

**Players and Layers: Young Men's Construction
of Individual and Group Masculinities through
Consumption Practices**

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Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

2009

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself. To the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously written or published by another person. It does not contain material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, except where due acknowledgment has been made.

Date: **01/06/2010**

Wendy Hein

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Hein". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

This thesis is dedicated to the two most important women and men in my life: my sister Sonja Hein-Schnieder, my mum Bianka Hein and my patient husband Leon Barron. Without your help I would have never completed this work and words cannot express my gratitude and admiration.

Most importantly, this PhD is for my father, Detlef Hein. Dad, I hope you're as proud of me as we are of you.

Acknowledgments

A piece of work such as this spread over several years cannot be produced without the support of countless people and I would like to specifically thank a few of them in the following lines. My first words of gratitude go to the informants and participants of this study. They allowed me to experience a world and culture that I may have never gotten to know and they probably do not realise how much I enjoyed the time I got to spend with them. Their support made this work possible in the first place and I hope I did them justice. Right behind them, I give particular thanks to my patient and incredibly hard-working supervisor, Stephanie O'Donohoe, who always knew the right words to say each step of the way and who was more than considerate of my own circumstances, personality and inner demons. Additional thanks go to my second supervisor, David Marshall. Speaking of all the people who inspired and further motivated me, I would like to thank everyone in the group of Scottish interpretive consumer researchers, most notably Paul Hewer, Kathy Hamilton, John Desmond and Susan Dunnett. Thanks are also owed to those people who gave me initial inspiration and support from my 'home' institution DCU: Darach Turley and Michael Gannon. Thanks also go to Maurice Patterson and Brendan Richardson for having an open ear and a word of advice when it was needed. Most importantly, I have to thank Annmarie Ryan and Robert Corrigan for their collaboration and their belief in this work.

I would like to thank everyone who found this work worthy of being funded, most importantly the Dr. Jost Henkel Foundation whose support was invaluable to me. I would also like to thank the University of Edinburgh for providing additional funding. My mum's and my sister's belief in me to give when I needed it the most went above and beyond and I am extremely grateful. All of those friends who put up with me during weeks and months, fed me and housed me, most notably Michael Clouser, Kevin Quinn, Tali Deeb and Naoise Byrne, I cannot thank you enough for your support. If not monetary, countless other friends across several European countries (véis, aqui aparecéis Pablo, Noelia, Ana, Teresa y Dani) helped, supported and motivated me during a time when funds and self-belief was low. No doubt this will change with the completion of this work and I'll be able to express my gratitude more appropriately. Finally, thanks are owed to fellow PhD students, Shariq Sheikh, Stephen Harwood, Mary Ho, Rene Arnold and Sarah Marshall for keeping me company and allowing me to vent whenever necessary. Particular thanks go to Laura Nisbet for being there for me in the last days and hours with sound words of advice and wise information. It really kept me sane.

Finally, words cannot express my gratitude and admiration for the unwavering support from my family, Mama, Sonja, Ralf und in den letzten Zuegen auch Charlotte; the Barron family, Pat, Angela and Laura; and most importantly my husband Leon. When I had no more motivation, you were there and your belief in me is the reason this all finally came together. You don't know how much it means and I'll make sure to make it up to you.

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Abstract

Literature across a range of social science disciplines highlights the existence of multiple masculinities, performed and negotiated through everyday practices. However, many studies of male consumers have not explicitly addressed how practices construct gender. In consumer research, themes of masculinity have mainly emerged in studies of advertising images, subcultural consumption, brands, events and consumer tribes. Few studies have explored men's consumption and the construction of masculinity through and across practices. Previous studies also appear to have examined gender, practices and identities at either individual or group levels. This study therefore sought to address the role of consumption in young men's construction of masculine identities, across a range of contexts, and at individual and group levels.

Working within the Consumer Culture Theory tradition, these issues were explored through ethnographic research with young Scottish men aged 18-22, developed from contact with members of a football-themed University society. Data on collective practices were generated through non-participant observation followed by participant observation over a 13-month period. Practices included playing, watching and supporting football, visiting pubs and nightclubs, and playing poker. Accompanied shopping trips also formed part of the study. To gain further insights into individual identities long interviews with nine key informants were conducted. The analysis involved the iterative cycle of de-contextualising and re-contextualising of data strips in the form of detailed reflexive fieldnotes, interview transcripts, photographs and film material.

Masculinities emerged as contextualised, shifting and deeply rooted within practices of these young men. Their consumption produced normative ideals within groups. It also played a role in practices during which 'masculine capital' was sought. This capital was expressed through knowledge and experience in practices rather than objects and brands.

Practices came to resemble games in which this capital was constantly contested. Through these games, groups also negotiated their place within the cultural context of gender relations. Consumption within practices constructed 'invisible' gender identities through collectively shared meanings of masculinity. However, seemingly normal meanings of masculinity and consumption emerged as highly complex and layered as individuals constructed their multiple selves across practices. Rather than being fixed, consumption and masculinity was constantly (re)negotiated in changing contexts. This layered negotiation process of consumption meanings and masculinity was also reflected in informants' discourse.

This study suggests that various masculinities are 'played for' through consumption across culturally situated practices. It shows how practices and consumption meanings shift during the negotiation of often contradictory and intertwined layers of gender identities. Methodologically, it offers insights into the challenges of gender differences between researcher and researched, and the role of new technologies such as mobile phones in ethnographic studies. Consumption and marketing messages may therefore allow young men to 'do', 'talk' and 'be' masculine across varying practices and contexts.

1. Introduction

A recent advertising campaign by Publicis UK (2008) for McCoys crisps shows a group of four young men playing a trivia quiz on a games machine in a pub. Holding pints of lager in their hands, eating crisps, they stand in a semi circle around the machine answering questions. One of them reads out the first question: “Bass player in the Sex Pistols, quick?” Everyone answers in unison, “Sid Vicious”. The second question follows: “Who won the World Cup in 1986?” One of them proudly responds, “Argentina”. Up to this point, all questions are answered comfortably and the friends are visibly enjoying each other’s company. Question number three is read out: “In ballet, what is the term for the graceful bending of the knees?” Three of the four men look at each other in bewilderment, astonished that such a question could be asked in a pub quiz. None of them knows the answer. The camera turns to the fourth who answers after some hesitation: “Pliés?” Subsequently, a glass tube is lowered into the scene, isolating him from the others. Glancing at the pack of crisps in his hand, he drops it with regret as we see him being ejected through the tube from the group. The camera returns to the other three who continue their game selecting the answer “Pliés”. The slogan of the ad appears in bold writing across the screen “McCoys – Man Crisps”.

Ads such as these that frame men and masculinity in humorous and ironic ways have become pervasive in contemporary society. They also present the wide array of products that are now specifically targeted at young men. While not all of them may define men’s interests, practices and spaces as clearly as the example above, they indicate a growing recognition of the male as consumer. Marketing has reflected the increasing awareness of men’s gender identities and their construction through consumption (Mort 1988). It also produced changing images and discourse to follow the shifting popular tastes and ideals of masculinity (Nixon 2001). Despite clear meanings of masculine practices presented in ads such as McCoys’, research on men and

masculinity has also been marked with crisis discourse (Horrocks 1994, MacInnes 1998a). Talk of masculinity in a crisis emerged in conjunction with changing roles and expectations of men in contemporary society (Faludi 2000). Shifts in what seemed previously accepted as firm and monolithic meanings of masculinity often presented difficulties for some men to cope (Segal 1990). It appeared more difficult to define the essence of masculinity. This alleged crisis had been further linked with increasing crime and violence by men along with concerns for their health and emotional well-being (Whitehead 2002). Although masculinity had been traditionally associated with dominance (Seidler 1997), recent studies and reports suggest fragile and vulnerable identities (Horrocks 1995).

Talk of masculinity in crisis and increasing marketing efforts directed towards men may however be poor reflections of how men really live their lives and construct gender identities, also through consumption. These are the issues that define the scope of this study. It follows suggestions that describe masculinity as a relational and social construct negotiated within practices. Along with broader socio-cultural meanings, a collective element of masculinity was recognised for its contested character and the continuous search for approval from other men. Gender however also emerged as interpreted and enacted by individuals as part of fragmented, multiple and contradictory identity projects. Acknowledging the importance of groups and individuals for negotiating masculinities, this research explored the construction of young men's gender identities through consumption across culturally situated practices. With this, it seeks to contribute to existing consumer research by addressing the gendered consumption of men in practices.

This thesis is structured into four main sections. Initially, the literature review provides an overview of existing research on men and masculinities, how this topic has been studied in consumer research and finally the role of practices for constructing individual and collective identities. This is followed by Chapter 3, outlining the methodological

approach and how it was adopted in this study. The dominant part of the thesis is dedicated to the presentation and interpretation of research findings. In three chapters, themes are highlighted that relate to a) collective masculinities and consumption practices, b) the negotiation of individual identities and consumption and c) the cultural discourse that reflected the layered negotiation of masculinities and consumption. Finally, the conclusions aim to briefly summarise the findings and highlight its contributions to the field of consumer research.

2. Review of literature

2.1. Introduction

“Manliness, in other words, is a contested territory; it is an ideological battlefield.” (Edley and Wetherell 1996, p. 106)

“Like the *Invisible Man* of H G Wells, whose death is signified by his return to visibility, the weakening of particular masculine identities has pushed them into the spotlight of greater public scrutiny.” (Rutherford 1988, p. 23)

The question of what masculinity actually is cannot always be easily answered. Definitions of gender and masculinity have changed alongside socio-cultural shifts. For some time it seemed that there was no need to define masculinity as it was ‘natural’ for every man (Coleman 1990). As Jonathan Rutherford (1988) refers to in the opening quote, masculinity has only slowly moved into gendered visibility (Segal 1990). The question of what masculinity is and the difficulty of finding a straightforward answer relate to contemporary notions of masculinity in crisis (Horrocks 1994, Kimmel 2005a, MacInnes 1998a). While it may have been perfectly clear what masculinity meant in the first half of the 20th century, different and competing versions have started to emerge that challenged the existence of a single, ‘normal’ masculinity (Faludi 2000). Definitions of gender also largely depend on the research task. As Edley and Wetherell (1996) point out above, meanings of manliness and masculinity are contested. This literature review sets out to describe some of these varying understandings of the concept of gender, and specifically men and masculinities. As part of this, significant attention is placed on Connell’s theory of masculinity as part of gender relations. Subsequently, some of the research into gender and masculinity in consumer behaviour and marketing is reviewed. A third section considers the importance of practices and how these may play a differentiated role for constructing collective and individual

identities. The overall aim of this review is to point out some of the key concepts that may be necessary for interpreting subsequent research findings. At the same time, a number of gaps are identified that this piece of research aims to address.

2.2. What is masculinity?

Across fields of inquiry, we encounter a relatively recent increase in interest in men and masculinities (Hearn 1996). Prior to this, gender studies had been dominated by women with a view towards voicing feminist ideas (Kimmel *et al.* 2004). These aimed at increasing the visibility of female and feminine perspectives in contrast to the male and masculine ideals that dominated research and public life in general (Seidler 1994). Subsequently, studies from the gay movement emerged that added to the perception of different versions of masculinity (Morgan 1992). Although heterosexual men stayed mainly outside of the spotlight of investigation, masculinity was also addressed in these movements, albeit indirectly. The title of Simone de Beauvoir's work, for example 'The Second Sex' (1953), already indicated that women were recognised as the 'other' in opposition to their dominant male counterparts. Other feminist work (Friedan 1965, Ehrenreich 1983, Faludi 2000) further described men and masculinity as the oppressor, their position maintained through institutionalised power. 'Rational' masculinity as opposed to 'emotional' femininity justified men's superior positions, legitimising their political, public and economic status in patriarchic structures (Seidler 1989, Seidler 1994). The majority of feminist work therefore highlighted the social inequalities between the sexes (for a discussion on the social division of labour see Siltanen 1994). Men's reaction to feminist movements varied. Seidler (1989) noted that men historically responded with hostility. Dench (1996) argued that women actively placed themselves into the role of the oppressed and that this was one of the fundamental flaws of feminism since it removed their power to change. Other studies emphasised how men were influenced by feminism and often contributed to feminist theory (Digby 1998). Overall,

the discussions sparked by feminist and gay movements generated a greater interest in studying men and masculinity.

