and perceptions concerning the phenomenon of interest. Blanche and Durrheim (1999:123) refer to qualitative methods as ‘interpretive’. This is because these methods try to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement. According to Drew, Hardman & Hart, (1996:162), qualitative methods are applicable when the research problem does not allow for high control and manipulation of variables.

Basically, this is a qualitative research that involved the use of different data sources. It denotes what Denzin (cited by As De Vos, 2005:362) described as data triangulation. The reason for employing different methods together was to help enhance, illustrate, and clarify data collected in order to guard on trustworthiness of the information. This is in line with the definition of triangulation given by Burgess (1993, cited by Mosetse, 2005:121), as associated with an exercise of confirming a claim to judgment that is done by drawing on evidence from more than one source. Patton (in De Vos et al., 2005:314) argues that each data source has its strengths and weaknesses, and by using triangulation, the strengths of one procedure can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach.

4.3.1 **Rationale for employing the qualitative method**

This study aimed at explaining the gender-atypical behaviour of young male adults. Factors that influence the way the masculine identity is constructed were investigated in a bid to understand why social norms no longer seemed effective. Since the study was deeply imbedded within a setting of naturally occurring interactions among people, and the research problem did not allow for control and manipulation of the variables (Drew et al., 1996:162), the qualitative research methodology was used. This method allowed the researcher to do the following:
• demonstrate that the study subjects are active beings with feelings, thoughts, meanings, intentions, and awareness (Mwiria & Wamahiu, 1995:116);
• understand the research phenomenon in situ;
• capture the complexity and deconstruct meanings of masculine presentations and the coupling fragility;
• collect information pertaining to views, attitudes and feelings which quantitative methods may not adequately represent; and,
• provide a holistic view of the phenomenon by elucidating the general perception of male and female gender roles and behaviour.

4.3.2 Data collection

The researcher considered the objectives for the study in order to come up with specific items that comprised the questions. To find reasons for gender-atypical behaviour among boys, two related research findings were taken into account. One was by Rekers and others (cf. Rekers, 1995 in http://file:F:\GenderIdentityDisorder.htm), which concluded that the social environment of child-rearing was implicated in the etiology of psychosexual disturbance of children, especially boys. The other, several findings, that the father is the parent whose role behaviours are most likely to generate sex-appropriate behaviours in a family unit (cf. Dickinson & Leming, 1995; Hertherington, 1967; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Maccoby, 1980; and Ruble & Martin, 1998). The characteristics that have been reported to foster the establishment of normal gender identity in children include the father’s nurturance and dominance. Conversely, literature on the effects of paternal deprivation indicates that the sex-role learning process is adversely affected when fathers are either physically or psychologically absent from the home (Biller, 1974; Hamilton, 1977 in Rekers, 1995 ibid).

The researcher therefore combined both these views (home environment and paternal aspects) to come up with characteristics that were reflected in the questionnaire. These were; parental contact, relationship and closeness (attachment) with the child, interest in the child’s behaviour and discipline, provision for the child’s needs, leadership and
dominance in the home, and role modeling, reaction to sex-atypical behaviour, as well as gaps in parenting duties. All these were to represent the perceptions of the children (the research subjects who responded to the questionnaire). Below is a description of how the researcher went about collecting the required information.

4.3.3 **Data collection methods**

Before explaining how the data was collected, it is necessary at this point to clarify that the researcher employs the term ‘data collection methods’ to mean the ‘techniques’ or ‘tools’ used in gathering data. This should not be confused with the term ‘research method’ which, according to the researcher, is broad, denoting normally quantitative or qualitative approaches. In this study, the method used was qualitative. (Note that literature review is also included as a means of obtaining data, both before and during the actual project, as characteristic of most qualitative researches). A further clarification is that the terms ‘study’ and ‘research’ were used interchangeably by the researcher.

In choosing to use the qualitative method of study, the researcher held the assumption that people’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously, and that we understand other’s experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (Blanche & Durrheim, 1999:123).

For this study, the following methods of data collection were employed:

- A **literature review** which was used to expose fundamental concepts and contexts related to gender categorization and the situation in Kenya;
- **Observation** undertaken in the course of interaction with study interest subjects to understand the particular behaviour in situ;
- A **questionnaire** to capture varied perceptions of the situation as presented in questions;
- **Interviews**, both one on one and focused group types to enhance understanding of the research problem in its context.
4.3.3.1 Literature review

In Chapter One, literature was reviewed to help plan the research design; and in Chapters Two and Three, the literature reviewed was for application to the research. In this chapter however, the purpose of mentioning literature review here is to indicate what was done to advance the researcher’s knowledge on the issue, in preparation for actual empirical data collection.

An extensive review of related literature was conducted to obtain a theoretical basis for the study. This was achieved through the use of primary and secondary sources, research reports, theses, conference papers, journals and the internet. As mentioned in Chapter One, some apparently less current sources were included for their relevance to the study. The information from the above mentioned sources helped the researcher, as operationalised from the functions outlined by de Vos, et al., (2005:263), in the following ways:

- To be able to explain the concept of gender, and specifically, masculinity; and to make sense of and see patterns in diverse observations of the masculine gender.
- To understand the underlying assumptions behind the research questions. In other words, by depicting the values and assumptions that the researcher brought into the research enterprise, it underscored the paradigm within which the research was conceptualized.
- To become knowledgeable about related research and the intellectual traditions that surround and support the study.
- To identify gaps in the previous research that and show how the study will fill the demonstrated need.
- To conceptualize the problem, redefine it, and reduce it to a feasible size and scope (Mosetse, 2005:123).
- To refine and redefine the research questions by embedding those questions in larger empirical traditions (Marshall & Rossman, 1999:43).
Apart from utilizing the literature review method, the qualitative nature of the study required that empirical data to be collected using methods that enhanced a deep understanding of the phenomenon through rich and detailed revelations. The methods used in this case were as discussed in four sections that follow below.

4.3.3.2 Observation

This is one basic technique for studying behaviour (Baron, 1998:23) and fundamental to all research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 cited by De Vos et al., 2005:275). Observation may be participant or non-participant although these two are sometimes used in collaboration with each other and represent the extreme points on the continuum of roles to be assumed by the researcher (Ginsberg, 2001; Singleton et al., 1988 cited by De Vos et al., 2005:275). However, it is worth noting that all forms of observation are basically similar and depend to a greater or lesser extent on participation, thus necessitating direct contact with the subjects of observation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Sarantakos, 2000 noted by De Vos et al., 2005:274). Denzin and Lincoln (ibid) add that researchers observe both human activities and the physical settings in which such activities take place. In this qualitative investigation the researcher used observation to study the natural and everyday set-up of the situation within which behaviour being investigated occurred.

Prior to designing the research, observation was incidental and informal. In other words it was not intentional, but an occurrence that drew the attention of the researcher as behaviour that stood out. From the time the atypical behaviour display among some male students was noticed, further interest in it was developed followed with the desire to explain the occurrence. It was this desire to find reasons for the behaviour that led to the research design, resulting in the more earnest observation. This was guided by a list of specific observable characteristics against which the observer checked. Aspects pertaining to social behaviour of those who manifested the ‘new’ masculine identity, as well as cues to their economic lifestyles were taken note of. All this information became important in determining the kind of questions that the researcher had to find answers to,
the other methods of data collection used, and the items included in the questionnaire and interviews. One aspect to mention at this juncture is that the researcher did not have problems interacting with the subjects as they has already struck a rapport in the classroom where as the researcher was their lecturer. The research subjects that were observed were not alerted for purposes of minimizing both subject bias and researcher influence, or what is known in research as reactive effects.

Apart from observing the subjects during consulting sessions in her office, the researcher benefited more from observing subjects from vantage positions at the Students’ Centre which, among other services, houses a bank, beauty parlour, an eating place (café), and three shops. Here students’ behaviour is unrestricted, and the researcher was able to get insights about in-group characteristics, general financial spending based on what thy bought, as well as interest in beauty culture.

Use of observation was important to the researcher in the following ways:

- It made possible gathering of information without making the subjects uncomfortable that their behaviour was under observation.
- The technique enabled the researcher to obtain information that was first hand and not manipulated.
- It helped the researcher to gain a comprehensive perspective of the problem under investigation, including specific groups that could be identified with it, other accompanying social behaviours, and the pattern of the behaviour of interest.
- It assisted the researcher in formulating item questions for the other instruments that were necessary to obtain the information that could not be readily observable, such as attitudes and perceptions.
- It enabled easy conceptualization of the problem and relation of the phenomenon to reality. The problem was made real, not just theoretical.

Yet, the researcher was not oblivious of the limitations of employing this technique to obtain information about behaviour. Such limitations included the following:
Other than the observed traits, the researcher was unable to collect any further information about the individual, for example the motive or driving factor behind the observed behaviour, which was absolutely necessary if the behaviour was to be accurately explained.

Given that the subjects were likely to change the very behaviour under observation posed challenge to the researcher’s assumptions and boundaries within which the problem might have been formulated.

Validity could be jeopardized. The observer relied almost exclusively on personal perceptions which are susceptible to subjectivity and prejudices (De Vos et al., 2005:284). This was likely to hinder objectivity in making conclusions about the observed phenomenon.

With the understanding that human behaviour is not only individual, but also social, complex and variable in time and space, observation as a technique of data collection may not be very reliable since other variables that intertwine to produce the behaviour cannot be controlled.

It can be boring, physically exhausting, and challenging to maintain attention in the whole process.

The researcher’s decision to employ other techniques in conjunction with observation was partly an attempt to minimize on the limitations cited above. Furthermore, the use of other techniques helped unearth more data that shed light on the problem under investigation, as well as clarify observed information. These techniques were as discussed below.

4.3.3.3 Interviewing

Interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research (De Vos et al., 2005:287). Manning (in Holstein & Gubrium, 1995 cited by De Vos et al., 2003:287) contends that all interviews are interactional events and interviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within participants. Kvale (in Sewell, 2001 cited by De Vos et al., ibid) defines
interviews as ‘attempts to understand the world from the participant’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations’. In a sense, interviews have the ability to ‘provide access to what is inside the person’s head’.

As a technique of qualitative research, the unstructured interview was used in this investigation. As earlier indicated, it entailed casual discussions (based on the study objectives) initiated by the researcher. The unstructured style was preferred as it allowed the participants to express feelings and experience with greater depth than structured interview schedule could possibly allow. Reasons for use of this technique included the following:

- **Flexibility.** Interview allowed the researcher to phrase questions to the level of the respondents (vide Cohen & Manion, 1998:272).
- **Ability to interact with the respondents enhanced an understanding of the situation.**
- **Interviews also guaranteed freedom of expression since the researcher was able to engage detailed discussions making it possible to obtain a clear meaning of the situation. Ideas that may be difficult to express in writing, for example are easily captured in interview (Mosetse, 2005:126).**
- **Due to the presence of the interviewer, greater completion is achieved because respondents are not likely to leave any questions unanswered (vide Cohen & Manion, 1998:272).**
- **In cases where the questions are answered inadequately the interviewer can ask for clarification. In the process, more information may emerge.**
- **Interview responses are likely to be more reliable than questionnaires due to the interviewer-presence effect. Also, as Kulundu (2001 in Mosetse, 2005:127) points out, interviews can be more trusted to acquire information that needs sequence since respondents cannot read the questions ahead whereas in a questionnaire one can read ahead. This implies that interviews allow sequence to flow accordingly, thus enhancing validity and reliability. Furthermore, that the interviewee does not**
know the question to follow cannot reverse his/her response, a likely happening in questionnaires if it can make the exercise less tedious.

• Cohen and Manion (1998:272) add that interviews offer a great magnitude of data collection due to the process of coding, which is limited.

The self-administered one-to-one interview was undertaken with three women and two men with whom the researcher had prior interaction by virtue of job or other social undertakings, which made entry to their social space relatively easy. However, arrangements were made for interview times whenever the respondent was not in a position to respond, often due to a tight schedule. Time and place was to the convenience of the respondent. All the interviewees were chosen on an availability basis, as well as being parents to young male adults of college-going ages.

Interviews have the ability to generate a wide range of responses due to question perception by the interviewee. To enhance communication on the same wavelength with the participants, the researcher, basing on interviewing tips (vide De Vos et al., 2005:288-289), did the following:

- Asked clear and brief questions and gave the respondent time to respond with minimal interference.
- Asked questions in a general way (open-ended) to allow the respondent latitude especially with regard to perception.
- Posed one question at a time to avoid confusion.
- Used allusions (especially for sensitive questions) without giving researcher’s own opinion while at the same time taking care not to ‘victimize’ the respondent.
- Whenever the respondent found it difficult to answer a question, it was paraphrased to make is simpler.
- Questions that required the respondent to indicate his/her experience often preceded those that required opinion.
- Asked the respondents to clarify answers that were not clear.
Often asked same questions in different ways, as a within-instrument measure of assessing the validity and reliability of both the questions and the answers received. Care had to be taken to retain the original meaning of the question.

Ensured that the sessions were more or less conversations rather than question and answer ones.

Took notes, making the respondents to realize that their contribution was relevant to the study.

Kept the interview fairly short and focused to avoid overstaying the welcome.

The information generated from these interviews was a representation of the adult-world understanding and perception of the phenomenon under investigation. This was later to be compared with the responses of the young males contained in the questionnaires. This was important to the researcher as it helped gauge consistency, as well as differences in perceptions and opinions between the two groups. The use of this technique posed a challenge in trying to maintain a balance between allowing the respondent to tell his/her story (flexibility) and control by the researcher in order not to veer off the study course.

4.3.3.4 **Focused group discussions**

This is a method in which 6-12 members are interviewed collectively. The interview is more like a guided discussion among participating members, with the researcher acting as the facilitator (Mwiria & Wamahiu, 1995:122). The assumption of using this method is that individuals would be more motivated to respond to the questions without fear or reservation. Also, since the focus groups should consist members who share at least two characteristics, it is likely that the individuals would share a common perspective or view if the research phenomenon.

Focus groups were used in this research as a supplementary source of data that would then be compared with that obtained by use of questionnaires. The use of this technique was limited to two groups of seven female students (counterparts of the questionnaire respondents) randomly chosen for their willingness to participate in the study. The
motive of the researcher was to obtain the shared views of these groups about the specific male behaviour and see how these views agreed or departed from those of their counterparts (males) with whom they were often in constant interaction, and from those of the adults. In each case, the sessions were informal to allow free expressions.

4.3.3.5 The questionnaire

The New dictionary of social work (1995:51 in De Vos et al., 2005:166) defines a questionnaire as ‘a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project’. Although the definition suggests that it comprises of a collection of questions, a typical questionnaire may contain as many statements as questions, especially if the researcher is interested in determining the extent to which the respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective (Babbie & Mouton, 2001: 233). De Vos et al (2005:166) state that questionnaires are probably the most used instruments of all.

Questionnaires are a suitable method of data collection in quantitative research, but they are also not uncommon in qualitative research in which case the questions contained will be mainly open-ended. In the latter research method, the questionnaire is designed to provide self-report data from the respondents, and the open-ended questions enable the participants to include detailed information that naturally would be difficult to capture when closed-ended questions are used.

A self-generated questionnaire, validated by critical discussion with the researcher’s promoter and with peer group members, and pre-tested on some Third Year Moi University students was used. The questionnaire was self-generated because of the novelty of the specific area of research interest, hence the lack of an existing instrument. Pre-testing was important as it gave the researcher the chance to re-evaluate and modify the questionnaire items that were confusing in terms of the specific information required. The aim keeping questions open-ended was to generate as much data as possible based on the varied responses from the participants. Question items were phrased to elicit attitude rather than factual information.
For information that seemed sensitive and would make the respondents uncomfortable, the items were phrased as if the responses were not directly of the respondents. An example was, ‘why do some young men plait their hair?’ The researcher was aware that some of the respondents plaited their hair and therefore did not want to appear offensive or to question their behaviour as if to insinuate that it was wrong. The researcher worked with the assumption that a lot of people prefer collective responsibility; hence communicate personal attitudes with ease by referring to imaginary other (third) persons.

The questions sought information on both parents to obtain balanced information and avoid biased responses. The assumption was that focus on one specific parent would become evident to the respondents, and therefore ‘direct’ them to either negate or ‘aid’ the researcher by imagining what the researcher intended to obtain. In such a case, the information would be skewed. An ‘either or’ allowance was given in some questions for the respondents to choose which was applicable for them. This was a deliberate undertaking to avoid possibility of threatening questions, as well as ensure truthfulness of answers.

Data collected constituted respondents’ perceptions of their parents’ participation in parenting, relationship with them and with their (respondent’s) mothers, social power, personality, modes of instruction, communication, reliability, provision, and modeling. It also indicated gender characteristics, affinities and attributes of the respondents themselves. Only male students were selected to respond to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections. The first carried an introductory letter and request for participation in the investigation. It contained information about the purpose of the study, acceptability for all responses (i.e. an assurance that there were no right or wrong answers), pledge to keep responses anonymous (no name to be indicated), and choice to participate (i.e. participation was voluntary).
The second section comprised the questions and statements that the participants had to respond to. The questions were sequenced to gather information on specific variables of interest. The first question sought information on the frequency of contact between the respondents and their parents; the next two questions investigated the relationship with their parents; the one that followed addressed the issue of who disciplines; the next two were to elicit data about parental provision for the respondent’s needs; the next two on parental dominance and communication in the home; the following three on direct parental (leadership) influence on the respondent’s behaviour and role modeling; the next four on gender equality and roles, including power and control; the following six on gender identity, differences and physical presentations, including participation in beauty culture; the next two sought information on parents’ behaviour and mistakes. All these sought answers in form of detailed explanations. The there was one last in this section that enquired about the waiting time between finishing school and joining the university. This was to help gauge the maturity of the student against the background of differences between behaviour in school and that out of school (behaviour in school was -and still is- directed by rules and regulations).

Finally, the last section contained questions on the biographical data of the respondent except the name. These included age bracket, the community, marital status of parents, family type, parents’ academic qualifications, parents’ occupations, number of siblings, the respondent’s birth rank in the family, and finally the religious affiliation. These varied forms of data were of interest, due to the researcher’s understanding that they all, individually, had an influence on behaviour.

Certain terms in the questionnaire were typed in bold in cases where the researcher felt the respondents needed to take note. The questions were preceded by a bold heading requiring that the respondents answer all questions.

A sample of 100 teacher-education Second Year male students at Moi University, Gishu district (Western Kenya) was used. The participants were selected using both *purposive* sampling (a specific class) and *simple random* style (specific individuals from the class),
from among those who indicated willingness to participate. Both Arts and Science groups were represented on a fifty-fifty basis. Among the group were few who wore feminine-like dressing styles (plaited hair, earrings, nail polish and other jewelry). The teacher education group was preferred, due to the instruction they receive about the requirement to be proper social role models. That the teachers have widespread influence on the society, both in the urban and rural areas cannot be overemphasized. The ideas they carry are likely to have a bearing on the direction in which the society is moving, thus pointing to the implication that the study would have on teacher education.

The questionnaire was group-administered. The poor return problem, as well as non-response or incompletion were minimized by the researcher administering the questionnaire in person. Issues pertaining to question interpretation were minimal, but when they did occur, the researcher was at hand to make clarification. Questionnaires were counted on being issued and on return to ensure total collection. Once the respondents each got a questionnaire, instructions were read out aloud and the time (50 mins) accorded for the exercise told. As the respondents began to answer the questions, the researcher maintained a low profile as much as possible by reading a newspaper but quietly monitoring the process through overview looks. However, a few problems were encountered where students tended to engage in discussions. When notice was taken of such a case, the researcher reaffirmed the need that the responses be independent. When the process was complete, the researcher expressed gratitude and left, to undertake the next task ahead - data analysis.

Before exploring data analysis, it is necessary to state the measures employed to minimize limitations arising from the use of questionnaires. These were as outlined below:

- Subjecting the questionnaire to expert and peer scrutiny to help detect inconsistencies.
- Asking paired questions rather than single ones especially on concepts that would elicit variable responses from the some subject.
• Piloting enabled the researcher to identify shortcomings in the instrument leading to adjustments.
• Wording the items in the questionnaire in a non-threatening form thus enhancing willing responses by the participants.
• The researcher personally administering the questionnaire

All the outlined measures to minimize limitations in each data collection method, contributed to the overall reliability and validity of the empirical research. These terms are briefly examined below.

4.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Oppenheim (1992:144) defines reliability as ‘the purity and consistency of a measure, repeatability, the probability of obtaining the same results again if the measure were to be duplicated’. Neuman (2006:188) refers to reliability as ‘dependability or consistency. It suggests that the same thing is repeated or recurs under the identical or very similar conditions’. He however draws attention to the fact that qualitative researchers often study processes that are not stable over time, and they believe the relationship between the researcher and the data is an evolving one hence acceptability of distinctive results (Neuman, 2006:196). Drew et al., (1996:168) argue that objectivity in describing social patterns, for example, can help maintain internal reliability such that even if another language is used, beliefs of right and wrong may remain the same. Also, by creating a careful audit trail that another researcher can follow can be useful in eliminating inconsistent results. They add that detailed explanation of data collection and analysis procedure may enhance external reliability (replicability of concepts across and between sites).

Validity refers to the degree to which the a research instrument (meaning data collection method), measures what it is expected to measure (cf. Bell, 1997:65; Brazelle, 2001:22; Kulundu, 2001:102; Monnapula-Mapesela, 2002:30; Wellington, 2000:30 in Mosetse,
According to Drew et al., (1996:168), validity in qualitative research captures the accuracy or truthfulness of the findings. Lecompte and Goetz (1982 in Drew et al., ibid) find validity to be a strength in qualitative research because it sets findings within natural settings, free from the contaminating effects of control or variable manipulation. Simply, validity is the degree to which a measurement can be trusted.