The first definitions of masculinity emerged therefore rather indirectly in contrast to femininity. While efforts were made to make feminine perspectives visible, masculinity remained relatively invisible and undefined. It was accepted as the default or standard position. This characteristic of invisibility has also emerged in several instances in literature. Male researchers started to realise themselves as gendered. Kimmel for example talked about invisible or even 'genderless' masculinity as the ability of 'ignoring the centrality of gender' (Kimmel 2005b, p.6, Wetherell and Griffin 1991). David Morgan (1981) encountered one specific moment of self-awareness of his 'invisible' masculinity during a course on feminism and feminist theory. He described his situation of being in the minority as one man amongst a group of women: "(...) What happened was that, at each point, my normally-taken-for-granted gender came up for critical self-examination and reflection." (p. 84) Morgan recognised his gender here as uncritical, taken for granted and without a need for reflexive awareness. All this also refers to masculine gendered invisibility. Men and masculinity represented 'malestream' positions (Hearn and Morgan 1990) that were rather 'spontaneous' (Coleman 1990). Slow changes towards gendered visibility were also seen as challenging men's status as 'normal' (Segal 1990). Difficulties associated with change were equally reflected in manuals for men, such as Robert Bly's (1992) *Iron John*, which invited men to search for 'new visions' of their own masculinity.

With this in mind, the following sections outline how further fields of inquiry have shaped our understanding of men and masculinities. Specific attention is placed on those theories that build the background for this study. Throughout, we will also address how men and masculinities, sex and gender, have been inextricably linked (Hearn 1996).

2.2.1. Masculinity in psychology

Parallel to social sciences, the natural sciences also investigated the concept of masculinity. Masculinity and the male have often been placed here in opposition to femininity and the female. Biological studies for example grounded gender within sex difference, often using gender and sex interchangeably (Whitehead 2002). Men and masculinity, and women and femininity were two opposing, inseparable entities. By nature men and women differed physically based on their different genetic make-up that influenced distinct body shapes and sexual reproduction organs. Nevertheless, the results of sex difference research investigating behaviour of males and females were mostly inconclusive (Edley and Wetherell 1995). Men were not always more rational or better at maths due to their genes, for example. These studies did however highlight the socially perceived dualism of men and women which often separated the sexes far more than the actual distinctions of their biology (for a discussion on this view Epstein's *Deceptive Distinctions* 1988). The results also sparked nature versus nurture debates surrounding gender (Segal 1990), reinforcing notions that gender may be socially dependent rather than a biological fact. Psychoanalysis produced further insights into the meanings of gender. It mostly studied how individuals came to identify as either masculine or feminine and developed their sexuality. Jung (1968) for example saw gender identifications as existing within archetypes of the collective unconscious. Freud and Jung ultimately considered gender as a fixed set of characteristics although these were regulated through social pressures and the desires of individuals (Connell 2005).

Freud (1952) was also interested in the development of individuals as gendered and sexual beings. His theory of the Oedipus complex explained the contradictory and complex relationship between men and women. He argued that through the process of internal conflicts experienced during childhood, men eventually came to identify with their father's masculinity. Boys were described as suffering under castration anxiety from their fathers for loving their mothers. As a consequence, men came to fear and

distance themselves from their mother and her femininity. Freud argued that these were the reasons for men's search for independence, conflicts with intimacy and emotional behaviour. He characterised this as the foundations of masculinity as rational and detached. Masculinity was equally placed here in opposition to the feminine. As a result of the conflict for the attraction men felt for their mother, men were described as searching for legitimate ways to channel or project their emotions onto other women or even other activities. For one, Freud was heavily criticised for interpreting the relationship between mothers and sons as sexual. Subsequent feminist critique also commented on Freud's seemingly natural assumption of the father as the more powerful figure in the family (Dinnerstein 1987, Chodorow 1978). Men were those who passed on masculinity and power. Nancy Chodorow (1978) reinterpreted Freud's concepts following object-relations theory, arguing that instead of the son identifying with the father it was the mother who felt socially compelled to bring up her son as masculine. She was the one who ultimately forced him to distance himself from her gender. Young children, she argued, were mostly unaware of gender differences. Their behaviour was thus a reflection of the gender education of the mother, fostered by her traditional role as childcarer. Masculine identification was therefore viewed as a particularly conflicted process for young boys as they were forced to find an alternative to the femininity of their mother. In the absence of a father as childcarer, finding this masculinity and opposing the mother could be an even more complicated process (Chodorow 1978).

The Oedipus complex with all its critiques has been widely drawn upon across disciplines. In anthropology, Gilmore (1990) took on Chodorow's theory of masculinity as 'invented' by young boys, interpreting acts of opposing their mothers as 'breaking their chain'. Comparing masculinities across different cultures he argued that it was achieved through a process of struggles, contests and rites of passage. Chodorow was also criticised for interpreting women as more powerful than men for their role as childcarers, and then conferring this power to men (Segal 1990). General criticism of psychology and psychoanalysis was also raised for its claim of representativeness (Frosh

1999). Additionally, gender characteristics were rather portrayed as relating to fixed, 'healthy' identities (Edley and Wetherell 1995). The notion of a changing gender psyche over time was not explicit. Its findings did however offer some explanation for certain masculine behaviour. Kimmel (2005a) for example saw the repression of the feminine as a basis for men's constant competition with each other. Men's contests were rooted in their fear of being perceived as more feminine, emasculated and hence humiliated in public. He further suggested this as a source for deep-seated inferiority complexes that often lead to homophobia or bullying acts. Edley and Wetherell (1996) also argued that the "flight of the feminine" may explain homophobia as compensating for one's emotional needs by projecting them onto others. Horrocks (1995) suggested that emotional compensation acts are directed towards 'legitimately masculine' interests such as sports or music. Men were allowed to become passionate and emotional in such legitimate areas of interests.

Another theory of masculinity through object-relation was offered by Lacan (1977) in his concept of the phallus. Lacan's theories related to the notion of the self being created through symbols or objects, where these translate to the subject and define one's self (Horrocks 1995). As objects received symbolic value, masculinity became understood as a system of symbols represented by the *phallus* (Connell 2005). The phallus was not associated with fixed structures or personality traits. Rather, it corresponded to a symbolic relationship of hierarchy that led to dominant positions. Hence, the phallus represented a source of power that was claimed within the continuous struggle and competition amongst men over dominant positions. Although the phallus disregarded sex differences, Lacan also saw that women could never have access to the phallus (MacInnes 1998). Rather, men and women identified differently in relating to this symbol of the 'phallus'. For men, the phallus remained an elusive symbol representing an ideal rather than something that could be possessed permanently. Horrocks (1995) suggested that the symbolic value of gender was essential in taking gender relations forward through generations within specific cultures. Interpreting

gender in terms of a relational system of symbols, the theory of the phallus also marked the beginning of a progressive understanding of masculinity as non-monolithic (Segal 1993) and changing across situations and cultures (Craib 1987). Through its symbolic meaning, masculinity had the potential to change. Lacan's theory of the phallus therefore seemed more flexible. It mainly offered explanations for men's quest for (symbolic) achievements and contests. Nevertheless, psychology and psychoanalysis often described masculinity in terms of men's dominant position over women and femininity. The notion of opposed behaviour and characteristics was further reinforced as part of sex role theory.

2.2.2. Masculinity and sex role theory

As the name implies, sex role theories mostly considered gender in terms of different roles of men and women. While sex and gender remained relatively separated, men were ultimately associated with masculinity and women with femininity (Connell 2005). Similarly, sex role theory often described normative roles for women and men in society. Men were expected to occupy male sex roles and women female sex roles. Talcott Parsons (Parsons and Bales 1956) summarised male roles as essentially 'instrumental' opposed to female roles as 'expressive'. Taking a rather pragmatic view of society and social structures, he interpreted male behaviour as more controlling and rational in opposition to females who were perceived to have greater ability in emotional, caring and creative work (Edley and Wetherell 1995). For Parsons (1956), 'instrumental' and 'expressive' roles were complementary and reciprocal. They both had to be present for a functioning society. Roles were also affirmed through the male 'public' and female 'private' realm. Subsequently other frameworks relating to sex role theory continued to define certain characteristics as inherently male or female, separating and opposing the two. Sandra Bem for example listed opposing traits traditionally associated with either gender in her Sex Role Inventory (SRI, Bem 1974)

and Gender Schema Theory (GST, Bem 1981). Identification with these traits rendered individuals as masculine, feminine or androgynous (Bem 1985). Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) therefore classified individuals as more or less 'sex typed'. Sex was not related to gender as men and women could be identified as either more masculine, feminine or gender 'neutral' in this schema. Nevertheless, normative gender traits were conceptualised here once again as dualistic opposites. One side of the table contained feminine, the other side masculine traits. Moreover, the BSRI did not take consideration of any changes in gendered characteristics or the variation of gender across cultures, over time or according to circumstances.

Focussing on normative roles for men, Brannon (1976) divided culturally dominant roles of men into four groups. These were 'no sissy stuff' referring to the rejection of the feminine; 'the big wheel' describing men's role as the breadwinner in search for status and social recognition; 'the sturdy oak' being men's strive for strength and independence; and 'give 'em hell' summarising the aggressive, violent and competitive element of masculinity. The role of the breadwinner and the 'flight from commitment' were also discussed by feminist writers (Friedan 1965, Ehrenreich 1983, Faludi 2000). In political terms the breadwinner model was seen as contributing to structures of patriarchy (MacInnes 1998a, MacInnes 1998b, Seidler 1994). While Brannon's categories aimed at summarising a set of normative male roles, they also came to represent essentialist definitions of what it meant to be a man, mainly referring to American culture. Here lay the central criticism of sex role theory. Although it represented ways of understanding men, ultimately roles also provided stereotypical meanings of masculinity. For "roles are defined by expectations and norms, sex roles by expectations attaching to biological status" (Connell 2005, p. 25). In a sense, sex roles summarised the social expectations and masculine norms that were eventually associated with men. Gender and sex intertwined here once again. Sex role theory was also heavily critiqued by Pleck (1981) for inhibiting change (see also Donaldson 1993, Edley and Wetherell 1996). Roles and norms defined by sex role theory often required

adjustments of individuals without viewing individual difference as a key driver for change. Pleck also commented on the lack of space for dysfunctional roles within the sex role paradigm (Connell 2005). Parallel to this, sex roles did not address the unequal power relations between men and women but rather continuously reproduced them (Carrigan *et al.* 1987). Ultimately, sex roles were seen as educating men into stereotypical roles that ignored personal differences, placing pressures on social conformity.

Subsequent theories aimed at increasing the flexibility of a sex role approach. Harris (1995) for example considered how cultural norms and messages regulated men's behaviour and how these changed over different life stages. Father figures, the family and culture in general were named here as the most important sources emitting messages about masculine behaviour. Pleck, the major critic of earlier sex role theory, attempted to grasp the essence of male sex roles in the dialectic between the dualistic themes of 'get ahead' and 'stay cool' (Pleck and Sawyer 1974). Sex role theory was also adopted across fields of inquiry as a way of interpreting gender. Kessler and McKenna (1978) for example considered sex roles in their ethnomethodological study of gender. Roles were considered here as a component, but not a definition of gender. A sex role framework was also adopted for interpreting masculinity in anthropological studies (Gilmore 1990, Chant 2000). Chant's (2000) study suggested that the lack of more flexible roles in a changing society were the reason for a crisis of masculinity among Costa Rican men. Although sex roles often created the illusion of fixed norms, expectations and roles were depicted here as changing over time and in response to cultural influences (see also Mead's (1942, 1949) anthropological studies).

Sex role theory therefore added to an understanding of gender as socially constructed. It also appeared that locating gender in sex roles related to a more common view of masculinity and femininity (Edley and Wetherell 1995). Roles and role assimilation described gender as it made common sense within society, referring to a kind of

masculinity that everyone could potentially identify with. These common perceptions also highlighted that social pressures to conform to specific roles appeared very real. Asking anyone about the meanings of masculinity often produces a list of very similar characteristics: “(...) hard, aggressive, strong, dominant, remote, powerful, fearful of intimacy, rational, unemotional, competitive, sexist.” (MacInnes 1998, p. 14) These traits have been pervasive in the way masculinity has been conceptualised within society, although they may appear traditional. While they may have produced positive connotations in the past, nowadays they placed men and masculinity in a more negative light (Craib 1987). Masculinity as aggressive was now often associated with crime and violence (Messerschmidt 1993, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Here was also the basis for the much-discussed crisis of masculinity as essentialist norms were very difficult to ‘live’ or adopt in contemporary times. While men were expected “to be at the helm“ (Whitehead 2002, p. 48), their traditional roles supporting their dominance were undermined by feminism and general social expectations to adopt more feminine sides (Faludi 2000, Whitehead 2002). With essentialist gender referring to the notion of male/masculine and female/feminine as categorically different (Messner 1997), men were described as experiencing a crisis of confidence in how to define masculinity (Whitehead 2002). Moreover, traditional sex roles may have placed men in dominant positions, but they also presented ‘costs of masculinity’ (Messner 1998). These costs included the compliance to very narrow definitions of how to ‘be masculine’ that also rejected the feminine, including the ability to be expressive or emotional.

Goffman (1963) also gave his account of the stigma attached to the normative roles for the American male:

“There is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and recent record in sports.” (p. 128)

This quote emphasised again how masculinity became associated with an ideal that was difficult to achieve. It also describes the pressure to perform according to certain expectations. Performance was not just key here in the sense of producing results. In his earlier work, Goffman (1959) also added the dramaturgical side to role theory. He argued that we performed certain roles within society and that we were socially expected to present ourselves in specific gendered ways. While sex role theory rather referred to the roles we engage in or the positions we occupy, Goffman related roles to theatrical performances that we used for presentation management in front of others. This contributed to a notion that gender formed part of what we 'do' rather than who we 'are'. Gender was not described here as a fixed, constant part of our biological make-up. Instead, Goffman argued that gender consisted in performances for others according to social conventions, expectations and norms. Goffman's presentation management thus highlighted how gender was performed for the sake of social or collective acceptance. At the same time, 'doing' gender in real life was often not as fixed as it was presented in sex role theories. Performances varied contextually. Viewing gender as the presentation of roles for social convention also placed the construction of gendered meanings rather outside of the individual. While gender certainly contained elements that referred to social expectations, it also emerged as a central concept in relation to identity.

2.2.3. Masculinity as gender identity

The socially constructed understanding of gender therefore led to the notion that we 'do' gender. This concept of 'doing gender' was initially introduced by West and Zimmermann (1987) who took an ethnomethodological approach to their study of seemingly fixed gender characteristics. Similar to Kessler and McKenna's (1978) ethnomethodological study, 'doing' gender emerged as an extension of Goffman's concept of gender display and presentation management. The idea that we all 'do' gender was subsequently adapted in several studies outside of ethnomethodology

(Wickes and Emmison 2007), and also extended to the idea of 'doing' masculinity (Morgan 1992, Hearn and Morgan 1990). Rather than viewing gender as a set of fixed attributes which seemed consciously displayed towards a socialised ideal, 'doing' gender introduced the notion of masculinity as enacted. Coleman (1990) criticised Goffman's concept of gender as dramaturgical performances arguing that it was less consciously scripted. Although masculinity was at times consciously 'performed' in Goffman's sense, Coleman (1990) explained that the individual experienced it as far more fluid, subconscious and natural. In the majority of cases, masculinity was not something that required a conscious effort or work. At the same time, Gilmore (1990) also described masculinity as a set of accomplishments, often achieved through a process of rituals, contests and struggles.

Other, often feminist theories contributed to the idea of 'doing gender' in the context of constructing gender identities and sexuality. Using the concept of 'performative iterations', Butler (1990, 1993) viewed gender as accomplished, enacted and performed through recurring performances appropriated by individuals. Reproducing and re-enacting gender norms became understood as legitimising acts, enabling identities to be constructed so they could be accepted and performed in appropriate social structures. Through these embodied iterative performativities, Butler saw gender as taking on the illusion of being fixed. The body was emphasised as the site for gender enactments that were constantly worked on. Gender was described as imprinted on the body. Although bodily performances were understood as highly socialised, the body as the instrument was nevertheless part of the individual who appropriated, interpreted and engaged in embodied performances (Butler 1993). It was the locus or site of individual choice, although these were contextualised within historical and cultural structures (Butler 1999). The body thus presented personal interpretations of gender. Here we found also the site where sex was connected with gender as embodied performances communicated gender (Connell 2005). Men were expected to perform masculinity, women femininity. Yet, embodiment could change and shift. The body as the site of gender emerged as a

working project, as something that needed to be incessantly (re)formed and (re)developed. Muscles and strength were part of the conventional display of masculinity and were expected to be developed (Bordo 2000). Masculinity as an embodied identity emerged here as a constant and continuous work in progress.

Masculine bodies were also recognised as symbols of the phallus (Bordo 2000, Butler 1990, Lacan 1977). Connell (2005) described male bodies as ‘true’ or ‘deep masculinity’ (p. 45). For one, he argued that bodies represented a certain appearance connecting masculinity to the male. He characterised masculine embodiment as “a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving (...)” (Connell 2005, p. 53). Parallel, the individual was also viewed as experiencing and perceiving his masculinity through the body. These themes also permeated into several other areas of inquiry. For example, male bodies became central in the study of sports (Parker 1996, Messner 1990, Messner 1992, Connell 2000b) and body modifications, often with a focus on deviations from normative expectations of embodied masculinity (Gill *et al.* 2005, Kessler McKenna 1978, Garfinkel 1967). Embodied masculinity was also related to the expression of power (Seidler 1997, Messner 1997). Roper (1991) translated embodiment into the representation of the suit as a symbol of masculine power as it de-sexualised men and allowed them to objectify others who were unable to embody ‘the suit’. It therefore became recognised as a uniform of power that supported seemingly ‘invisible’ masculinity (Kimmel 2005a). Similar to the phallus, only men could embody the suit in a masculine way. Embodiment, gender and power also emerged from a broader discussion of the construction of identities (Butler 1990, Luther *et al.* 1988, Crossley 2001). Just as gender was embodied and performed, so were identities. Rather than viewing masculinity as an isolated variable, identities were found at the intersection of gender, age, class, ethnicity, sexuality and culture (Segal 1990, Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, Rutherford 1988).

Giddens (1991) further explored issues of the self and identity in modernity. Although his ideas did not directly address gender identities, certain themes are very relevant for how we can understand gender and masculinity. Modern theories such as Giddens' describe identity as a continuous reflexive project drawing from historic, cultural and social frameworks. Fragmenting forces of modernity lead to increased search for 'ontological security' (Giddens 1991, p. 36). Generally, this security was found within those recurring performances that created the illusion of natural, taken-for-granted, fixed identities. We can relate this to the seemingly 'natural' character of masculinity. The illusion of 'normal' or appropriate identities also supported the resolution of existential questions through a belief in the existence of a shared reality. Often promoted through mediated experiences (Giddens 1991), forces of modernity result in an ever-increasing amount of choices for how to live our lives. The central theme that emerged was that individuals have no choice but to choose (Warde 2005). The abundance of choices may be very liberating in one sense, but choice can also be a source of existential anxiety. Constructing coherent and 'natural' identities becomes a more complex process as meanings of what is 'normal' or fixed are blurred, fragmented and fragile. Choices present several ways of constructing identities and inventing our 'lifestyles' (Giddens 1991, p. 80). Additionally, our choices represent and express our self in our day-to-day actions. We portray our selves through what we 'do'.

Translated into a gender context, masculinities can also be understood as reflexive identity projects that are continuously worked and re-worked. Although they are influenced by this illusion of a fixed, natural or shared meaning, the word 'illusion' already suggests that this reality may not exist. These theories further remove masculinity from its 'monolithic' appearance towards a perspective that sees each gender identity project as different. It also leads us to understand that masculinity is ultimately an individual project. Our life choices are as individual as our identities. Therefore, the locus of understanding, expression and sense of masculinity may rather be found within each individual. Every individual may construct their own version of

masculinity. As an extension of this we can consider Foucault's theory of 'practices of the self' within his *History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1979). With this concept he placed significantly more importance on individuals for constructing selves and gender identities (McNay 1992, 1994). In drawing parallels between Foucault, de Beauvoir (1953) and Butler (1999), McNay (1992) described the act of becoming gendered as acquiring individual **skills**. "It is a certain way of existing in one's body which involves the individual's idiosyncratic interpretations of already established corporeal styles." (McNay 1992, p. 72) Gender identities, 'from the body to the self', required individual participation and interpretation. The role of the individual in 'doing' gender emerged as more prominent here.

Notwithstanding, the connection of masculinity to class, age, culture, ethnicity and sexuality (Forrest 1994) also implied social dimensions. As diverse as our personal choices for our identity, identity projects were not worked on in isolation but within a socio-cultural context. These broader, more collective aspects were taken into consideration in the concept of social identity (Jenkins 2004). Research surrounding social identity focussed more on how identities were shaped by membership of certain social groups, categories or cultures (Turner and Giles 1981). Jenkins described gender in this context as a collective category defined externally through social structures. Gendered identification was equally seen as driven by the membership or identification with social categories or groups. At the same time, the construction of self and the embodiment of gender were experienced in moments of internal or individual identification. Jenkins (2004) therefore conceptualised social identities as continuously negotiated through the internal-external dialectic, simultaneously collective and individual. We will examine these concepts in more detail in subsequent sections. It is important to understand how we can understand masculine identities as continuously (re)constructed through every-day actions and interactions: living, doing and talking (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1995).

In relation to these complex processes of identification, masculinities emerged as layered, fragile, fractured and shifting, yet fluid and seemingly 'natural' at the same time (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Segal 1990, Segal 1993). Social changes in relation to family structures and increasing employment of women (MacInnes 1998b, Connell 2005) contributed to changing social expectations and a variety of choices for men in the construction of their own gender. Yet, these choices were fundamental in the discussion of masculinity in a crisis (Whitehead 2002, Kimmel 1994). With different choices also emerged different ideas of what masculinity was and how to live it. The multiplicity of masculinities that emerged from these choices seemed to erode ideas of normative or essentialist, monolithic masculinity (Segal 1990, Faludi 2000, MacInnes 1998a, Horrocks 1994). Research moved towards 'masculinities' instead of a single 'masculinity' (Kimmel *et al.* 2004, Connell 2005, Hearn 1996). However, Hearn (1996) suggested that society promoted a false monolithic masculinity that reproduced existing power structures. While identity theory may therefore help us in understanding gendered identification, it does not address the different positions of gender within society. Accepting that every individual is different neglects gender inequalities. The following theory of masculinity sought to reflect the social construction of gender alongside the power that men continued to hold within society. Instead of considering how men and women are inherently different, it approached gender as a relational construct.

2.2.4. Relational approach to gender and masculinity

Taking into account that gender and gendered identification were not constructed in isolation of socio-cultural structures led to another theory of masculinity. Instead of viewing gender solely as an individual project, masculinity was interpreted in relational terms. Leading to this theory, Carrigan *et al.* (1985) first applied Antoni Gramsci's concept of hegemony to masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity describes how certain

groups of men gain dominance and how this power is reproduced within social structures (Donaldson 1993). In a sense, hegemonic masculinity defines how superior positions are claimed through accepted models of masculinity within the gender hierarchy. Masculinity takes shape through its relation to other forms and expressions of gender. Within these relational structures, we encounter masculine ideals or 'winning styles' (Connell 1987). They dominate the gender configuration and its practices within cultural settings. Antoni Gramsci (1992) described hegemony in terms of class relations. His concept explains that certain groups 'configure' around the winning of power and build hierarchies in the process (Connell 2005). This power gives them the ability to create definitions, describing the 'normal', moral or ethical, and punish non-conformity (Donaldson 1993). Translating these ideas to masculinity, hegemonic masculinity was understood as the most accepted model or version of 'doing' masculinity or constructing masculine identities, whether collective or individual. 'Winning styles' also imply multiple versions of masculinity. The struggle for claiming hegemonic ideals evolves into continuous contests underlying the acceptance of hegemonic positions. These in turn shape those practices that lead to these positions.