The following measures, together with those undertaken to overcome limitations of the various data collection methods, collectively served to ensure reliability and validity of the entire empirical study:

- Use of different subjects to establish the consistency of findings;
- Use of more than one method of data collection;
- Obtaining data from various sources;
- Making a detailed description of the social setting within which the research was undertaken;
- Acknowledging varied behaviour presentations against other scholarly work in the report of findings; and
- Preserving questionnaires, interview schedule, and field notes for constant reference and perusal for confirmation of conclusions

**Conclusion**

In chapter Four, the researcher undertook a detailed exposition of how the empirical data was collected. The research design, information required, participants involved, and the specific methods used were described. Highlights of possible limitations, as well as explanation of attempts at enhancing reliability and validity were undertaken. The next chapter will focus on the analysis of data qualitatively collected.
CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

Aim of the chapter
In this chapter the researcher presents an analysis of the data as collected from the respondents, as described in the previous chapter, in some organized manner, through identification of topics, categories and patterns that emerged from the data. The purpose of this activity is to make sense of the data collected in view of the study topic.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

From the explanation of what qualitative data comprises, any reader is able to foresee the bulk of information that the researcher is likely to end up with, not to mention the lack of a specific order especially with observation and interview techniques. From this jargon of data, the researcher is expected to fish out some findings. After all, the purpose of conducting any study is to produce findings. De Vos et al., (2005:333) describe qualitative analysis as a process that ‘involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal’. They further add that it is a process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data, an involvement that can be messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating. Marshall & Rossman, 1999 in De Vos et al., (ibid) describe the process as a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data which builds grounded theory.

According to Gay and Airasian (2003:228), data analysis in qualitative research is an integrative part of the entire process, beginning from the initial interaction with participants. The ‘after data collection’ analysis undertaken here therefore is a
culmination of various mini-analyses that the researcher made in the process of undertaking the investigation. This is presented below by way of information categorized under subtitles. Data from questionnaires, interviews and observation is simultaneously factored.

5.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND DESCRIPTION

As earlier indicated, the students who responded to the questionnaire were required to give their views and perceptions of aspects relating to feminine behaviour among males as well as specific roles as performed by their parents. One-to-one interviews with participating parents were conducted to get their perceptions on the topic, specifically highlighting parental role. The focused discussions were undertaken to obtain information on attitudes that female students have towards the behaviour of their male peers. Observations by the researcher were done to help identify additional information on characteristics of the specific group under study. Much of the data is therefore a reflection of respondents’ perception of the matter being investigated. This is in line with qualitative research characteristic that the researcher strives to describe the meaning of the finding from the perspective of the research participants, not from the researcher himself/herself (Gay & Airasian, 2003:169). By so doing, the researcher aimed to collect information that would reflect the true situation, rather than her thoughts and biases.

Information from the above mentioned techniques was analyzed by means of descriptive analysis of Tesch (Cresswell, 2003). Coding by means of bracketing (putting preconceived notions aside) was done until prominent themes, together with categories could be identified and described, resulting in particular patterns. At this point however, the researcher presents a description of the respondents before describing their responses.
5.2.1 **Information about respondents**

Student respondents were all in the 18-25 age bracket and of all birth rank orders with most being middle children. None indicated he/she was the only child. They represented a majority of Kenyan communities. Most were from Christian, monogamous married family type. Their parents were fairly literate, at least with a secondary school education with quite a number engaged in various occupations, both private and government-paid. The conclusion that can be made is that the respondents comprised a fairly homogeneous group, except for their communities. They were also young and religious, and joined university soon after completing high school, which characteristics may have probably influenced their response to the questions.

Parent respondents (two men, three women) were urban dwellers, or at least had the influence of town, due to proximity. They were engaged in various income-generating activities. Of the three women, one was a lecturer at the university, another a student at the Bible Institute, and the third, worked at the hair salon which she owned. One of the men was a messenger at the university, and the other a middle-level administrator at the university. It is likely that their exposure may have influenced their way of looking at the subject of study.

5.2.2 **Descriptive data**

In this section the researcher reproduces observations on the study subjects, and responses of the participants. It is important to note that subjects were those that displayed feminized masculinities, while participants were all those who were study respondents. The narratives of findings are given below, based on the method of data collection.
**Observations**

From observations of study interest students, behavioural cues, such as ways of self expression, were coded to help determine their social and economic lifestyles. These lifestyle categories gave hint to the pattern consisting of character traits of these individuals.

The study subjects tended to belong to small groups, sometimes dyads or triads which appeared stable. In other words, the groups comprised few members who were often the same. Incidentally, the other group members did not display feminine characteristics of study interest, enabling those who did so to stand out. Often these same effeminate individuals were popular in their groups, appearing like group leaders in the way they related to the rest. Like other members of their groups, dressing was informal, characterized by T-shirts and designer jeans. The T-shirts were often loosely fitting and bearing pictures of heroes, fun scenes, or some wordings in the front or back. Plain, one-colour T-shirts were evidently a rare wear.

It appeared to the researcher that the study subjects tried to look both ‘rough’ and ‘appealing’ at the same time. They looked rough, or at least gave that impression, from the clothing and the pictures on them, yet groomed by the jewelry and hairdo they wore. According to the researcher, these study subjects displayed some ‘conflict of interests’. On the whole, they seemed to have money, judging from their designer clothes. Their economic lifestyles appeared to be at par with those of their group members. At no one time did the researcher see any visit the beauty salon, concluding that they may perhaps had their hair, manicures (and maybe pedicures) done at off-campus joints, or much later in the day when the researcher had left for home. Conclusively, these effeminate males were quite sociable.
From the unstructured interviews with parents, information regarding family values, family type, parenting style, parent availability to children, and economic status of the family, was underlined to generate the theme of parental influence on the character of their children. All these reflected the home environment and parenting patterns. From these interviews it emerged that many parents did not condone boys’ effeminate looks.

Only one of the parents interviewed indicated that the sons displayed feminine looks, but added that she was sure it would be just for some while and the sons would ‘mature’ from the habit. The other four parents dismissed as, ‘rich and uncaring, too engrossed in money-making businesses to worry about sons’ looks, those whose sons wore feminine appearances. Their parenting styles were described as ‘too permissive for African culture’. ‘They had no family rules yet they cried foul whenever their children were caught on the wrong side of the law’. Nevertheless, others seemed to ‘respect’ their parenting lifestyles because they had the money.

On engaging in further discussion, the parents who did not condone the practice openly had a negative attitude towards those whose sons showed feminine behaviours. The former felt that the later failed to discipline their children, and that for lack of discipline, few of their indiscipline children were successful in academics or other sectors where competition was fair. One can wildly guess that this explains why not so many of the socially ‘deviant’ were at the university.

Parents interviewed were emphatic that children only did whatsoever they were not barred from doing. Setting rules, making them known to the children, and reinforcing them were important issues alluded to by these parents. They acknowledged the pressure from the peer groups and media, but they claimed these only took over the gendering of boys because the parents had allowed it to happen, or because the boys had no reliable father-figures as in the case of deceased fathers and uncaring relatives. They however, were not blind to the fact that some children may be, by nature, rebellious, but added that
such were few and often indulged in things like abuse of alcohol or drugs but not feminine looks. Of all the five interviewees, only one (female) said she did not mind looks, as much as she did the ability of her boys to make a good future living. Her boys styled themselves as they wished. The other four interviewees stated they could take in none of female looks by their boys as these identified them with homosexuals.

- *Focused group discussions*

Information from the focused group discussions aided by semi-structured reflected common descriptive phrases for the behaviour of the males such as cool, freedom, control of their lives, okay, unacceptable, childish; which the researcher classified as either acceptable or intriguing. While some of the females did not mind dating men that had aspects of female appearance, most found them rather offensive and said they would not want boyfriends, brothers or sons with feminine appearance. Fathers with that kind of appearance were beyond the imagination of all the females in the groups. None of them had a father like that. This confirmed the point that the practice is relatively new within the Kenyan society.

On the question of specificity of behaviour for males and females, most participants felt some of the behaviours like painting nails were better suited for females than for males. There was consensus that those males who engage in those behaviour displays sought to look like music or sports celebrities, or to ‘look cool’ by being different from others. The main reason, the females thought, was to attract others, especially female colleagues. A greater number of the group participants believed the males would look better if they had plain appearances as expected of men. The final evaluation of the feminized males, for most, was, ‘not good’. Many said their ideal husbands should not look like them (wives). All these details spoke about the kind of interaction that the boys of interest in the study had with their fellows of the opposite sex.
Finally there was data collected by means of questionnaires. As indicated in section 4.3.3.5 in the preceding chapter, the questionnaires were designed in an orderly style, but the answers given too needed coding under some general emergent themes, considering that the questions were open-ended. Multiple phrases came up in response to various questions, as the following illustrations show:

a) ‘Confidant’, ‘abusive’, ‘harsh’, ‘confrontational’, ‘fearful’, ‘friendly’, ‘distant’, ‘good’, ‘disinterest’, ‘commanding’ and ‘close’; were some of the words used by the respondents to describe the relationship they had with their parents. These were classified in three categories; (i) close loving and friendly relationship, (ii) distant, disinterested and detached relationship, and (iii) harsh, confrontational, abusive and fearful relationship. At a higher level of categorization, two patterns were seen to emerge; one relationship that was rated as positive, enhancing emotional attachment, and the other kind, a negative one, leading to detachment.

b) ‘Understanding’, ‘available/unavailable’, ‘panicky’, ‘approachable’, ‘concerned’, ‘responsive/dismissive’, ‘soft’, ‘prompt’, ‘experienced’, and ‘listens’ were commonly used to describe the nature of the parents they often approached or did not, in order to fulfill their personal needs. This meant that a parent of a given individual was either approachable or unapproachable.


d) In explaining reasons why men plaited their hair, painted their nails, and wore adornment and jewellery, the popular responses from the questionnaires were:
‘Western and media influence’, ‘peer pressure’, ‘search for recognition’, ‘copying music celebrities’, and ‘to attract women’. All these were summed up as, (i) adaptation to external pressure (69), (ii) seeking others’ attention to the self (ego indulgence) (21) and other reasons, (10). All students responded to the question.

e) Reasons why many did not engage in the practice solicited the following responses; ‘Christianity’, ‘culturally wrong’, ‘meaningless activities to men’, ‘acceptance of themselves’, ‘understanding of who they are’, ‘separateness from girlish/women’s things’. Two major ideas that emerge here are (i) influence of religion and culture (32); (ii) choice to remain the natural man, different from woman (64). 96 responded in this manner. The remaining 4 (this specific question had 100% response) indicated the practice was one way of enjoying their youthfulness and feeling good about themselves.

f) As to whether the individual is man or woman, most respondents found the question offending, underrating (undermining), insulting, disappointing, silly or outright irritating. Two felt that would make them feel abnormal, one would be traumatized and question his own character. Only four out of a total of 82 who responded to the question thought it would be amusing. All these responses seemed to capture two reactions (feelings), (i) annoyance and (ii) disappointment. With their various feelings about the question, the respondents indicated they would answer as follows; give no response since the question was rhetoric; most other responses were in question form ‘what do you mean’? ‘What do you observe’? ‘Why’? Others were, ‘As you see’, ‘Use common sense’, ‘a man’. Both the parts of the question were to help elucidate the attitude of the subjects towards improper identification by others.

g) Consistency or inconsistency of behaviour in the presence of either parent was given the following varied explanations; ‘fear Dad so avoid mistakes in his presence’, ‘Dad demands good behaviour always and I respect him’, ‘no fear for Mum, hence consistent behaviour in her presence’. The purpose of this question was to help elucidate the importance of consistent reinforcement in the inculcation of acceptable
behaviour. What could be made from these responses was the differential reinforcement from the father the mother.

h) To the question of why men should or should not enhance their beauty, most respondents had this to say: ‘They shouldn’t because it is valueless’, ‘it is a women’s habit’, ‘men are naturally handsome’, ‘God created men and women different and the distinction should be maintained’. Those who said enhancement of beauty was fine argued that; ‘men too need to look beautiful/handsome’, ‘they should not abandon themselves’, and ‘to express gender equality’. All 100 respondents answered this question. 76 said no to enhancement of beauty for men, while 24 said yes. Generally, cultural beliefs seemed to underlie the responses.

i) On whether gender should determine roles, 97 responded. 59 said yes, giving reasons like, males and females are naturally different in their capacities, some roles are best suited for male and others for females, 2 gave no reasons. 38 said roles should not be based on gender because ‘equality ensures that both can take on any role’, ‘should base on one’s ability to perform’, ‘free participation by both sexes’, one said, ‘what if born boys only?’

j) On who was the decision maker in their home, 76 said the father, as ‘he was the head of the home’, ‘had the economic power’, it is ‘a cultural requirement’, ‘he gives good working results’, and ‘he believes everything is under his authority’. Nine chose mother because ‘she was the only parent’, ‘the father was absent from the home’, or ‘he was a drunkard’. All In all, 85 responded to this question.

k) Differential reaction of parents to feminine behaviour in their boys brought out these responses: ‘Dad would be angry, harsh, would punish me, send me away until I undid them’. ‘Mum would be confused, ashamed, would advise me to stop, would be quiet and sad’. The father is seen as forthright in his demands, but the mother is portrayed as helpless.
1) A perceived parenting mistake, the following responses were elicited; parents are not
good role models, don’t give polite advice, too hard on the children, discipline
without love, some were overprotective, do not trust their children, have no time for
their children.

Responses from interviews and contained in questionnaires, as well as information
obtained through observations were quite interesting. Whether or not the responses were
similar was still put into account because the minority also spoke something that many
times was important for the study. Often these few represented an awakening to the fact
that society was changing and realities were becoming more than just what society’s
prescriptions were.

**Conclusion**

This chapter presented the information gathered from the research, in its descriptive form.
It comprised data observed by the researcher, verbal data from interviews and
discussions, as well as written data from the questionnaires. All this recorded information
is what that the researcher deemed important in meeting the main *goal of the research
which was to explain the gender-atypical behaviour of young males*. After transcribing
the information, the next stage would be to show the meaningfulness of the data, i.e.,
undertake interpretation. This the researcher does in the chapter that follows next.
CHAPTER 6

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Aim of the chapter
The researcher in this chapter goes beyond the stage of reporting the results which was undertaken in the last chapter. The aim here is to explain the results to the readers, thereby demonstrating an understanding of the meaning of the results of the research study. In simple terms, this chapter answers the questions: ‘What is important in the data?’ ‘Why is it important?’ ‘What can be learned from it?’

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Gay and Airasian (2003:245) explain that interpreting is the reflective, integrative, and exploratory aspect of dealing with a study’s data. The whole idea is to state what the findings in the data mean. They add that data interpretation is based heavily on the connections, common aspects, and linkages among the data, especially the identified categories and patterns. One cannot classify data into categories without thinking about the meaning of the categories. Using some conceptual basis or understanding to cluster a variety of data pieces into a category means the researcher is interpreting data, either implicitly or explicitly.

From the observations, transcriptions of the interviews and the information contained in questionnaires, the researcher was able to integrate and explain the data under some categorizations. The important portions of data for interpretation were selected based on their relevance for the research topic.
6.2 DATA INTERPRETATIONS

The researcher identified some themes and sub-themes under which the findings are discussed as shown below:

6.2.1 Identity of boys as perceived by themselves and by others

The identity of individuals ought to be obvious and therefore, it was not supposed to be questionable. This could be judged from the answers given by male respondents, to how they would respond if someone asked them to state whether they were man or woman. Some of their sampled responses were: ‘As you see me’; ‘what can you see?’; ‘use common sense’; ‘what do you mean?’; ‘what do you think I am?’; ‘why’? 18 said that was a rhetorical question to which they would not respond. About how they would feel if asked such a question, many said they would be offended, disappointed, irritated, feel insulted and underrated. Two felt that that would make them feel abnormal, one would be traumatized and question his own character. Of the 82 who responded to that question, only four thought the question would be amusing.

What can be derived from the responses is that, none wants to be misunderstood on the basis of gender, since they think it is an obvious physical characteristic. Being male or female is an important aspect of a person’s identity (Beal, 1994:5) which must be incorporated in a child’s self-concept (Shaffer, 1994:280) and is learned fairly early in life, in fact by the third birthday (Golombok & Hines in Smith & Hart, 2004:118; Maccoby, 1980:238; Slaby & Frey, 1975; Spence, 1985; Stanger & Ruble, 1987 in Beall & Sternberg, 1993:58). If this is the case, it therefore seems unnerving to ask the boys to confirm the very aspect of the self that is ‘central to social order’ (Frosh, 1994:9). Identity is one’s sense of being, and questioning it would be tantamount to questioning the basic unit of existence. Gergen (1991:38) adds that ‘in the social jungle of human existence there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity. Even those who
display male atypical behaviour still expect their identity, first and foremost, as males to be obvious and therefore unquestionable.

From the respondents’ perception that male and female distinctions should be clear, and from their overwhelming ‘No’ to the question as to whether they would have been happier if born female, the researcher concluded that those who display female characteristics may not necessarily be uncomfortable with their identity as males. They therefore do not seem to pass a subtle message that they would rather have been the opposite sex, as earlier thought. In other words, they may not be transgendered, but appear to communicate a different message altogether.

From the angle of other people’s perception of them, the researcher’s close observation of the young males who displayed feminine-like behaviours also found a pattern of other common characteristics such, as freer and loud expression, both verbal and nonverbal as in their conspicuous relatively better economic presentations. All these were apparently meant to draw the attention of others which they seemed to enjoy. This conforms to the postmodern identity where image is all that matters; and pop and rock stars offer image models. Female interviewees had varied references for the effeminate males; such as ‘cool-looking’ or ‘childish brats’. Given that these individuals do not pass unnoticed concurs with a major goal of metrosexuals. (cf. Weiten & Lloyd, 2003:128; Trubo, 2003).

The conclusion is that the young males did not perceive masculine atypical behaviour to jeopardize their identity as males. This downplays the existence of the ‘other’ gender groups (discussed in chapter 2) that are recognized in the West. This is in line with the understanding that homosexuality, for instance, is not a legalized practice in Kenya. On this basis, the researcher concluded that she was dealing with a male group that was homogeneous as far as gender identity was concerned, but that the major reason for behaving different was to obtain attention to themselves. This speaks something about the self esteem (the evaluative component of the self-concept) of the affected individuals. The assessment of their own self worth may be such that it borders on narcissism –
regarding themselves as grandiosely self-important. They seem to have positive but unrealistic self-appraisals.

6.2.2 Parental contribution to gendering

Information on this topic was collected from various questions which reflected different sub-sections of the whole parental contribution subject. The sub-sections were as follows:

6.2.2.1 Contact between parents and children

From the questionnaire responses, 31 out of 98 students had frequent contact with both the father and the mother, 54 had rare contact with the father, 6 had frequent contact with father but rare with the mother, while 7 had rare contact with both the father and the mother. Summarily, 61 out of had rare contacts with their father which is slightly above 62% of the respondents. The parents interviewed conceded to the fact that the kind of economic engagement allowed little time for meaningful interaction with their children who, are either in school during learning sessions, or are all too happy to socialize with friends unrestrictedly. Parents worked on the assumption that their children were old enough to make unmonitored, appropriate life choices. Fathers stayed out longer and so children could have some more interaction with their mothers than they did with their fathers. This indicates that the young males continue to have more frequent contacts with their mothers than they do with their fathers, just as is common in childhood.

Kimbrell (1995:40) postulates that because of lack of familial images of masculinity to learn from and identify with, boys have had to attempt to develop a masculine identity in the absence of a continuous and ongoing relationship with their fathers, uncles, or other male elders. Instead, they have had to develop their understanding of the masculine image with mothers, or other female relations, and primarily early-grade teachers as their principle adult influences. Such influences may very well be misrepresentations of true
masculinity. It can be concluded here that the physical absence of a father-figure contributes to the masculine type that a given boy develops.

6.2.2.2 Relationship between parents and children

12 out of 90 questionnaire respondents described their relationships with fathers as good; 8 as casual and distant; 15 described it as shrouded in fear while 4 said it was confrontational. 23 said they enjoyed friendly relations with both parents and 28 were close with their mothers but not with their fathers. On the whole, most respondents (56) had poor relationships with their fathers. Most first born respondents indicated that their fathers were harsh. For whatever reasons, it would seem that they received more of their fathers’ temperaments than loving relationships.

On the aspect of preference for one parent, most preferred their mothers for being loving, sympathetic and understanding, while the few that voted their fathers reasoned that, it was because the fathers were generous. This seems to confirm the argument by Popenoe et al., (1996:99) that due to the requirement to work long hours, parents appear to spend more money on their children as a substitute for spending more time with them.

Male parents interviewed indicated that they have to be strict with their children for the purpose of helping them to secure a better future. However, they confessed that they could only go so far. Being a widow, the female lecturer-respondent said she had to do everything to keep her children happy so that they didn’t have to live in perpetual regret of their father’s death. When probed to explain how she ensured this, she said;

“I cant fight with my boys…just have to have their freedom…to party with friends, dance…I watch them sometimes (laughs)…and tell them what they think is ‘helicopter’ was an old traditional dance…‘kilumi’. They tell me I don’t know anything”
What emerges here is that the boys have a good relationship with their mothers yes, but which relationship seems devoid of strict (read proper) guidance needed for development of acceptable masculine behaviour.

6.2.2.3  **Discipline/correction**

Fathers corrected 30 of the 68 questionnaire respondents who answered this question, while 35 were corrected by mothers. 3 were corrected by both parents in the event they made mistakes. What emerged as interesting were the reasons that the respondents gave for the correction from either parent. For fathers it was due to obligation but for mothers it was out of love and concern. The researcher found this to speak something about attachment – that emotional bond that is characterized by a tendency to seek and maintain proximity with the specific individual. The allusion to weak attachment between fathers and their children could explain a lack of personal security that makes children vulnerable to external pressures and influence. The issue of attachment will be articulated further in the next chapter of this work (vide section 7.3). For now, what can be obtained from the data is the weak or detached emotional relationship between fathers and their sons.