Gender was found here again at the intersection of ethnicity, age, class, etc. (Connell 2005) within dynamic social structures. Hegemonic ideals were also acknowledged to continuously change over time. Carrigan et al. (1985) emphasised the historical dimension of hegemonic masculinity. At times, it was not even represented by a real-life individual but maybe a super hero or a film star (see also Rutherford 1988). A very important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is that it is not just relational towards femininity; it also needs to be considered as relational in terms of other masculinities, particularly in relation to homosexuality. The relational structures are further explained in three concepts. Firstly, Connell (2005) argues that subordination refers to the dominance of hegemonic masculinity over other groups of men, his example being gay masculinities. Hegemony as heterosexual is generally placed in a superior position in relation to subordinated homosexual men who cannot claim or have access to hegemonic

ideals. Gay masculinities in turn are also subordinated for their proximity to femininity. Second, marginalisation describes relational configurations towards other races or classes. Finally, complicity refers to passive compliance or conformity rather than active participation in the construction of hegemonic positions. Connell compares this to the audience at a football match as opposed to the actual players on the field. Complicity is central to the construction of hegemonic masculinity as it represents the passive support of an ideal by other men. Other men or men as a collective endorse accepted ideals so to speak and through their passivity reproduce legitimate structures of masculinity. Kimmel (1994) explains this further:

“We are under the constant careful scrutiny of other men. Other men watch us, rank us, grant our acceptance into the realm of manhood. Manhood is demonstrated for other men’s approval. It is other men who evaluate the performance.” (p. 128)

Similar to Gilmore’s (1990) account of cultural rites of passage leading to manhood, masculinity is presented here as granted by other men. This contrasts the notion of a gender project or process that is completed by the individual. Connell (2005) also indicates that masculinity has been increasingly recognised as a collective construct and complicit behaviour is central to this process. At the same time, the construction of a collective demands individual participation and choice (Giddens 1991). Within groups, Connell argues, that practices sustain a legitimate masculinity that relates to socio-cultural conventions and expectations (p. 108). Other men and other versions of masculinity also contest hegemonic masculinity. Parallel to complicit acceptance as supporting hegemonic masculinity, the idea of ‘other men’ emphasises the struggle over defining and legitimising dominant ideals. Hegemony is seen as challenged, tried and tested (Donaldson 1993). It varies across cultures, class and age but it is always heterosexual (Hearn 1996). This also supports the subordinate position of homosexuals and homophobia as a central element of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel 1994). Cathexis is the concept that refers to the repression of other forms of sexuality (Connell

2005, Carrigan *et al.* 1985). Carrigan *et al.* (1985) also argue that this repression can lead to channelling or compensation acts in sports for example.

How is hegemonic masculinity created or sustained? One source of hegemonic ideals as mentioned by Carrigan *et al.* (1985) is the mass media. The media provide continuous reminders and inspiration for the modification and creation of hegemonic ideals. Gender relations are communicated to us continuously through commercial messages for example. The power of persuasion is central here and equally fundamental in Gramsci's description of hegemony. Hegemonic masculinity also addresses the social division of labour as some occupations or tasks are considered as feminine and therefore rejected or subordinated whereas others legitimate masculinity. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity is often seen as reinforced through institutional, public and social structures including schools (Renolds 2004, Hawood and Mac an Ghail 2003) or the state (Seidler 1999). Legal frameworks that control rights for gay marriages in contrast to traditional couples could be seen as one example. The benefits of hegemonic masculinity motivate men to comply with accepted ideals. Hegemony also generates material differences in relation to other gender positions. Men earn significantly higher wages and reach more senior positions although they work a similar amount of time or even in similar positions (Connell 2005, MacInnes 1998a, MacInnes 1998b). They are more likely to be in control and exert power over what Connell described as subordinate or marginalised groups.

How has hegemonic masculinity been explored? Studies of men and masculinities, particularly as part of sociology, gradually moved the focus towards the lived dimensions of masculinity (Tolson 1988, Willis 1977, Morgan 1992, Hearn 1996, Messner 1997). Connell's (2005) approach of studying life narratives represents one example. His descriptions of men and masculinity show the different versions of masculine relations and how their life experiences result in different gender constructions. He presents cases of lower class masculinity that are negotiated around

the labour market. Other masculinities in turn are ‘organized more around knowledge and calculation than around confrontation’ (p. 103) as he outlines in ‘Men of reason’. Here, he looks at men’s construction of masculinity through their work. He considers those masculinities that take on feminist critiques, displaying a ‘softer’ side to masculinity in ‘A whole new world’. Emphasising the relational construct, he also presents cases of ‘gay’ masculinities. The gendered body remains central to this relational approach and ultimately brings gender back to sex. Rather than viewing the body as an instrument of identity it was understood as an ‘object of practice’ (Carrigan *et al.*, p.595). For example, Connell (2002) described masculine embodiment as part of Australian ‘Iron Men’ contests. In an attempt to define masculinity, Connell (2005) suggested the following:

“(…) we need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives. ‘Masculinity’, to the extent the term can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations, the **practices** through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture.’ (p. 71, added emphasis)

Edley and Wetherell (1996) offer a similar explanation:

“(…) masculinity emerges from men’s social activities. Masculinity is the sum of men’s characteristic ‘practices’ at work, with their families, in their communities, and in the groups and institutions to which they belong.” (p. 96)

Gender can thus be understood as a ‘place’ generated by relational and social practices that carry gendered meanings. These practices in turn create shifting configurations through which gender identifications are expressed and experienced. Masculine and feminine can therefore be understood as configurations of relational practices. Gender needs to be seen as relational, as constructed in interaction with other gender positions and their practices. It is their inter-relationship that creates and influences the other. We can also see that these practices define different masculinities at the same time. Men can be boys, sons, fathers, husbands, workers and non-workers simultaneously. This also

emphasises the plurality of masculinity, not just across groups but also for individuals. Masculinity emerges here as shifting, contextual yet also highly contradictory.

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been subject to much criticism for being too vague and too undefined (MacInnes 1998a, Donaldson 1993). It could be argued that it left masculinity in its 'invisible' state as it mainly received its meaning through practices constructed in relation to other groups in the gender configuration. This may also mean that masculinity had no inherent meaning on its own. The centrality of gender for the individual was therefore diminished. The presence of other men seemed to produce the need to compete over masculine ideals which constructed masculinity (Kimmel 1994). Although Connell's theory may present one of the most significant attempts to describe masculinity in its complexity, it has been questioned whether it actually explains individual masculine identities appropriately. Only a small number of men represent hegemonic masculinity and ideals change continuously. This leaves us with a relatively elusive concept that may not necessarily grasp the 'nitty gritty' of everyday lived masculinities (Wetherell and Edley 1999). Messner (1997) indicated the differentiated meanings that masculinity could have for men as a collective and individuals: "Men, as a group, enjoy privileges due to the social construction of gender relations. Men tend to pay heavy costs for their adherence to narrow definitions of masculinity." (p. 8) These narrow definitions relate to normative hegemonic ideals, the constant struggle over claiming hegemonic masculinity and heavy punishment for deviating from this norm (Kimmel 1994). This leaves us with the thought that masculinity may be of benefit to men as a collective, but rather negative for men as individuals. Throughout this discussion, everyday practices emerged as central to the construction of masculinity. Yet, questions still remain concerning how masculinity may be different for men as individuals and men in groups.

The following sections highlight some of the studies that have explored the behaviour of men in groups. Existing literature that presents relational 'other' is also explained.

Finally, the last section summarises some studies on male practices and their role for the construction of masculinity.

2.2.5. Masculinity and 'homosociability'

Masculinity has been increasingly described as a collective concept. Connell (2005) relates this to the social and collective element of practices. Kimmel (1994, 2005a) underlined collectivity through expressing masculinity as constructed under the constant scrutiny of 'other men'. While competitions within groups of men were generally described by Kimmel as reinforcing normative masculinity, they were also viewed as creating a distinct bond between men (Lyman 1987). The male bond has also been a theme in other studies (Messner 1997). Lionel Tiger (1969) added his perspective of the importance of male groups in the context of the biological and social evolution of men. He described men's socio-biology as developing from primal hunters and gatherers. Their competition and simultaneous solidarity evolved within groups of men for their 'survival of the fittest'. Solidarity and the contradiction between intimacy, competition and homophobia in male groups were also themes summarised under the concept of homosociability (Morgan 1981). Homosociability is described as the desire of being amongst heterosexual men (Butler 1990). This desire was for example often found amongst English writers (Sedgwick 1985, Kimmel 2005b). It seemed that being in the company of people who are the 'same' produced a certain comfort. While referring to same-sex company, homosociability provides insights into the relationships in groups of men and their attitude towards women (Morgan 1992). This attitude and the desire to be in the company of heterosexual men also translated to specific practices and spaces.

'Homosociality' emerged in the anthropological study of masculinities in Latin America by Gutmann and Viveros Vigoya (2004). Besides the relationship between men, the authors described in more detail the social spaces that were historically occupied by

groups of heterosexual men. Identified spaces were leisure spaces which were usually differentiated between work and home places, the public and private (cf. Stevenson *et al.* 2000). Within these culturally situated spaces, men also used to share and reproduce common masculine ideals. Similar themes emerged in the study of male consumption spaces or enclaves (Dodson and Nielsen 1996, Sherry *et al.* 2004, Kozinets *et al.* 2004). Work spaces, such as factories for example, were often seen as divided into areas for women and men. This related to homosocial work spaces encountered in the advertising industry (Nixon 1997a, Nixon and Crewe 2004). Gregory (2009) recently compared male advertising groups to 'locker room' culture. Equally, locker rooms have been studied for their homosocial characteristics and identified as spaces for maintaining hegemonic masculinity (Bird 1996). Homosocial groupings were described by Gutmann and Viveros Vigoya (2004) as expressive about their homophobia against homosexual men. This behaviour was often depicted as mere justification acts or affirmation of heterosexuality in the presence of other men, similar to what Kimmel (1994) referred to as homosocial enactments. Gender hierarchy based on sexuality seemed to be more an issue in these heterosexual groupings. Any doubt in group loyalty, for example a lack of participation, was punished with being labelled as 'gay'. The authors also added that masculinity was continuously validated through competitions. Homosociability therefore combined the fear of the feminine within a male group with the fear of sexual ambiguity expressed through homophobia and competitive acts (Kimmel 1994). The competitive strive to 'best' the other person also related to the harming side of masculinity (Horrocks 1995). Out-performing one another in certain practices such as car racing or drinking alcohol often based competitions on endurance of hardship which were negative associations with hegemonic masculinity.

Interestingly, homosociability referred to groups of men based on their biological sex rather than masculinity. Although sex and gender were separated here, male groups were described as producing normative masculine ideals through competition and pressures of conformity. Once again, this indicates the benefits that men derived from

being part of a group (Messner 1997), although often at a cost (Horrocks 1994). Beside these concepts of male groups, Hearn (1996) pointed out that masculinity can be categorised into specific groups within cultural settings, possibly based on age, class, ethnicity and sexuality. Of course, one man can be part of several different categories at the same time. We can relate these categories to cultural stereotypes (Tajfel 1981) or practices that may be associated with specific versions of masculinity (Gilmore 1990). Gilmore further argued that groups of men often exerted pressures to conform to certain ideals, beyond the choices of the individual. He suggested that broader socio-cultural forces shaped ideals that were habitually reflected in groups. However, finding one individual man who could be placed into these categories or stereotypes may be more complicated (MacInnes 1998). Connell's approach of studying individual men's life narratives showed the contradictions and negotiations that each men faced in performing socially accepted masculinities while remaining true to himself (Connell 2000b), being his 'own man' so to speak. It seems that men have a desire to be part of male groups, although these may exert pressure.

Homosociability was described as men's desire to be amongst 'the same'. Being 'the same' as everybody else also emerged as an important theme in the study by Wetherell and Edley (1999) on discursive practices in negotiating hegemonic masculinity. In these psycho-discursive practices, men positioned themselves differently in relation to hegemonic ideals. While they saw themselves as 'heroic' and complicit, Wetherell and Edley also found that men were keen to describe themselves as 'ordinary' and 'normal', not representing a stereotype. Instead, they were just 'the same' as everybody else. Fitting in and not being 'visible' has been pointed out as an important element of masculinity in previous sections. At the same time, in 'rebellious' positions men located themselves as individuals, opposing any association with hegemonic masculinity (Wetherell and Edley 1999). While in the first instance, the social aspects of masculinity seemed important, men were also described as focusing on themselves as individuals. Similar findings emerged in a study by Gill *et al.* (2005) on the negotiation

of masculinity through the embodiment of their identities. Findings revealed normative behaviour for managing bodies, for example in negotiating the use of cosmetic products, body building or even plastic surgery. Here, men were described as seeing themselves as ‘rebels’ in the first instance, as different from everybody else. Men were also found to express autonomy and independence from media images or other men. They were described as unanimously rejecting vanity in relation to their appearance. While men therefore wanted to be ‘the same’ or comply with masculine norms, they also sought to be different than others.

We therefore find two sides of the coin within studies of masculinity. Although the notion of masculinity as a collective concept prevails, other approaches argue for men as individuals negotiating their own masculinity. While normative or hegemonic ideals seem to be an issue within group contexts, the focus is also of how individual men positioned themselves as (co)producing or rejecting these. The contradictory theme emerges that presents masculinity within two forces: conforming to ‘the same’ ideals within collectives yet differentiating themselves as individuals.

2.2.6. Masculinity and ‘the other’

Defining masculinity as a relational concept also emphasised the role of gendered ‘other’ in locating masculinity. In contrast to masculine hegemonic ‘winning styles’ (Connell 1987), ‘the other’ were often characterised as marginalised or subordinated groups (Connell 2005). Women as gendered ‘other’ in relation to masculinity already emerged significantly through feminist research (de Beauvoir 1953). Parallel to this, other men and masculinities have also been discussed besides hegemonic versions. Renold (2004) for example described ‘other’ masculinities of non-hegemonic young boys at schools. Here, she explained ‘othering’ processes that reinforced hegemonic and subordinated gender relations. Parallel to non-hegemonic boys, Renold mentioned

several other works that described categories or groups of 'other' that generally remain outside of insider groups. Other deviant classifications include 'earoles' (Willis 1977), 'nerds' (Gilbert and Gilbert 1998), 'burnouts' (Eckert 1998) and 'swots' and 'wimps' (Connell 1989). These labels for social categories have also been described as creating a closer bond amongst members of an in-group while further defining an isolated out-group (see also Coates 2003, and Gough and Edwards 1998). They establish boundaries of 'us' versus 'them'. Penelope Eckert (1998) examined how these social categories were established and sustained within American high schools. 'Jocks' or sports-enthusiasts received support from their institution in their superiority over 'burnouts'. Interest in sports represented dominance in this context. Boundaries between social categories were also reinforced for different spatial locations on the school grounds. Certain areas were occupied by 'jocks' while 'burnouts' congregated in other areas. This division of spaces resonated with the construction of 'homosocial' spaces and the exclusion of women. Relational 'other' may therefore play a role in the symbolic construction and boundaries of spaces. Edley and Wetherell (1997) also explored non-hegemonic boys at schools. Their findings suggest that these boys continuously looked for ways to diminish the power positions of hegemonic boys, for example school athletes. Rather than positioning themselves as subordinated, non-hegemonic boys suggested that it were athletes who had a 'weak mind'. With their justification they also relied on masculinity represented through strength and power, albeit only mentally. Edley and Wetherell (1997) thus suggested that while outsiders may certainly perceive power relations in these groups with one group dominating over another, non-hegemonic boys did not always perceive themselves as inferior.

Moreover, relational gender positions were seen as shaped differently through varying ages, social class, race and sexuality. This also played a role in the way gender was practised (Burkitt 1998, Forrest 1994). One important factor for hegemonic masculinity was that it was based on 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Connell 2005). Hegemonic masculinity was necessarily heterosexual. On that basis, 'other' sexualities were

marginalised. This marginalisation has often been related to homophobia (Kimmel 1994). At the same time, homophobic interpretations and intentions were seen to change with age. Plummer (2001) considered that the use of homophobic terms often had the role of following masculine stereotypes rather than expressing homophobia. His study focussed on the use of certain homophobic expressions. Participants were young men who were asked to reflect on their childhood experiences, mostly at school. He found that as young boys, informants used homophobic expressions without being conscious of their meanings. Their intention was not discrimination based on sexuality. Rather, they represented imitations of other boys or men in their environment. Plummer suggested that words such as ‘poofter’ and ‘faggot’ were traded as a type of currency amongst young boys; this seems similar to Willis’s (1990) concept of ‘tokens of social exchange’. Yet, the changing meanings and understandings of these terms may describe the trajectory of masculine socialisation into hegemonic ideals. Indirect contact with homophobia may occur at a very early stage, marking the path of young men’s understanding of ‘other’ deviant men. Plummer (2001) thus argues that normative masculinity is instilled through “(...) early roots of “otherness” – specifically in being different from the collectively authorized expectations of male peers, in lacking stereotypical masculinity and/or betraying peer group solidarity.” (p. 21) Groups of ‘other’ thus directly shaped the construction of masculinities, often through collective notions of deviance. Being different than identified ‘other’ was seen as a strong driver in the construction of masculine identities. The role of peer groups and the fear of being disloyal through permitting differences also resemble the descriptions of homosocial groups above.

Both Plummer (2001) and Renold (2004) point towards groups as central for setting standards of masculinity that ‘other’ masculinities are measured against. Plummer argues that the feminine always remains outside of any association with masculinity, therefore being perceived as an intra-gender boundary towards the masculine. Homophobia against other masculinities on the other hand presents inter-gender

boundaries. He also notes that the early 'asexual' use of traditionally homophobic terms also continued during adulthood. Similarly, Deborah Cameron (1998) encountered that the term 'gay' had several connotations. Men's use of the term within groups was not always intended to express homophobia. The labelling of other men as 'gay' did not necessarily mean that they were considered homosexual. Rather, they were graded as less masculine against a standard that was set within the group. With the use of 'gay', certain practices such as clothing were defined as deviant. Plummer adds that as homophobic meanings become conscious and intentional, men look to distance themselves from homosexuality that is seen as 'weak' and 'effeminate'. Connell (2005) also suggests that homosexuality and femininity are often in close proximity in relation to hegemonic masculinity. The list of homophobic meanings regularly relate directly to acting like a 'girl', but also non-participation in team sports. Bodily competences form an element here as men were seen to avoid 'throwing the ball like a girl' (Connell 2000a) for example. Forrest (1994) suggests that the notion of masculine practices in relation to women has also emerged in queer theory. Women are again described here as inferior in relation to masculinity, while gay masculinities are often seen as the repressed feminine version of masculinity. Forrest discusses the drive of British gay men to be recognised as 'real' men and one way of doing so is to reject the feminine. Hence, he entitled his study 'we're queer' but 'we're not going shopping'. We can also understand this as referring to the practice of shopping as feminine, and therefore not masculine.

Further, Forrest (1994) calls for considering gender identities "(...) in the broader context of a 'total society'; as a 'product' of both the underlying material and ideological (that is, 'social') practices and what constitutes human praxis – the on-going struggle between individuals, groups and classes in their widest setting." (Forrest 1994, p. 109). We learn from this that practices receive their gendered meanings through gender relations on several levels: wider social structures, groupings and individuals. From the above discussion we can also see how 'other' gender identities directly and indirectly

influence meanings of masculinity. Being 'different' or a social outcast is often punished through labelling and also being denied to claim hegemonic masculinity. This further emphasises the importance of group conformity. Being seen as the 'same' or 'normal' may be important to avoid being labelled as deviant. Constructing gender identities therefore also follows a dynamic of being 'the same' as the group that further defines itself through being 'different' towards groups of 'other' (Jenkins 2004). This may be very helpful in understanding the construction of practices and identities through their relational gendered meanings.

2.2.7. Masculinity and practices

“What is required is a new paradigm for conceptualizing 'identity in culture', developing an understanding of how sexuality, along with gender, race, ethnicity, class, and generation, is articulated and experienced within a terrain of social practices.” (Stein and Plummer 1996, in Burkitt 1998, p. 489)

A myriad of studies have located masculine identities within the context of specific practices and structures (Connell 2005, 2002, Frosh *et al.* 2002). These identities and practices are also considered within the context of culture, age, race and class, etc. as described above. Parallel to the study of contemporary practices of men, historic studies of masculinity were also viewed as shedding a light on what masculinity means nowadays (Kimmel 2005b, Connell 2005). In relation to age, mature 'working' masculinities were explored in the context of their employment and 'public' lives (Roper 1991, Connell 2005). The alienation of producer and product as well as the emergence of modern industries and organisations are often central issues here. The study of 'working masculinities' followed men's identification through their work. On the other side, emphasis has been placed on young or adolescent masculinities (Frosh *et al.* 2002) often in schooling contexts (Willis 1977, Mac an Ghail 1994, Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, Renold 2004). Findings included here that hegemonic masculinities distanced themselves from and even punished scholarly achievement. Young boys were

accepted for 'being cool' when they seemed to not care about school or homework. Masculine ideals were further reinforced by boys through teasing and even bullying (Stoudt 2006). Labelling of others also defined those practices associated with them as deviant. Parallel to students, institutions were also found to 'instil 'proper' masculinity' (Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, p. 79). In extreme circumstances, schools encouraged violent behaviour amongst boys within their institutional structures through pushing and challenging boys towards at times aggressive competitions (Stoudt 2006).

Masculinity has also been extensively studied in a variety of sports. Ranging from rugby to windsurfing, sporting masculinities have received significant attention for their relation to embodied masculinity and the hierarchies established through sports (Connell 2005, Connell 2000b, Messner 1990, Messner 1992). The bodily competences that are necessary for participating in sports are often explained here. These competences are generally considered in comparison to bodily competences of women. Sports may also retain its prominent association with masculinity for its male dominance over women (Parker 1996). Women were traditionally seen as the 'weaker' sex, too frail and fragile to compete in sports. Parker therefore suggests that the sporting arena continues to perpetuate masculine superiority. Some of these elements were even found in new sporting cultures such as windsurfing (Wheaton 2000). Although competition and aspects of male superiority continued to be observed, 'new sports' also revealed the re-negotiation of certain boundaries that characterised normative masculine practices. Sports in that sense have also been described as reflecting (masculine) cultures and (re)establishing hierarchies of masculinity. Specifically, the role of rugby in creating a national identity has been outlined by Nauright and Chandler (1996). Football has also been widely discussed in this context (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, Giulianotti 2005, Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001). These relatively recent football ethnographies have however been criticised for neglecting their gendered dimensions. Free and Hughson (2003) argued that the gendered dimensions of football have been largely neglected across studies. They suggested that football fandom and playing football was important

for masculine performances, contests and competitions and ritualistic celebration of masculinity, which could also be achieved through objectifying women (Carrington 1998). Moreover, football practices were steeped in history and culture, which reflected the construction of ethnic and national identities (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997, Brown 1998, Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001). These identities also emerged through international competitions of football (Finn and Giulianotti 1998, Dimeo and Finn 1998). We can see that sporting practices are therefore loaded with resources for constructing masculine identities.

The changing practices of male dress and clothing have equally received some attention (Edwards 1997, Breward 1999, Kuchta 2002, Roper 1991, Galilee 2002, Frith and Gleeson 2004). Following the historic constructions of masculinities (Kimmel 2005), Breward (1999) discussed the role of male dressing during the 19th century (see also Kuchta (2002) for the development of the three-piece suit from 1550 – 1850). Roper (1991) argued that masculine embodiment of the suit desexualised men in working contexts. The male body became concealed and almost un-gendered through suits while also representing positions of power. The majority of studies consider rather how boundaries of normative masculinity are established concerning clothing practices (Frith and Gleeson 2004). This also refers to relational perspectives that generally associate women with clothes and appearances (Forrest 1994). Some attention has been given in this context to how masculinities have changed over time and negotiated different styles (i.e. Edwards 1997, Mort 1996, Nixon 1996). For their proximity of these studies to consumer behaviour, they will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

Discourse practices of men and their construction of masculinities have also been explored in the context of alcohol consumption (Gough and Edwards 1998, Kaminer and Dixon 1995). Here, normative boundaries and the construction of (often stereotypical) masculine ideals were observed. While alcohol as a product was not necessarily found to transfer masculine meanings, it was rather the conversations between men in groups

mixed with alcohol consumption that created a phallogentric discourse (Gough and Edwards 1998). This discourse (re)produced masculine norms based on the 'othering' of women. Additionally, it consisted of competitive interactions that measured the ability of generating humour which also objectified women. This discourse then also represented efforts to gain group approval and establish hegemonic masculinity. Interestingly, these findings emerged specifically within a homosocial context and beer consumption. Relating these findings to studies of socio-linguistics, this area of inquiry has mainly placed attention of how women and men conversed differently (Bradley 1998, Eisikovits 1998). Gender differences also emerged in the context of computer-mediated communications (Maclaran *et al.* 2004). Talk plays an important role in expressing, communicating and reflecting us as gendered beings (Labov 1994). We have already seen how specific discourse influences our experience and understanding of gender and sexuality in Plummer's (2001) study of homophobic terms. Sociolinguists previously paid more attention to sex differences in discourse (Trudgill 1998, Bradley 1998) and the characteristics of women's talk in contrast to men (Tannen 1992, Coates 1998). Women's talk was described here as more co-operative in contrast to the competitive talk of men that often saw men vying for turns. Following from this, more studies moved towards exploring the construction of masculine gender identities (Johnson and Meinhof 1995, Coates 2003).