Interviews with parents showed that the modes of disciplining children had significantly changed to what is advocated today (counseling), but does not seem to be as effective as the punishments the parents themselves endured (like caning, or withholding certain privileges, even food) as children. Such deterrent measures are today seen as abuse, and parents stand to face charges if they tried to use them. Unfortunately, they do not quite know how to counsel with their own children since they never had the chance to experience it. Fathers believe that they have no ability to discuss but only to act. The discussion approach is therefore left to their wives who of course, handle it the best way they know. The method is even more unsuccessful for mothers to use on grown boys who are not ‘women’. Some student respondents indicated that their mothers feared to discipline them.
While the lecturer-respondent argued that children should be dealt with lovingly, the other two women respondents were unanimous in their demands for compliance of family rules by all the children regardless, of the age. The salon worker said she could beat the children if they transgressed. Here is a portion of the conversation with her:

**Researcher:** You cant try that on your big boy, can you?

**Respondent:** …a long look of shock, then says, “wait till he does something that is bad. Am mad you know. You don’t know that part of me”.

**Researcher:** What if he floors you in the process?

**Respondent:** What!...(laughs sarcastically)...must be joking. Ken can kill him

**Researcher:** Who is Ken?

**Respondent:** The father.

(My condolences to my interviewee and family. Ken succumbed to injuries inflicted by muggers at the beginning of May this year).

This is a clear indication that women rely on their husbands to discipline their children, and if the husbands are not there, or do not exercise the discipline for one reason or another, there is high likelihood of self-willed undisciplined children, especially boys.

6.2.2.4 **Reliability of parent and need provision**

Questionnaire respondents relied more on their mothers (51 out of 70) than fathers when faced with problems. They indicated that mothers were more sympathetic and understanding. However, those who took their problems to fathers (14) believed that their fathers had experience to deal with male issues. 4 shared with both parents while one only accessed his parents through their friends.
Highlighting the complexity of current gender roles (among the Gusii of Kenya) different from the traditional ones, Silberschmidt (2001) in her paper, *Changing gender roles and male disempowerment in rural and urban East Africa*, seems to point an accusing finger at migrant labour. In their zest to fend for their families, men seek paid labour that often takes them away from home. The wages turn out to be negligible compared to the women’s contributions from the family farms. Gradually, women appear to take over provisions for their households as men struggle to keep afloat. This has resulted in the undermining of men’s roles as family providers. This state of affairs may be one reason why needs are taken to mothers more than to fathers. It is possible that fathers promise to provide, but are rendered incapable by the circumstances, hence appearing unreliable.

Interviews with male parents showed that they welcomed the economic contribution of their wives to the family welfare, but alluded to the fact that family ties remain stable, as long as they earned more than their wives. The messenger respondent said the woman would become disrespectful if she made more money and stopped relying on the husband. The administrator reasoned that is was ‘manly’ for the man to be more economically stable. When women pay school fees for the children, men’s dignity is put on trial.

From the findings it can be concluded that the changes in economic power for the women have had unprecedented results for ability to cater for needs in the homes. This too has implications for the respect that parents command from their children, especially boys. It goes without saying that children will give more attention to the parent who provides for the needs more effectively.

6.2.2.5 **Dominance, influence, and role modeling**

Most to the questionnaire respondents indicated that decision making was the father’s domain. The reasons they gave varied from cultural and religious recognition as head of the home, to economic power. Few who cited ‘mother’ said it was because the father was
absent. Kayongo-Male and Onyango (1984) cited by Adams in his paper entitled _Males and females: Gender and marital relations_ (2001), argue that when the husband is away, the wife becomes used to making decisions regarding property, finances, disciplining children, and the like. This makes it difficult to accept the husband’s authority when he returns home. It alludes to the general view that when women become the overall decision makers in a marriage relationship, stability of that family is, more often than not, in the balance.

Male parents were not asked about dominance, influence and role modeling in their homes because that would be disrespectful in a patriarchal and patrilineal society like Kenya. Instead they were asked to generally comment on these issues. They were in agreement that gender relations had significantly changed, with women gaining more say than in the past. This they said was fine, as long as it was under check and not used to look down upon their husbands. They insisted that even if the woman became boss at her place of work, in the home she still had to play the role of wife and mother. In view of this, Adams (ibid.) argues that Kenyan women were more likely to be satisfied with their role in the family division of labour, be loyal and obedient, as long as the men were responsible. This was echoed by women interviewees who added that besides being responsible, the men ought not to be abusive. It is important to note here that in many Kenyan communities, men misconstrue abuse to mean dominance, hence wife abuse is rife.

On how parents directly influenced their behaviour, many questionnaire respondents said they avoided problems, as long as the fathers were present but they did not fear their mothers, hence their behaviour was consistent, whether the mothers were present or absent. Again, this portrayed fear rather than respect for their fathers, and the argument that mothers are not strong deterrents in case of unbecoming behaviour. 51 out of 82 preferred to emulate their fathers because they were male like themselves. It was therefore the natural thing to do, drawing on their cultural and religious backgrounds. Those who chose mothers (31) supplied the following reasons: ‘she was friendly,
hardworking and supportive’. Such views drew from the affective relationships they had with their mothers.

6.2.2.6 **Summary on parental contribution to gendering**

Although both parents are important for the well-being of their children, there is evidence suggesting that men make a significant contribution to child development, especially in the case of sons, and that the absence of a male presence typically poses a handicap for the child (Popenoe et al., 1996:260). A weak or broken attachment with their fathers resulted in violence among boys, as the absence of a strong positive figure makes them vulnerable (Garbarino, 1999:57). Fathers influence the process of sex-typing through their personalities, by serving as role models, and in their daily interactions with their children (Parke, in Bruner, Cole, & Lloyd, 1981:78). Findings from the research indicate that fathers are rare in the lives of the boys, hence the likelihood of association between paternal detachment and gender-atypical behaviour; partly due to feelings of unhappiness, rejection and despair by the boys.

David Blankenhorn argues that ‘a father’s involvement with his children is imperative for the development of internal security and well-being in virtually all human societies, and that fatherlessness… is the leading cause of declining child-well being in society’ (1995:1). Following from this, the researcher concluded that the individuals who display feminine behaviours may be pointing to a lack of security in their personal lives, which only their fathers can well ensure. Emotional abandonment begets fear, anxiety, betrayal, and anger in the child resulting in rebellion against the father’s expectations (vide Pease, 2000:60-64). Based on these citations and those already given earlier in the text, the significance of the father is not culture-specific, although his roles might be. A Kenyan father is equally important in the lives of his children, especially boys who are supposed to adopt masculine roles from him. This role is however not effectively realized as the boys acknowledged better relationship with their mothers than with their fathers.
Considering the data obtained, certain trends seem common with regard to parent (especially father) participation in the lives of the children. These are enumerated below:

1. The boys have less contact with their fathers than they do with their mothers; therefore the father’s contribution to their gender typing is obviously minimal.

2. The boys have more cordial relationships with their mothers than with their fathers. This leaves them behaviourally vulnerable to external influences such as peers and media.

3. Women expect the men to discipline the boys but most fathers seem unavailable for this role. This leaves discipline ineffectively attended to.

4. Fathers are finding it increasingly difficult to effectively play their role as family providers, and the challenge from their emancipated wives on the economic platform only makes things worse.

5. Women are becoming influential and dominant in the households, making the fathers’ position as role models uncertain.

6. Positions of men as providers, disciplinarians and role models in the home are still highly recognized, and the men have to work harder to remain at the top, if only to justify their manhood.

Thus, when the men may be finding it challenging to put up with the expectations of ‘being men’, the boys are finding it equally difficult to ‘become men’, that is, form a masculine identity that complements their biological sex. This partly explains the confusion with the masculine behaviour displays by young males in the current Kenyan society.

6.2.3 Gender and roles

Respondents demonstrated an understanding of the meaning of gender equality and most stated that there should be equal opportunities for both sexes to realize their potentials. However, on whether roles should be based on gender, only a few (15) responded in the
positive that roles should be based on ability rather than sex, since women were just as capable as men in performance of tasks, including heading a home. Many emphasized that certain roles were specifically suited for one or the other sex and would be better if that order was maintained. They echoed the social expectations where even if the same job was undertaken by both men and women, differences were maintained in specific aspects of the job. For example, in the already cited role of building houses, (vide section 2.5.2 on gender roles in Kenya), most communities regarded structuring and roofing as male work, while plastering is female work.

From the responses, it can be concluded that differences in gender roles are still significant in the Kenyan society. Nonetheless, the minority voice that is of the opinion that anybody can do anything they are good at, cannot be ignored. It epitomizes a new perspective that may speak of a weakening in the social structure with regard to rigid gender role differentiation.

6.2.4 Perception of males’ beauty enhancement

Concepts such as Western, peer, and media influence commonly emerged as reasons for male participation in feminine-like beauty culture. This is an indication of external significance in determination of the physical presentation aspect of identity for the young males. A lot of what they learn from their peers emanate from urban areas where sub-cultural styles, different tastes and fashions, and multiple ethnic influences blend and clash most spectacularly.

Pressing on the issue of media influence, the argument advanced by Kimbrell (1995:16) fits in so well with the Kenyan situation. He contends that in the absence of a familial masculine image, the media have played a crucial role in defining modern masculinity, given that we evolve into the images we carry in our minds. We become what we see. The majority of the media images that youngsters choose to imitate are Western in origin, but are forced to fit in with the African culture. Consequently, the young males reflect a
host of ideas from the external world. Nevertheless, information and ideas from the media do not merely reflect the social world, but contribute to its shape, and are central to modern reflexivity.

The general view however was that men should be seen to be men, contented with the way they were created and not struggle to look like women. A few said there was no harm in looking beautiful since there is equality between males and females. From the voice of the few it can be derived that society’s preconceptions about men and women differences in appearance do not seem strongly intact as some are seen to openly bend them. With time, the presentations that are contrary to social expectations today may become a non-issue in itself rather than how well the behaviour can be accommodated.

6.2.5 Reaction of others towards feminine behaviour

For most, their parents would not tolerate the behaviour. Fathers would be very cross, although mothers would be unhappy but helpless. This underscores the point already emphasized; that mothers are not strong deterrents to their sons’ behaviour that society might view inappropriate. The idea that fathers would be hostile illustrated two things: one; that the fathers are the family disciplinarians and the boys acknowledge it, and two; that the behaviour trend is fairly novel and unacceptable among most families.

My female lecturer respondent however had an accommodating perception of the behaviour. Below is the question put to her by the researcher and the response that she gave:

Q. “...How about the way they dress... cut or do their hair...like plait, or even paint their nails, for example?”

A. “That’s simple. Tis their business... I don’t bother with that. Am sure they will soon get tired and grow out of all those funny styles ...I only need them to
respect me as their mother…they do, oh they do…like they let me know they are going out, and we are good friends…”

The salon lady was categorical she could not accept her son wearing women’s styles, hair, nails or whatever. Part of our conversation was as follows:

**Researcher:** Your son comes home to surprise you …his hair is done…like in cornrows, for example. What can you do?

**Respondent:** I will cut it using a razor blade…even not scissors. He knows Am capable of doing that…dare not try.

**Researcher:** Would you do a boy’s hair if he asked you to?

**Respondent:** Yes. Why not?

**Researcher:** But you just said you wouldn’t accept the same for your boy, so why do it on another person’s child?

**Respondent:** This is business. Am looking for money and if someone comes…I will make him and get my cash…see? I mean that’s simple. For my son …it is a No…No! Not as long as he is still under my care. But if another one wants it done, I won’t stop him when Am…I mean doing business. How can I refuse money…the thing I come here daily to look for?

The male administrator had similar views regarding his reaction to feminine behaviour by his son. A segment of our conversation was as follows:

**Researcher:** Sir, how would you react if your son did something that you think is associated with women…let’s say…plait his hair, for example?
Respondent: No male child or adult in my home is allowed to grow his hair long in the first place, so it would be hard for me just to imagine it plaited.

Researcher: Fine. But how about if he came in with earrings on one or both of his ears?

Respondent: Ok. Can’t deny that can happen… I already told them if anyone did such a thing… pierced their ears and put those women things…sorry madam… I mean the ones ladies put on their ears (demonstrates)… earrings, I will pull them out with the ears.

Researcher: You mean rip the ear along?

Respondent: Got it. I will tear it without thinking about the results. I have made myself clear, and they know it.

Researcher: But why? Others are doing it and it seems fine.

Respondent: Maybe at their home… other parents maybe don’t mind, or don’t know what to do. Here I won’t allow and … I know what to do… Am saying just let ‘em not try.

The Bible school respondent said it was all a matter of family rules and how one makes the children to obey them by ensuring that the rules are not at any time bent. She said the son had confessed to her that if it were not for them (parents) he would wear dreadlocks (called ‘rastas’ after the Rastafarians, with whom they are associated) on his head. The point is, there is propensity in each individual child to flout rules and the parents need to be firm and consistent in their demands for conformity to family norms.
There was near consensus among the female student discussion groups that their male colleagues were infringing too much on the female domain. They agreed that masculinity had imploded into femininity in a way they do not support. They indicated that they would not be comfortable with their brothers of boyfriends looking too much like women, but added that it was men’s pleasure and the females could do little about it.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that only a few members of the Kenyan society are comfortable with feminine behaviour of young males. An underlying emphasis is that the behaviour is possible among those boys whose parents are not strict with the requirements for specific masculine appearance for their boys. Where rule against are laid and reinforced, the behaviour was likely to be absent. Feminine appearance displays are therefore explained by the permissive nature of parenting in that regard.

6.2.6 Perception of parents’ behaviour

Many respondents alluded to the fact that their parents were not good role models. Fathers especially meted out discipline but without love, while mothers were loving but unrestrictive, regarding the behaviour of their sons. The meaning of this is that none of the parents is likely to enjoy genuine respect from their sons. They expect the mothers to be tough, which they are not; and their fathers to listen to them, which they have no time to do. All student respondents confessed to taking advantage of lack of reinforcement of family norms to get their way.

From the responses, it was evident that boys from families with strict religious or cultural norms still subscribe to socially approved behaviour patterns with regard to gender identity. Conversely, those from homes where the father was absent may often experiment with behaviour patterns that are agreeable with their peer groups or those that reflect their media icons, although they may be socially disturbing.
Conclusion

Overall, the researcher realized that an interaction of several factors, not just one, had a bearing on the effeminate behaviour of the young adult males. In the past, the self was seen as a product of nature (biology) and nurture (environment), in which case the environment was certain within confines of social definition. Today however, postmodern views have complicated the environmental scene with various possibilities of ‘reality’ that have become an allure to many seeking to find an identity. Thus, the young person is bombarded with so many factors all competing for their place in his identity. This means that he needs proper guidance (from a strong force) to help him decide what to include in his identity and what to omit. With diminished attachment to same-sex role models, many young men are increasingly curving out identities that society perceives as unacceptable.

Given the various factors that seem to influence biological male, what can be seen is more of construction of masculinity during the early years of life (when the child uses what is presented to form an identity without question); and deconstruction during adolescence (when the individual becomes aware of several realities) resulting in possibility of gender-atypical behaviour due to confusion. The effect of the various factors on the biological male youngster is captured diagrammatically (as per the researcher’s design) as shown below.
With the kind of position that the young boy finds himself in as he negotiates his identity, it is impossible to demonstrate a straightforward causal link to the masculine identity formed. This is due to the complexity of the social world; the multiple and contradictory nature of social reality, and the fact of simultaneous accommodations and resistances by the individual. Strong parents therefore become handy to drive him away from the bad influence, both by word and by deed. Parents need to be trusted by their children to be able to make a positive impact in the children’s lives. They need to be perceived by the children as behaving responsibly. Following interpretations made about the data, the next step is to undertake discussions and make conclusions. This is addressed in the chapter below.
CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim of the chapter

This chapter is a determination of the research success. Its aim is to illustrate the extent to which the research objectives were met and identify any areas that might require further research for further comprehension of the research area. In a nutshell, the chapter is a wrap up of the entire research.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of boys’ gender-atypical behaviour revealed interesting and insightful information regarding the construction of masculinity by the young men in the Kenyan society. Most importantly is the fact that the current masculine gender construction is in contradiction to societal norms. This is seen as resulting from postmodern influences propagated by media, which has increasingly created images of the ‘ideal’ man, the kind that is sensitive to fashion and consumer-related trends. Furthermore, there is indication that this trend is set to continue, thereby invalidating social underpinnings which, unfortunately, the larger section of society still desperately holds onto. It is increasingly evident that no amount of reinforcement of traditional social norms will turn the clock back, and society cannot in any way rid itself of metrosexuals. What any society needs to do is find a way forward, considering the host of implications that the new male generation is likely to have, as many more young males model after what was initially regarded strange. But before discussing the implications, the researcher undertakes to relate the findings to the research objectives in their order.
7.2 GENDER AND GENDER-ROLE DIFFERENCES

The first objective sought to determine the significance of differences between men and females in the Kenyan society. The researcher was able to learn from the secondary sources consulted, that each gender has his/her own place in society. Issues alluding to significance of difference were captured in cases where many communities allow polygamy on the basis of inability of the wife to give birth to a boy, one that ensured continuity of the family tree in the patriarchal social order. Moreover, the interest that families take in their sons during initiation adds to the fact that gender differences are emphasized with the male gender being perceived as the superior one.

It was also confirmed that gender roles in Kenya are an important aspect of gender differentiation. Recalling that ‘roles’, as used in this study, encompass occupations and behaviour, males and females are traditionally expected to attend to different roles. Literature sources showed that where roles were shared, there was still distinction pertaining to who performs what part of the task. Men are also recognized to be responsible for discipline of their children from the responses of students and communication of female interviewees. What emerged clearly was the probability of the boys to ‘stray’ in the absence of fathers because the boys do not take correction from mothers seriously. Neither are the mothers confident to discipline boys who are beyond adolescence since, having passed the rites of initiation, society declares them men.

Exhibiting female behaviour is only excusable in drama casts as this is short-lived. Anything outside that domain is not taken kindly by the majority of parents. This came to the fore from the answers that the respondents gave. They indicated that the parents would be very angry and demand the feminine behaviour to be undone. Furthermore, the disgust that the interviewed parents showed for boys that displayed feminine behaviour portrayed the significance with which the roles are seen as specific to each gender in the Kenyan society.
7.3 MASCULINE-ATYPICAL BEHAVIOUR

The core objective of this study was to explain the gender-atypical behaviour displayed by the emerging young males in the Kenyan society. Worded differently, the objective sought to explore reasons for feminine behaviour displays among males. The results from the research underscored the following as reasons:

- Copying of Western habits especially those portrayed by media, as well as those displayed by their peers;
- Copying celebrities, specifically those in the music, art, and sports sector;
- Lack of a strong male guide and unacceptable behaviour-deterrent figure in the home;
- Lack of emotional attachment with the father figure.

With regard to copying Western mannerisms shown by media, or their peers, youngsters are often convinced that what is portrayed by media is flawless. Gergen (1991:57) confirms that so powerful are media in their well-wrought portrayals that their realities become more compelling than those furnished by common experience. It is therefore not surprising that the young males turn to media for definition of what masculinity is.

Celebrities too are another powerful force in the construction of male identity. Ensnared by some form of classical conditioning, the young males tend to imagine that wearing the appearance of some celebrity will bring them to share in the popularity enjoyed by that celebrity (reflected glory), or maybe to succeed to the level of the celebrity. It is therefore small wonder how they get so captivated by the image of the celebrities at the expense of family values. This is because the specific celebrity figures have become absorbed into the cast of the significant others of these males that, in the words of columnist Cynthia Heimel, the celebrities become their frames of reference (Gergen, 1991:56).

Although only few responses pointed to the possibility of weakness in upbringing, the strong external (outside the family) influence alludes to the same. This is in line with
Kimbrell’s (1995:16) argument that our perception of the masculine may be coloured by a family figure if we had a strong male presence in our childhood. However, the absence of a familial masculine image (and the ineffective mother) gives room to definition of modern masculinity by the media, and that ‘we evolve into the images we carry in our minds’. This strong father-figure absence creates a vacuum that allows media as well as peers to take center stage in the gendering process of the boys. Besides, the distance between fathers and their sons, as indicated by the rare contact, less loving relationship and more likelihood of the boys to share their problems with their mothers than with their fathers also give the boys the chance to turn elsewhere for role models. As already mentioned in the text, father absence could be physical or psychological. In the case of the latter, the physically present father may be emotionally unavailable to the son.

Research has shown that a father’s emotional involvement with his children is essential for development of internal security, well-being and proper social behaviour of the children (cf. Blankenhorn, 1995; Dobson, 2001; Garbarino, 1999; Popenoe, 1996). Without the attachment to the father, the boys especially are emotionally unstable and vulnerable to detrimental influence from peers (Dobson, 2001:60; Garbarino, 1999:46). The inner world of an individual does not only contain the representations of the individual’s present life, but images of the past that exercise influence on everyday experience, particularly interpersonal relationships.

Thus, the lack of paternal attachment may influence the behaviour of the individual, whether it occurs in childhood or adolescence. When it does occur, the internally insecure individual is prone to external locus of control, especially as the attachment patterns shift from parents (asymmetrical as in need provision) to other figures such as peers (reciprocal) with whom a new bonding is developed. After all, their major need at the time is recognition and appreciation which they cannot obtain from their emotionally detached fathers. Once again this explains why young males choose to copy dress fashions and other behaviours of peers who belong to their social groups.
The next objective was to ascertain how significant and how influential the Kenyan fathers were in directing the gendering process of their boys. On this it was found that; since the absence of fathers (both physical and emotional) affects the young males as discussed in the preceding section, it can be concluded that the father is significant in the life of the son, by implication. If he is lacking, there are chances that the boy may develop a masculinity, as presented by other sources of learning, which may be regarded deviant by the larger society. Furthermore, responses from boys about their fathers’ reactions to effeminate behaviour indicated that those who knew their fathers to be tough and intolerant of feminine behaviours did not attempt to engage in those behaviours. It is possible that those boys who display the said behaviours have no strong male force to stop their engagement in the feminine behaviours. The father helped the boy to conform to, and inculcate into him, what was, and was not acceptable.