Men's talk was initially classified through its 'discussions' (Coates 2003) that located the topics of interest. Within specific cultural, age and ethnic frames, certain topics of interest seemed universal for men. In Cameron's example (1998), basketball became the universally accepted topic of interest. Men in this study were culturally expected to be competent in basketball. Competence was also expressed in their talk. 'Talking a good game' (Kennedy 2000a, 2000b) referred to the ability to speak the language and use the (often technical) terms that are necessary to communicate competence. Further, this seemingly universal interest created solidarity amongst those who shared this competence. Men's talk has been frequently described as competitive (Johnson and

Meinhof 1997, Kuiper 1998). At the same time, Cameron (1998) also found elements of co-operation in men's conversations. Although competition and co-operation were previously seen as exclusive, here they went hand in hand. Ironically, co-operation or solidarity even seemed produced through competition, also within homosocial 'locker room' discourse (Kuiper 1998). In contrast to previous studies (Coates 1998), men were additionally seen to engage in their version of 'gossip' in terms of socio-linguistic characteristics. The main function of gossip is described as "affirming the solidarity of an in-group by constructing absent others as an out-group, whose behaviour is minutely examined and found wanting." (Cameron 1998, p. 276) The construction of these in and out-groups in conversation also presented the gender relations (Coates 2003). Mocking, teasing and labelling were ways of constructing out-groups consisting of women and 'other' men. Out-groups were also often referred to in terms of their practices, for example deviant clothing (Cameron 1998). This discourse therefore established which practices were legitimate for the in-group.

Jennifer Coates (2003) added that talk expressed gender identity work. As well as engaging in gendered topics of conversation, individuals presented their stories, their narratives, their 'selves' while talking to others. Men are often described as presenting themselves in heroic positions and adventures (cf. Holt and Thompson 2004). Boasting and swearing is regularly interpreted as portraying strength and toughness to others. However, we also have to keep the contexts and practices in mind in which different discourse is produced (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998). It has been suggested here to further examine changing discourse across contexts and practices. While talk as defining practices and being a practice itself may be important for constructing masculine identities, we also need to consider its cultural variations.

2.2.8. Conclusions

These sections have described in detail how men and masculinities have been defined in literature. The main driver for an increased focus on masculinity has been the challenges of feminism. While women sought to gain recognition for their points of view and roles in society, masculinity remained largely within a state of gendered invisibility. This invisibility described it as a single default, 'malestream' position against which other groups constructed themselves as gendered. Through this, it also remained relatively undefined. Sex role theory further reinforced the notion of masculinity as polar opposite of femininity based on dichotomised gender characteristics that were also attached to sex. This further emphasised men and masculinity in the role of the oppressor. A narrow definition of masculinity appeared to benefit men as a collective, but it emerged as difficult to 'live' or achieve for men as individuals. Psychology and psychoanalysis offered additional perspectives on gender. Freudian theory also pointed towards masculinity as the 'flight of the feminine'. Lacanian concepts on the other hand saw masculinity as symbolised through objects. Viewing masculinity as symbolic also meant that it could change. Rather than conceptualising masculinity in roles that seemed to reinforce stereotyped behaviour, gender became acknowledged as part of identity. Modern identities were described as projects that were constantly worked on, negotiated and reflexively constructed by individuals. Fragmenting forces of modernity also led to the notion of gender as multiple and shifting which presented challenges to a previously perceived static and monolithic masculinity. Gender was viewed as embodied, performed and enacted (Butler 1990), requiring interpretive skills (McNay 1992, 1999). Although this highlighted how individuals appropriated gender, it did not explain its relational aspect. Gender also had to be recognised as embedded within socio-cultural and historic contexts.

One of the most comprehensive theories of masculinity was offered by Connell (2005), who described it as a place within the gender configuration. This relational approach

saw it defined through practices and interactions of everyday life. Masculinity was conceptualised in 'winning styles' that created hierarchies based on hegemonic masculinity, complicity, subordination and marginalisation. However, Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity was also criticised for being too elusive and leaving masculinity undefined outside of any relational context. Viewing masculinity as constructed in practices was also adopted in various research areas. A number of these practices such as sports, education and schooling, language and discourse were outlined. All these practices further added to an understanding of masculinity. Parallel to this, homosocial spaces also emerged as sites for enacting, approving and reinforcing masculinities.

Moreover, the literature highlighted how masculinity may be viewed as a collective construct. Its relational aspects along with the approval and validation it required from other men (Kimmel 1994) pointed towards masculinity as established in collectives rather than by the individual. On the other hand, gender has been recognised to form part of individual identities where it becomes negotiated, embodied and performed (Butler 1990). Although 'choosing' gender may be associated with certain anxieties (Giddens 1991), gender is described as a multiple and complex construct each individual reflexively interprets, appropriates and (re)produces (McNay 1992, Butler 1990). This also implies a certain agency of the individual. The subsequent sections highlight how gender and specifically men and masculinities have been studied in consumer research.

2.3. Gender and masculinity in consumer behaviour

After this in-depth discussion of what masculinity is, the following paragraphs highlight how gender has been studied in consumer research. With earlier research exploring consumption differences between the sexes, this section explains how an understanding of gender shifted the research focus and led to an increasing interest in the study of men and masculinities in consumer behaviour. Emerging themes and research areas into this specific topic of gendered consumer research are further identified.

2.3.1. Gendered consumption, feminism, sex role and sex differences

Gender and sex differences have been studied extensively in consumer research with an emphasis mostly on understanding existing differences in consumer behaviour (Catterall and Maclaran 2002). Research here has been heavily influenced by feminist theory (Bristor and Fischer 1993) with the intent of giving women and the feminine a voice (Scott 2000). The male and masculine perspective had been generally described in terms of its normative character, also reflecting masculine aspects of rationality and instrumentality (Venkatesh 1991). The dominance of men and masculinity also affected research perspectives in the study of consumer behaviour. The masculine paradigm saw the consumer as a rational, logical decision-maker, often related to the machine metaphor (Hirschmann 1993, Holbrook and Hirschmann 1984). This paradigm saw the mind as reigning over the body; the rational dominating over the emotional “anima” (Scott 2000, Catterall and Maclaran 2002, Seidler 1994, Fischer and Bristor 1991). Feminist thought in marketing and consumer research challenged these perspectives from which data was generated, read and interpreted (Catterall *et al.* 2000). It also revealed how masculine positions were accepted as ‘normal’ points of view for interpreting consumers (Hirschmann 1991). Examples of feminist critique were found extensively in studies of advertising texts and representations. Research in this area

emphasised how texts were written as gendered and read differently by gendered readers (Stern 1993, Stern 2000, Brown *et al.* 1999, O'Donohoe 2000). While women were often described as accustomed to reading male texts, men were less receptive to feminine texts. The notion of the androcentric as the 'default' position emerged here again. Women were able, or rather required, to read male texts. Men on the other hand were far less open to gynocentric texts. In general, gender inquiry in consumer research predominantly aimed at representing feminine and subsequently other marginalised gender perspectives. The male and masculine mainly remained outside of such studies. The majority of research also explored gender representations in media advertising (Goffman 1979, Thornborrow 1994), often in the context of feminist literary critique (Stern 1993, Williamson 1978, see also Skeggs 2004).

Another reason for the focus on women in consumer research may have been the notion that the traditional consumer was female, at least for consumer decisions in the household (Davis and Rigaux 1974, Fischer and Gainer 1991, Breward 1999). Relating this to sex role theory, the male was often seen as the breadwinner while it was a woman's task to spend the money for domestic purposes (Lavin 1991, MacInnes 1998b). Firat (1991) contextualised this theme in the historical development of consumption and gender theories.

"Feminine (female) was the consumer, in the home, the private domain. Masculine (male) was the producer, in the workplace, the offices, the political arena, the public domain. (...) The female, specifically in visual culture, the female body, became the representation of the feminine which was the "ideal" consumer in western culture. She "went shopping" while he worked." (Firat 1991, p. 380)

We can see here how consumption often related to sex role theory. The 'private' was feminine and the 'public' masculine. It also polarised consumption and production, one being a female, the other the male task. Certain consumption was therefore already traditionally viewed as female, with the consumer decisions of women ranking lower than the often rational and task-oriented decisions of men. Subsequent studies focussing

on shopping behaviour described its recreational role for women (Friend and Thompson 2003, Fischer and Gainer 1991). Otnes and McGrath (2001) saw the male as rather passive in these shopping activities in his role of accompanying the woman. Men appeared far less involved in consumption than women. On the other hand, their findings also contradicted traditional perceptions of male shopping behaviour. For example, men were found to browse in the form of bargaining and 'winning' in shopping contexts. Otnes and McGrath also encountered instances where men shopped together. While some changes emerged in men's shopping behaviour, shopping was also an activity men associated with tension (Tuncay and Otnes 2008). This tension was mostly attributed to men's anxiety for engaging in a feminine practice. Despite changes therefore, shopping and consumption in general was dominantly linked with the female and feminine. Some feminist research suggested that consumption and markets had the potential to serve women in advancing feminist ideas, mainly through increasing female employment and market relations (Scott 2000, Fischer and Bristor 1991, Connell 2005). Women were able to use marketing for communicating feminist ideas. Gender and consumer research therefore often referred to studies of women's consumption. If men and masculinities were discussed, this occurred generally indirectly, often in opposition to the feminine and female.

The idea of men as opposite to women was often reinforced in studies that directly compared differences in consumer behaviour between the sexes (i.e. Fisher and Dubé 2005). Additionally, concepts of gender, sex and sex roles were frequently used interchangeably as meaning one and the same (i.e. Myers-Levy and Sternthal 1991). Researchers often referred to gender, using the terms 'feminine' and 'masculine', when they explored sex differences between men and women. Early studies presented at Association of Consumer Research (ACR) Gender, Marketing and Consumer Behavior conferences showed an emphasis on exploring sex or gender differences in consumption. Findings repeatedly affirmed essentialist roles in consumption through the display of traditionally 'masculine' characteristics by men and 'feminine' characteristics by

women. Research that contrasted the sexes focussed on their differences which often reinforced that gender was different for each sex. Further, sex role theory was directly adapted for explaining sex differences in consumption (Myers-Levy 1988). Later studies referred to contextual changes of women behaving more ‘masculine’ and subsequently ‘feminine’ in their roles using Bem’s gender schema (Caldwell and Kleppe 2006, Caldwell *et al.* 2007). In this study of female high achievers, women shifted between masculine, dominant and assertive characteristics in work environments and more emotional, caring and expressive feminine behaviour. Other studies used similar sex-typed gender schemas to describe behaviour. Bem’s SRI for example found application in consumer research to explore gendered consumption of advertising (Hogg and Garrow 2003). This research aimed at explaining how different sexes could display similar gendered behaviour when interpreting and processing ads. While these studies sought to understand how men and women consumed differently, they gave little insight into the gendered consumption of men specifically.

2.3.2. Towards the study of men and masculinities in consumer research

Men and masculinities therefore often retained their ‘invisible’ character for their relation to women as consumers. Through this, they were also repeatedly characterised based on essentialist and normative definitions of masculinity. The focus remained on sex differences rather than potential similarities or how gender was constructed through consumption. The recent growth of studies on men and masculinities in other academic fields also led to increased interest in male and masculine consumption. Feminist critiques and the subsequent ‘gay liberation’ (Carrigan *et al.* 1985, Donaldson 1993) further moved masculine gender issues into the consumption spotlight. These changes were marked in the growing studies on men and masculinities at ACR Gender, Marketing and Consumer Behaviour conferences, particularly in 2006 and 2008. The

following sections outline in more detail some of the key themes emerging from studies of men and masculinities in consumer research.

2.3.3. Representations of masculinity – mediated masculinities and masculine discourses in the marketplace

Goffman (1979) was one of many who pointed out the centrality of gender in advertisements (other examples Williamson 1979, Goldman 1992, Schroeder and Borgerson 1999). Early studies mainly concentrated on images of women or ‘mixed’ adverts that contained men and women. Their aim was frequently to describe the different roles men and women occupied in adverts. Subsequently, studies also moved towards studying representations of men (cf. Fischer and Halpenny 1993). The authors followed suggestions that idealised images of women in advertising produced low self-esteem amongst female audiences (Martin and Kennedy 1993). They explored whether men felt similarly about masculine representations. Generally, men were described as feeling less threatened by these images than women. More than a decade later, a similar study was conducted by Elliott and Elliott (2005). They found rather ambivalent and contradictory reactions to idealised images of male bodies in advertising. Men’s responses included elements of homophobia, gender stereotyping and overt distancing from identifying with these images. On the other hand, some responses displayed an appreciation of masculine body images as art. The general distancing was related to the perception of certain images as effeminate indicating informants’ fear of the feminine. This also related to their attitudes towards consumption in general as feminine. Bodily insecurities were equally found to affect men’s choice of clothing (Frith and Gleeson 2004, Seidler 1997). Frith and Gleeson (2004) found that men consistently stated to purchase clothes that would not make them appear vain. Rather, clothing had to be ‘normal’ so that they did not stand out.

We can draw parallels between these reactions and the ‘backlash’ phenomenon that was mainly documented amongst British men in the 1990s against earlier representations of men (Nixon 2001). The 1980s saw the rise of rather sensitive ‘New Man’ images that were now far too effeminate (Mort 1988, Mort 1996). The images of the ‘New Lad’ spoke to a culture that required more affirmation in their masculinity (Carrington 1998). Prior to ‘New Man’ and ‘New Lad’ discourses, several changes had taken place in how masculinity and men were presented in the marketplace. Before, men had rarely been objectified as they were in ‘New Man’ images. Traditionally, men as the subject were described as looking at the female object (Mulvey 1975). During this time of change, images had started to depict men, even as sexual objects (Neale 1983, Nixon 1997b). Men were increasingly found to be looking at themselves or ‘inverting their gaze’ (Patterson and Elliott 2002). Patterson and Elliott related these representations of masculinity to bodily gender projects. This inverted gaze also changed men’s shopping behaviour towards a more active role in choosing, displaying and monitoring their ‘look’ (Nixon 1992, Nixon 1996). Men were described as becoming more conscious of their appearance and their use of fashion to construct their gendered selves. Fashion formed part in a complex process between self-surveillance and embodiment (Frith and Gleeson 2004). The inversion of the gaze also brought along a certain bodily consciousness. Men’s clothing retailers responded with refining their shops to cater for the male consumer (Mort 1996). What had been previously seen as a female practice became accepted by and for men. In addition to the emergence of effeminate images of men, men were also depicted in homoerotic, ambiguous poses with other males. Normative boundaries of gender characteristics, sex and sexuality blurred in these representations.

The ‘New Lad’ movement or ‘New Laddism’ (Carrington 1998) that followed distanced itself from these images. Instead, a return to traditional representations that objectified women rose in popularity. The ‘New Lad’ celebrated masculinity as a shared culture of ‘cars, girls, sport and booze’ (Nixon 2001, p. 380). Nixon suggested that a lack of alternative roles for men was a reason for returning from often ambiguous ‘New Man’

images towards representations that reinforced heterosexuality in a more traditional way. Consumer ambivalence (O'Donohoe 2001, Otnes *et al.* 1997) was possibly the result of the role conflict men perceived. While 'backlash' imagery returned to normative boundaries, ambivalence did remain in the irony of these images (Carrington 1998). As Carrington points out, the 'New Lad' gave himself the permission to be sexist and even racist in his own ironic, non-serious way. Men's magazines were important in documenting changes in these representations. Irony was also found here in ambivalent texts (Stevenson *et al.* 2000). Men reacted differently to the stigmatising and (re)producing of gender stereotypes that were offered to them in interests commonly associated with them. In magazines, men's interests were often reduced to football, sports, cars, alcohol and women. This radical change from rather hazy representations was explained on the grounds of providing men with 'constructed certitude' (Jackson *et al.* 2001, Rogers 2005). Themes and practices in magazines seemingly provided men with simplified versions of 'how to be a man'. Previous ambiguous images may not have given them the assurance of being 'normal'. 'New Lad' imagery apparently did. Relating this to theories of modernity and identity, magazines provided men with a script that gave them the illusion of a fixed and 'natural' masculinity. We can draw parallels here with Giddens' (1991) 'ontological security'. Rather than representing and accepting fragmented identities facing the existential issue of choice, the 'backlash' movement reinforced normative heterosexual masculinity through the provision of seemingly 'safe', unambiguous discourses.

Heterosexuality was also assumed in the context of new marketplace masculinities that subsequently took shape in the form of 'metrosexuals', 'emos' (Salzman *et al.* 2005, Conway 2004) and 'übersexuals' (Hedley 2007, Mermelstein and Fielding 2007). These new versions of masculinity have often been attributed to media efforts to direct the tastes of their male target audiences and legitimise the use of previously deemed feminine consumption (Salzman *et al.* 2005). 'Metrosexuals' were described by Salzman *et al.* as acting upon a new-found narcissism and engaging in practices such as

shopping with other men, cooking for domestic purposes and purchasing cosmetic products. All of these were practices previously associated with women and the feminine (Hedley 2007). For being too effeminate, it was suggested that the 'metrosexual' male as a construct devised by the media was not adopted by men in real life (Mermelstein and Fielding 2007). Being faced with a multitude of contradictory and ambiguous choices, heterosexual men seemed to fear particularly effeminacy and being perceived as homosexual. The discomfort that sexually ambivalent images and practices stirred may have also been due to the rise of gay men's representations (Branchik 2007, Kates 1999). A resolution was offered in the 'übersexual' and 'emo' version that supposedly engaged in similar practices as the 'metrosexual' but overtly claimed heterosexuality (Hedley 2007). There were some suggestions that younger men may have been more concerned with their appearances and hence adopted certain elements these masculine discourses offered (Conway 2004). However, men's behaviour mainly emerged as directed by deep-seated values of masculinity as distancing itself from ambiguous practices associated with the feminine. The expansion or shifting boundaries of the gaze still appeared contained within the 'backlash' against more effeminate masculinity (Elliott and Elliott 2005). Translating this gaze into real-life consumption, Rinallo (2007) found that heterosexual men were careful with consuming fashionable clothing for its association with effeminacy and homosexuality (see also Frith and Gleeson 2004). He described them as keeping consumption within 'safe zones' that were surrounded by the limits of 'danger zones'.

While boundaries and limits emerged as one characteristic of masculine representations, discourses were constantly intertwined with ambiguity, irony and ambivalence. Brownlie and Hewer (2007) also found certain ambivalence in popular images of celebrity chefs. Representations were described as reproducing traditional gender stereotyping and hierarchic structures. At the same time, boundaries of masculinity were also seen as shifting within this 'laddish' discourse. Although images depicted groups of men as intimate friends, they also rested on 'compulsory heterosexuality' as

coined by Connell (2005) in relation to hegemonic masculinity. The apparent contradiction of shifting boundaries was therefore continuously contained within normative limits. Schroeder and Zwick (2004) came to a similar conclusion. They suggested that advertising images of men resembled mirrors that reflected their identity. These mirrors also made masculine identities visible as gendered. In response to Patterson and Elliott (2002), the authors suggested that instead of inverting the gaze, the limits or possibilities for masculine gazes had expanded. This also referred to images of men including more traditionally feminine connotations such as the male 'Pin-up'. At the same time, these were presented in action poses which reduced possible homosexual associations. Most importantly, while the gaze, limits or boundaries may be shifting, men were still described as retaining their power positions.

Although representations of masculinity had therefore undergone severe changes, the question remained of how and whether these affected lived identities of men. The most important point to emerge from this stream of research is that masculinities emerged as visibly 'gendered'. Men became recognised in these images as constructing their gender through consumption. We also saw how images reflected changing masculinities that produced ambivalent and contradictory reactions. Discourses such as 'New Lad' imagery can be understood as offering resources for 'doing normal' masculinity. Although this presented a seeming 'backlash' against more effeminate versions, elements of ambiguity and ambivalence, often in the form of irony, remained. It could be argued that this provides insights into the difficulty for men of performing and living in this gendered spotlight. More importantly, it also emphasised the role of consumption in supporting their construction of 'normal' masculine identities. This role has not yet received sufficient research attention, however. Some studies questioned men about their opinion of men in advertisements. Others used focus groups to explore this further. Media representations may reflect and even affect meanings of masculinity. Yet, this does not mean that men identify with these images. Moreover, the study of

representations provides little insight into how men's consumption relates to their meanings of masculinity.

2.3.4. Consumption and lived masculine identities

“Gender – despite speculation that we live in a post-gender world – remains a central organizing feature of identity.” (Schroeder 2003, p.1)

“(…) it may not be possible to understand future consumer behaviors without understanding how the decomposing gender categories of the day get to be resignified and represented in a culture of fragmented selves.” (Firat 1993, p. 204)

Parallel to studying gendered representations, the focus also moved towards studying gender as a dimension of lived identity projects. Attention was placed on the deconstruction of gender categories and sex differences in consumption (Peñaloza 1991, Firat 1993, Goulding and Saren 2006). Postmodernist ideas were embraced as sex roles and essentialist gender descriptions faded. Feminism and subsequently queer theory (Kates 1999) also played a role in challenging dichotomous gender perspectives (cf. Peñaloza 1992). This deconstruction of traditional definitions of gender also influenced gender consumer research. Marketing was somewhat ambiguous as it mixed the old and the new. While markets and consumption provided potential for expression and liberation from old stigmas (Scott 2000), marketing also held on to essentialist and stereotypical gender representations (Cosgrove 1991). Driving forces of feminism and new approaches to studying gender and consumption led to exploration of lived gender identity projects. Themes of gendered consumer research moved towards unpacking gendered meanings of consumption. Instead of studying consumption differences between the sexes or gendered representations, efforts were directed towards understanding how gender identities, increasingly also those of men, were constructed through consumption.

Gender identities were mainly explored in the context of specific consumer activities, rituals or events. This followed mainly the idea that gender was constructed through the consumption of objects or symbols (Solomon 1983). Gendered rituals emerged in the context of gift giving (Fischer and Arnold 1990, Belk and Coon 1993), possessing or owning objects (Rudmin 1991) or collecting (Maclaran and Otnes 2006, Belk and Wallendorf 1994, Ekström 2006). Studies often related to the idea of extending the self through objects (Belk 1988). While most of these studies looked at gender differences and different behaviour between men and women, gender categories or symbols were also found to blur, mostly in relation to collecting. Men for example were found to collect items with feminine symbolic value (Belk and Wallendorf 1994). Ekström (2006) found that men's collecting behaviour also displayed elements of love and care as well as aggression and competition which were rather traditional traits for men and their sense of owning (Rudmin 1991). Despite their focus on gender identities, attention was often placed on different gendered behaviour between the sexes.

Studies of men's consumption mainly emerged in the context of subcultures. Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) study of the Harley Davidson brand culture of bikers represented one example. Their findings revealed that Harley Davidson fostered a culture of machismo as defining what 'real men do'. The motorbike and clothing conferred group members with a sense of 'power, fearsomeness, and invulnerability' (p. 54). The authors also suggested that consumers in subcultures were not easily segmented into fixed categories of social class, age, ethnicity, etc. Another group ritual that related more to men's experiences was the study of the 'Mountain Man Myth' (Belk and Costa 1998). Gender was seen here as embedded within the enactment of a certain culture. Contextualising gender within a cultural context has been a recurring theme in Costa's research (see also Costa 2005, 1996, 1994). 'Mountain Man' rituals placed emphasis on how the community came together through sharing the same fantasy and (re)creating a romanticised culture. This culture also involved a shared knowledge of

specific ritual objects that marked the enclave of the mountain man rendezvous. Although the subcultures in these two examples consisted mostly of male participants, gender issues were often dealt with more on the sideline of subcultural activities. Both studies were also presented in other contexts as referring to sites of male dominance where women negotiated their gendered identities (Costa 1993, Martin *et al.* 2006). It appeared that women were gendered in these cultures, not men.