The significance of the father in the gendering process of boys in the Kenyan society was also indicated by the boys themselves. When asked whom of the two parents they would prefer to emulate, the majority (53 out of 84) voted ‘father’. The interesting aspect of the responses was the reasons given. Of the 53 who said they would emulate their fathers, only 14 explained their choice of father by saying that ‘because he was responsible’. The remaining 39 said because the father was the overall controller of the family, or because he was the same gender like them. This points to the depth in which patriarchy is rooted in the Kenyan society and how much just being male is overplayed above the responsibilities that accompany it.

It appears then, that the significance of the father is hailed more in the social establishment, than in deed; a conclusion confirmed by the kind of wishes the boys indicated (when asked to) they had for their fathers. Most wished their fathers would be more responsible, caring, concerned, understanding, patient, friendly, available and well-behaved. One would imagine that these are the very characteristics that make a male individual a father, apart from the biological privilege of being able to father a child.
From the foregoing, it can be concluded that although the father is seen as significant for directing the boys’ behaviour development, some Kenyan fathers failed to influence their sons accordingly. The poverty of the non-influential Kenyan fathers with regard to the fathering characteristics fits so well with a famous anthropologist’s statement quoted by Parke (1981:11) that ‘fathers are a biological necessity, but a social accident’. If they do not choose to arise and speak out, masculinity may be headed for a deeper muddle. Requiring that fathers establish meaningful contact with their sons, the researcher hopes, is not asking for too much. That is what their children are asking for. Even with the discovery of in-vitro fertilization (IVF), Kenya has not reached the point of contemporary American culture which David Blankenhorn describes as having ‘now fully incorporated the belief that fatherhood as a distinctive social role is unnecessary, undesirable, or both’ (in Kimbrell, 1995:145).

Nevertheless, the father seems to play an ‘important function’ in the second phase of the boys’ gender construction, during the period of initiation. Once the boy attains the required age, the father takes over the arrangements for the ceremony, as it is a time to pride in the transition of their sons from childhood into adulthood. Unfortunately, the intended purpose of the initiation – to enable the boy to construct appropriate male behaviour characteristics – has been overridden by the opportunity for the fathers of the initiates to graduate into the next level of respectable elders. Perhaps that explains why the ceremony has not been abandoned all together (to allow for uneventful hospital surgery if need be). This is because, as has been obtained from the research; the boys do not follow to mould their masculinity around the instructions given at initiation, making the ceremony a mockery of its former self.

7.5 SOCIETAL CHANGES AND BOYS’ GENDERING

The last objective sought to explore how changes in the Kenyan society have had bearing on the subsequent gender identities formed by the ‘new man’. The fact that respondents acknowledged gender equality as a necessary component of social life speaks of changes
within a society where males were unquestioningly superior and females inferior. This is not to say that inequality has been overcome, but there is some tilt, from the initial vertical male-female (male top, female bottom) relationship to a diagonal one today that may be (hopefully) heading for one that is horizontal. In discussing the relationship between changes in society and masculine gendering, the researcher firstly examines some of the changes; and secondly explains how these changes have affected boys’ gendering.

7.5.1 Some notable gender-related changes in Kenya

Changes towards equality between males and females have been initiated and are perpetuated by different bodies at various levels of human existence. At the global level, the UN Centre for Human Rights has done a tremendous job in the fight for the equal rights for all. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (sheet no.16) for example is a covenant that seeks to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights of individuals through member states. These include:

1. The right to work in just and favourable conditions;
2. The right to social protection, to an adequate standard of living and to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health;
3. The right to education and to enjoyment of the benefits of cultural freedom and scientific progress.


At the national level, the member states who are party to the international covenant, either by signature or accession, bind themselves to bring the National law and practice into line with the provisions of the covenant. Suffice to say, Kenya is a signatory member state of the UN.
Several changes have been initiated by the Kenya government aimed at improving the educational, working and social conditions of her women folk, all in line with eliminating the gender inequalities that characterized the society. These include the 1981 Law of Succession Act, giving women equal rights to inherit, own and dispose of property; Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1984); abolition of female genital mutilation (FGM) to enable women to have control of their sexuality, deliberate attempts to increase the number of women representatives in parliament (18 in 2002 from 9 in 1997, and 0 at independence in 1963); the implementation of Free Primary Education in 2003 in a bid to provide Education For All (one of the Millennium Development Goals); the 2001 Affirmative Action; the National Commission on Gender and Development (2003); and the Sexual Offenses Act (2006), among others. With these legislations, a substantial number of women are now participating at the economic and political levels of the society, although grappling with challenges such as poverty, insecurity, early marriages but above all patriarchy and the negative attitudes towards women’s leadership.

Besides the social-related changes, there are also economic changes especially to adapt to the demands of the global economy. Truth be told, the only way capitalist nations can survive economically is to align themselves to effectively participate in the global market through production and consumption. Kenya increasingly makes deliberate efforts not to be left behind.

### 7.5.2 Effects of the changes on gendering of boys

Changes in the Kenyan society have had direct effects on the gender relations, and indirectly on the boys’ gender identity development. The effects of the changes on men are captured in a statement by Silberschmidt (2001) that ‘socio-economic change has left men with a patriarchal ideology bereft of its legitimizing activities’. Men have been disempowered in the sense that they now face legitimate competition from women who at times do better. This has resulted, on the one hand, in a lack of social value and self-
esteem, and an undermining of men’s roles and identities. On the other hand women have been accorded more bargaining power, yielding uneasy gender relations with the men.

Inability of men to effectively provide for their families means certain of the practices by which they asserted their masculinity, such as polygamy, can no longer be sustained. Furthermore, the dislodging from the economic and political power bases also means that men cannot continue to enjoy unquestionable respect from their wives and children, least of all boys who love to be associated with powerful figures. Because of these changes, men have increasingly lost control over their sons.

Looking at economic changes from a global angle, postmodernism is so intertwined with consumerism; with world economies more interested in the relentless race to more production and of course, more consumption. Ability to purchase material possessions has become equated with happiness. It appears that consumerism is fueled by ‘the promotion of the consumer’s interests’ alongside ‘the theory that an increasing consumption of goods is economically desirable’, as indicated in Webster’s dictionary (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consumerism). Although commonly associated with the Western World, consumerism has become a multi-cultural and non-geographical term. Kenya, like many other African nations is reeling from its effects. Buyers must be found for everything, products good or bad. Even the bad is made to appear good and therefore, sellable.

The media has done a lot in ‘transporting’ the ideals of consumerism and ‘hooking’ people, especially youngsters, to them (vide discussion on media under masculine-atypical behaviour section 7.3). However, the coastal location of Kenya as a strategic tourist destination cannot be overlooked in the discussion about changes in the country occasioned by Western influence.

Many new habits enter the country via the tourists who visit the coastal towns and within a short period of time, the rest of the country comes under the influence of the new cultural trends. These habits include modes of dressing that spurred interest and resulted
in this study. The colonial mentality that the West is more civilized continues to reign supreme among many Kenyan communities. All these new habits and ideas are taken on board in the already multiple and complex social world – a world in which the young males must negotiate and appropriately position their masculine identity. The whole scenario parallels what Kimbrell describes thus:

“As men are being buffeted by a whirlwind of painful new employment realities, gender-role reversals, family breakdowns, and demeaning public and media perceptions about maleness, they remain confused about the very nature of masculinity itself” (1995:295).

Formation of masculine identity has increasingly become a conundrum. It is imperative at this point in the discussion to examine what this kind of scenario means for the Kenyan society.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is certain that construction of masculinities takes place in many physical as well as social environments such as families, kraals, schools, gangs, workplaces, hostels, missions, and public spheres. This makes generalizations about masculinities a fallacy.

However, conclusions from the research, whose main goal was to investigate the masculine-atypical behaviour of young males in Kenya, are broadly speaking, two-fold. One; boys daily interact with the complex social environment comprising postmodern ideas, as well as women liberation movements ideals in their endeavours to form masculine identities. This poses a reasonable challenge regarding what, and what not to adopt in constituting their identities. The manner in which they respond to the challenge causes some of them to form masculine types that are not readily sociable. Two; the formation of identities that are out of shape with society is bound to continue, given the multiple and contradictory nature of reality that is continually changing and increasing
in complexity. This kind of scenario within the Kenyan society reflects the Western society of which Lewis Mumford poses a rhetorical question that is extremely relevant for the problem investigated in this study thus:

“If technology is not to play a wholly destructive part in the future of Western Civilization we must now ask ourselves, for the first time, what kind of society and what kind of man are we seeking to produce?”


In the light of deconstruction brought about by postmodernism and spurred on by technology, it becomes natural to ask the same question, ‘What kind of society and what kind of men are these changes likely to produce?’ And further perhaps, ‘how does society prepare to cope?’ This makes the researcher to consider as important, the implications; especially for education that is charged with the responsibility to train people to function properly in society, as well as implications for the society as a whole. Below is an exposition of these implications on the school as a gendered institution.

7.6.1 The school as a gendered institution in Kenya

A UNESCO document recognizes the school as a social arena marked by asymmetrical power relations that are enacted not only through gender, but also through age and authority (vide http://www.cnescdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001467/146763e.pdf). This thesis pursued only the gender aspect.

Within the institutional culture of the school, there are norms of interaction, and implicit and explicit rules that guide behaviour which are re-enacted and reinforced in the everyday life of the school. Even here the ‘gendered regime’ is constructed through everyday taken-for-granted routine practices. In many Kenyan schools, girls are predominantly responsible for cleaning classrooms while boys take care of the compounds. In the classroom, girls may sit at back (where they often get ignored) while
the boys sit at the front. Furthermore, girls share desks with fellow girls, and the same applies for boys. These gender boundaries help to construct and reinforce feminine and masculine identities, which are performed over time through individual and collective acts of resistance and accommodation. Transgressions across the boundaries of accepted gender behaviour are discouraged through teachers’ reactions and through peer pressure which sometimes manifest acts of violence (especially among boys) such as physical assault, intimidation, verbal abuse, deprivation, and ostracism. Both boys and girls play a part in ‘policing’ the boundaries of gender relations.

It is therefore evident that every day attitudes and beliefs about gender are being brought into the classroom, and they also influence what is taught and how it is taught. Kenyan teachers do not come into the school as gender neutral personalities. Instead, they come with their internalized patriarchal gender ideology acquired through years of socialization in both formal and informal settings. They then impact on the hidden curriculum that is as vibrant in classrooms as the stated curricula. According to a paper on *Gender equality in the classroom*, it is the hidden curricula that ensures that gender differentiated practices, procedures, and processes occur at classroom level, even where gender-friendly policies and curricular exist (Muito, 2004). This is still in line with one of the goals of education in Kenya, which is to maintain the cultural heritage and promote national unity. Schools therefore help reflect the values held by society. Kenway (1997:6) is cited as describing the function of the school with regard to gender as follows:

“…schools help to teach boys about being male and becoming men…They learn that there are male and female ways of being a student, a friend, a worker, a sportsman, a teacher and a partner. They also learn that there are different ways of being male, some more powerful and prestigious than others”

The school also provides the framework for the conduct of staff-student relationships. As external face of male power in the establishment, teaching is both about control and authoritarian certainty. According to Salisbury and Jackson (1996:18), the characteristics of effective teaching become talking from the front and controlling any child’s response. The boys recognize patriarchal values of control all around them, and incorporate these values as they shape their masculinities through interactions with others. Having shown how schools are agents in the construction of masculinity, the next is to examine what the study means for such an institution in the light of unprecedented changes.

7.6.2 Implications of the study for education in Kenya

If schools teach boys what it is to be men, then attitude change in matters of gender construction, and more specifically masculinity, must certainly begin there. The paradox is that the teacher is expected to act in accordance with what is the accepted gender construction within the specific society, and at the same time be the agent of change. This is further complicated by the fact that the school system is largely traditional. The teacher may therefore find it difficult to equip the learners with life skills in the highly dynamic society if he himself continues in his traditional mentality.

Issues of gender are just beginning to be articulated in the Kenyan education system with emphasis on equality between boys and girls. No policies are in place to cater for the males whose persona and style are different from those espoused by the male power system; which is frightened by fears of unmanliness, in associating with femininity. Clearly, there is bound to be conflict between the teachers’ expectations of masculinity and that of learners (boys) who may have feminine behaviour orientations in their expressions of gender. If this is the case, what scenario can be built in terms of future education with special reference to gender mentoring or modeling?

Kenya as a society should position itself appropriately as a global player, and education is the most important institution to help achieve this goal. The school system should
therefore be updated to yield products that fit in the world without losing the sense of identity as a nation. An understanding of the changes will go a long way in helping the individuals to make right choices with regard to masculinity construction. However, there are also implications for society as a whole.

7.6.3 **Implications of the study for the Kenyan society**

From the results of the study, it becomes apparent that the question no longer is; ‘why are the boys constructing feminized masculinities?’ This has been covered in the study. However, the questions that emerge are; ‘if traditional society is transformed by the new generation of men, what impact will this have on the urban and rural society, on communities, and on the family hierarchies’? In other words, ‘how do (or will) the changes and varieties in masculinities affect the functioning of various social institutions?’ Also; of what role is the continued imposition of gender construction (for example circumcision) in the advent changes brought about by the consumer economy that allows the youngsters to buy into another different type of gender construction (e.g. of music idols and sports icons) using money? These are viable questions for further research. At the moment it is clear that reclaiming masculine identity through staunch resistance to change – reaffirmation of the masculine mystique; or viewing masculinity as essentially dysfunctional hence advocacy for misandry; will not suffice to quell the current crisis in defining masculinity. Some recommendations were therefore advanced below:

- The entire society needs to be prepared to live with the emerging complex masculine types through change of attitude and redefinition of masculinity. The key is to recognize the variability of masculinities created by different environmental situations.

- The aspect of fluidity and fragility of masculinity should be factored in the teacher training courses to ensure that the classroom teacher will be sensitive to the dynamics of the masculine gender.
• The education system should seek to strike some balance between acceptable forms of masculine gender constructions and control extremes that would be damaging to useful social values.

• Fathers and father-figures should pay more attention to their parenting role by especially being more involved in their boys’ lives even after adolescence.

• Further research should be undertaken on the transformation of male identities to enhance greater appreciation of these individuals who today are not regarded with seriousness within the Kenyan society.

After outlining recommendations requiring attitude change and adjustments in education, the researcher proceeds to make final remarks.

7.7 GRAND FINALE

Having established that there are various reasons determining the likelihood of the construction of a masculine-atypical identity, the researcher concludes that these effeminate individuals can be conceptualized as belonging to two broad groups. One group represents the strong-willed identity that defies positivist structure which is perceived as no longer matching the changes in society. The other group represents two types of the weak identity; the first is the narcissistic and unrealistic in self appraisals, hence displays behaviours that are meant to attract the attention of others, and the second is the emotionally vulnerable to external influence, due to failure to experience paternal attachment necessary for development of internal security.

Masculinity, or gender construction as a whole, cannot be properly conceptualized from the sex-role socialization theory or even from the social constructionist view. Rather, it should be from the poststructuralist view. This allows one to recognize that what children learn through the process of interacting in everyday world is not a unitary, non-contradictory language and practice; hence not a unitary identity is created through those practices. To paraphrase the words of Bronwyn Davies, the individual is therefore ‘a
shifting nexus of possibilities which are increasingly unlimited by his /her reproductive sexual capacity and linked instead to the range of potential possibilities he/she is capable of taking up’ (Jackson & Scott, 2002:282). As already emphasized, postmodernism accepts multiplicity, randomness, incoherence, indeterminacy, and paradox, which positivist paradigms are designed to exclude. According to Hare-Mustin and Marecek, postmodernism creates distance from the seemingly fixed language and established meanings and fosters skepticism about the fixed nature of reality (Herrmann & Stewart, 1994:70). These ideas are taken on board by both the strong and weak personalities (as classified in the preceding paragraph), for varying reasons, in the construction of their masculine identities.

It is possible to foretell that masculinities will continue to reinvent themselves in different (and atypical) versions, as long as the two personality groups of men - the strong deviant personality and the weak personality - continue to exist; and they are certainly bound to. But because cultures are internally quite consistent with regard to their standards of ‘appropriate’ gender-role behaviour, it is upon the Kenyan society, and any other societies affected, to invent structures that will not only streamline masculinities but also accommodate ‘harmless’ emerging masculine identities. Being equal does not mean being similar, and the Kenyan society can do well to maintain differences between males and females without compromising equality between the sexes. This acknowledges what God did as recorded in scripture:

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

As a matter of fact, important cultural values must not be sacrificed on the altar of foreign invasions.
REFERENCES


ANNEXURE A

STUDENT’S QUESTIONNAIRE ON GENDER TYPING AND BEHAVIOUR OF BOYS.

Dear respondent,
I am a research student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth- South Africa, Faculty of Education. I am interested in understanding the reasons for the various kinds of gender-atypical behaviours among young adult males. This questionnaire has been constructed to obtain information on various items that have bearing on an individual’s behaviour development.

Kindly answer the questions as honestly as possible. It is important to note that:

1. There are no specific correct or wrong answers.
2. The information you give will be confidential and strictly for academic purposes only. Consequently, do not indicate your name on the questionnaire.
3. Your participation in this investigation is voluntary.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Catherine Kituko Simiyu.
D.Ed. Student.
Answer all questions in this questionnaire.

Note: The terms ‘father’ and ‘mother’ could be substituted for ‘male guardian’ and ‘female guardian’ respectively.

1.0 How often are you in contact with your parents?
   Father    [Never]    [Rarely]    [Frequently]
   Mother    [Never]    [Rarely]    [Frequently]

1.1 Do you prefer any one of your parents to the other?  [Yes]  [No]
   If your answer above is Yes, state the parent you prefer and give the reason.
   Parent preferred --------------------------
   Reason --------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.2 Give a brief description of your relationship with:
   Your father-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   Your mother---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.3 Supposing you make a mistake in the presence of both your parents, who among them will most likely correct you? --------------------------
   Give a reason for your answer above----------------------------------------------------------
1.4 When faced with a problem it is easier to share with your: [Father] [Mother]
Other (please specify) -------------------------------------------
Kindly explain your answer above-------------------------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.5 If you have any kind of need, would you obtain the same support from both of your parents? [Yes] [No]
Explain your answer above------------------------------------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.6 Who among your parents is the decision maker in the home? [Father] [Mother]
Please explain-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.7 Can you say any of your parents aggressive to the other? Please state who, and why he/she is aggressive.
Aggressive parent--------------------------------------
Reason for being aggressive--------------------------------------
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

1.8 Would the presence of your father cause a difference in your behaviour? [Yes] [No]
1.9 Would you behave differently if your mother were absent? [Yes] [No]

Please explain your response

2.0 Who among your parents would you like to emulate? [Father] [Mother]

State the reason for your answer

2.1 What do you understand by the term ‘gender equality’? 

2.2 Basing on your answer on ‘gender equality’, should gender be a necessary factor in determining roles? [Yes] [No].

Kindly explain your position above

2.3 How are roles shared among male and female members of your family?

2.4 “Any parent (father or mother) can be in control of the home” What is your opinion on the above statement?
2.5 Would you have been happier if you had been born a woman? [Yes] [No]
Why? -----------------------------------------------

2.6 Do you think men should enhance their beauty just like women? [Yes] [No]

Please explain your viewpoint-----------------------------------------------

2.7 What is the likely reason why some young men:
(a) Plait their hair? -----------------------------------------------
(b) Paint their nails? -----------------------------------------------
(c) Wear body jewelry? -----------------------------------------------

2.8 Basing on question 2.5 above, respond to any of the following two questions, whichever is applicable to you

(i) You engage in all or some of the practices mentioned because:
-----------------------------------------------

(ii) You do not engage in any of the practices mentioned because:
-----------------------------------------------
2.9 Answer one of the questions (a) or (b) below, depending on your case.

(a) How do the following people react when you come home displaying any of the characteristics mentioned in 2.5 above?

(i) Your father

(ii) Your mother

(b) How would the following people react if you came home displaying any of the characteristics mentioned in question 2.5 above?

(i) Your father

(ii) Your mother

3.0 If you met someone who asked you,” Are you a man or a woman”?

How would you feel about the question?

How would you respond to the question?

3.1 Please state any wish you have about the behaviour of each of your parents by completing the following statements:

(a) I always wish my father

----------------------------------------
3.2 Many parents hope their children will grow up into respectable people. What do you observe to be a common parenting mistake?

4.0 How long did it take you to join the university after leaving school? 

And now to help classify your responses, please answer the following by indicating the appropriate answer.

5.0 Your age bracket. 18-25 years [ ] 26 years and over [ ]

5.1 Your community (e.g. Kikuyu, Luo e.t.c.)----------

5.2 Your parents/guardians marital status. [single] [married] [divorced] [widowed]

5.3 Your family is [monogamous] [polygamous]

5.4 Your parents’ academic qualifications
   (a) Father [Primary] [Secondary] [College] [University]

   (b) Mother [Primary] [Secondary] [College] [University].

5.5 Briefly explain the nature of your parents’ jobs
(a) Father

(b) Mother

5.6 How many siblings do you have? ---------------

5.7 Your birth order rank [first born] [middle child] [last born] [only child]

5.8 Your religion [Moslem] [Christian], Other (please state) ----------------------------

Thank you for your participation.
ANNEXURE B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR FOCUSED DISCUSSIONS

1. Comment on the issue of specificity of behaviour for males and females. Are the differences necessary or not necessary?

2. Give your views on why some young men plait their hair, paint their nails, or even wear body jewelry like earrings?

3. Would you concede with the possibility of your boyfriend spotting the behaviours that are common with women, such as plaiting hair, painting nails, wearing body jewelry?

4. How would you react if the same behaviours mentioned are displayed by your father, brother, son?

5. What is the ideal image of your husband or husband to be?

6. Give a genuine evaluation of your male colleagues who display feminine habits.