Kates' (2002, 2003) research contributed to insights of gendered consumption by tackling the consumption of the gay community. As part of this, he explored the carnivalesque character of the Sydney Gay Parade in transforming consumer identities and embodiment (2003). He also considered how gay communities negotiated their relationships with brands (2004). This established the connection between brand meanings, communities and gender. Kates (2002) also conceptualised the gay community as a subculture, but rather one that was more permanent than other subcultures based on leisure activities (i.e. Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Kozinets 2001). Gay consumers' identification and their association to the gay community were more lasting, yet also more stigmatised and marginalised. At the same time, Kates referred to this group mainly in relation to its subcultural meanings. One specific element that emerged in subcultures overall was their drive towards hierarchies and authenticity (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Kates 2002). Gender identities also emerged as embodied and performed, particularly in Kates' work (2002, 2003). This reflected further findings in consumer research that explored the role of brands for the authenticity of performances (Elliott and Davies 2006). These studies present some examples of research into men's consumption in the context of subcultures and brand communities (i.e. Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Kates 2004).

Men's consumption has also been explored within the broader topic of consumer tribes (Maffesoli 1996, Cova and Cova 2001, Cova *et al.* 2007). The character of tribes was reflected through its networks, links and shared meanings as opposed to the importance

of symbolic objects (Cova 1997). Kozinets (1999) described tribes as more momentary and shifting in their character than subcultures. Relating consumer tribes to masculinity, Rinallo (2007) explored how heterosexual men negotiated their clothing choices, particularly since consumption of fashion has traditionally been stigmatised as 'metrosexual', feminine or gay. Rinallo considered the meanings of fashion within the broader context of gender relations, as men's behaviour was influenced by other gendered connotations. Limits and boundaries emerged again (Patterson and Elliott 2002, Schroeder and Zwick 2004), only this time in terms of specific 'safe' as opposed to 'danger zones'. Visconti (2008) recently added to this discussion with his study of the construction of straight/gay boundaries within the gay market. He argued that boundaries were also symbolically constructed and deconstructed by gay consumers. What remained to be explored was the potential 'grey zone' between the safe/dangerous or gay/straight dyadic.

Parallel to men in subcultures, communities and tribes, masculinity was also found in the consumption of gendered spaces (Pettigrew 2006). Pettigrew described Australian pubs as (re)producing masculine discourses. Arthur (2006) found male enclaves within the Australian hip-hop culture. Sherry *et al.* (2004) studied the construction of masculinity through leisure spaces, in their case the ESPN sports complexes in the US. These spaces also had symbolic meaning in being refuges for men from their daily routine. Further, findings showed how minute details such as food descriptions on menu cards reflected masculinity as strong and dominant in these sports zones. The centrality of sports for the construction of masculinities was also found in the consumption of football (Richardson and Turley 2006).

The above studies represent examples of where masculinity has been studied more as a collective construct. Moreover, the primary topics of these studies were often men's consumption in subcultures, spaces or tribes, and generally not men's gender. Consumer research has also emphasised individual constructions of masculine identities. Similar to

group studies, these generally considered masculinity within a specific context, theme or activity. Holt and Thompson (2004) for example related individual men's heroic masculinity to their daily consumption decisions. They explored how men appropriated the idealised discourse of men as heroes, negotiating between rebel and breadwinner models. Prior to this, Thompson (1990) explored women's consumption in their struggling lifestyles as they balance the needs of the family and working lives. Thompson and Holt (2004) also wrote about men's consumer practices and related these to the struggle of claiming the phallus. Their research illustrated how men strived to be on top and competitive in consumption, relating this for example to sports contexts. Instead of viewing men's quest for power in phallic objects, Thompson and Holt emphasised the importance of consumption practices. They also interpreted men's engagement in practices that lacked competitive elements as 'identity vacations' (Thompson and Holt 2004, p. 335). In these practices that often had feminine or different masculine connotations, informants were described as rejuvenating for their subsequent return to more competitive contexts. Thompson and Holt relate this idea to Moore's (1988) 'gender tourism' where men are described as finding momentary escape in feminine realms.

Beyond a gender context, further research emphasised the negotiation of identities in consumption. For example Waerdahl (2005) described how young consumers became active in expressing their changing identities through consumption and Goulding *et al.* (2001) explored consumers' fragmented identities in their experience of weekend rave parties. Consumption offered solutions here for shifting, contradictory, fragmented yet fluid modern identities. Focussing on gender, Goulding and Saren (2006) found that participants in their study blurred gender boundaries, also as a form of oppositional, subcultural expression. Their observations at the Whitby Goth Festival showed men and women deriving pleasure in embodying and displaying gender ambiguities, mainly through clothing and presentation management (Goffman 1959) The focus of consumption moved here towards a focus on 'being' in terms of expressing identities

rather than 'having' or possessing certain objects (Shankar and Fitchett 2002). Consumption provided the meanings for constructing seemingly stable yet fragmented and multiple identities.

2.3.5. Conclusions

These sections highlighted how gender and more specifically men and masculinities have been studied in consumer research. Influences from feminist theory also directed gendered inquiry in this field towards exploring consumption of women and the construction of their femininities. It was also explained how the traditional consumer may have been perceived as feminine. This shaped the position of men who were traditionally associated as the producer rather than the consumer (Schroeder and Zwick 2004). Turning towards a focus on men and masculinities in consumer research, initial studies mainly analysed men's gender representations in advertising (Patterson and Elliott 2002). Research of lived experiences also explored male consumers as part of subcultures and brand communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Further studies emerged in relation to men and leisure spaces and men's negotiation of gender identities through consumption.

Although there is a growing body of research on men as gendered consumers and their construction of identities through consumption, several research avenues remain to be explored. To date, studies on gendered consumption have focussed more on explaining sex differences or women's consumer behaviour and the construction of femininities. Men and masculinities have received notably less attention, despite some of the examples we saw above. We can identify some key areas of where masculinities and consumption have been studied. These include masculinity in relation to brands (Kates 2004), objects (Belk and Costa 1998), subcultures and communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Arthur 2006) or events (Kates 2003). While these studies certainly

described themes of men and masculinities as part of their findings, masculinity was rarely the primary research topic. Additionally, there has been less research that considered how gender was constructed across practices and communities. In general, Connell's (2005) definition of masculinity through 'practices' has been largely neglected. This also concerns the idea that these practices are not chosen in isolation of social structures. Following Connell's suggestion, we can think of masculine practices as constructed through interaction and gender relations. Studying gender in terms of practices (Wenger 1998, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998) also coincides with recent directions in consumer research. Thompson and Holt (2004) for example adopted a practice approach in studying men's consumption towards claiming the 'phallus'. However, they did not explain how these meanings of masculine practices emerged from the wider context of gender relations. In their study, practices were defined as masculine or feminine. Beyond a gender context, a practice approach was also adopted for brand communities (Schau *et al.* 2009, Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). Schau *et al.* (2009) recently explored several brand communities for their practices and the creation of value within the group. A broad approach to 'practices' could help in studying the construction of masculinity in a relational context.

A second discussion emerged parallel to the importance of practices. Holt and Thompson (2004) argued that every individual man negotiated his own masculinity according to his identity project (Holt 2002) or life project (Mick and Buhl 1992). A focus on consumption in subcultures (Kates 2002, 2003) suggested gender and masculinity as part of shared values and group meanings. The question arises of where we should study masculinity and consumption? Should we look at individuals or rather group masculinities when both may also relate to one another? The following section discusses this emerging dialectic and presents relevant literature on practices and identities. The focus remains on how different practices relate to either collective or individual identities.

2.4. Practices, gender and consumption – groups versus individuals

The following sections examine in more detail how identities and practices are connected to groups and individuals. It starts with a summary of some important ideas from consumer research that may also relate to gender practices. The term ‘practice’ itself relates to different theories, some developed outside the gender context. The final sections briefly outline how ‘practices’ are addressed in theories of capital, particularly Bourdieu’s cultural capital. Throughout this section, the focus remains on how these theories can help us understand gender and more specifically the construction of masculinity through consumption.

2.4.1. Practices and consumption – towards a theory of capital?

The sociologist Alan Warde (2005) recently wrote about theories of practice in relation to consumption. He suggested that consumer research previously placed a more consistent focus on individual identities. While these studies contributed significantly to our understanding of consumption, they are just one approach to exploring consumer behaviour. Individualist accounts of consumption describe the consumer as an independent or autonomous entity. Warde argued that theories of practice have potential for studying consumption in a broader, possibly more social context. His definition of practices is based on recent efforts to synthesise often disparate theories, specifically focussing on Schatzki (1996), Schatzki *et al.* (2001) and Reckwitz (2002). Practices are described here as taking a more flexible approach to the importance of social meanings. Referring to Schatzki (1996) Warde describes practices as doings and sayings; as both ‘practical activities and its representations’. The components of practices are summarised as (1) an understanding of what to say and do; (2) procedures in the form of rules or principles (know-how); and (3) engagements in the purpose, task, mood or emotions (Schatzki 1996, in Warde 2005, p. 134, see also Schau *et al.* 2009). They are further seen as sustained and re-constructed through perpetual enactment and

performances (Reckwitz 2002, in Warde 2005). “Practices are thus coordinated entities but also require performance for their existence” (Warde 2005, p. 134). Parallels can be drawn here between these performances in practices and gender performances (Connell 2005, Goffman 1959, Butler 1990). Practices are also presented as neither social nor individual, although both play a vital role for the existence of practices. Actors perform, embody, carry out, know and understand what to do in practices. At the same time, all practices are social practices. They are shared and collective (Warde 2005, p. 135) as individuals do not act as isolated beings outside of social convention. Practices therefore also reflect an understanding of social organisation.

This description recognises how practices create both collective and individual identities (Wenger 1998, Schatzki 1996). Indeed, Wenger emphasised that although there may be a distinction between these two levels of identification, they go hand in hand. “Talking about identity in social terms is not denying individuality but viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practices of specific communities.” (Wenger 1998, p. 146) With this, he echoes Jenkins (2004) notion of internal-external dialectic of identification. Social identities are described by Jenkins as simultaneously collective and individual. Jenkins also described ‘identities as somewhat fluid, situationally contingent, and the perpetual subject and object of negotiation.’(p. 22). Wenger continues that identities are negotiated within practices through the “layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other.” (Wenger 1998, p. 151). In other words, reification and participation within practices constitute the layered process through which identities are continuously constructed. Reification refers to the projection of meaning by the individual into the external world and through this projection perceiving these meanings as existing in the world. Through participation, Wenger argues, we perceive ourselves in each other. Through these processes, collective and individual identities inform each other. It is their contextual interaction that is important. He adds that these identities are shaped through different trajectories and the ‘nexus of multimembership’. Additionally,

they may be experienced locally although membership or belonging may be defined globally. This refers to further layering of broader global or cultural patterns but their local interpretation. For example, a trend or news may be communicated on a global scale but its interpretation and realisation takes place locally, also by individuals and communities. Similarly, Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest that men doing, living and talking masculinities is experienced locally yet influenced by broader structures. While Wenger previously removed a distinction between collective and individual identities, he still considers these themes as the link between 'individual engagement and the formation of communities of practice' (p. 163). At heart of these practices are learning, competence and knowledge that build the community.

Relating these often abstract theories to consumer research, Warde (2005) suggests that most practices involve or are even based on consumption. It is often these practices that generate wants and needs to consume. The knowledge, doings and sayings within practices require consumption. Relating this to a gendered context, masculinities as a set of practices also demand consumption or investment. One issue here is individual choice. Individuals choose to participate in practices. Warde sees individuals at the intersection of the variety of practices they engage in, similar to Wenger's nexus of multimembership. Of importance is the 'benefit' or value they receive through their engagement in practices. Benefiting from knowledge or performances that lead to certain positions within practices may take the form of developing a 'career' or rather trajectory of a person.

“Someone who values the practices of stock car racing, and has the possibility of engaging in it as a competent or excellent practitioner, probably has access to the psychic rewards that psychologists attribute to the process of self-development. In other words, no matter where a practice fits in a hierarchy of prestige, there are internal goods to be derived from it for individual practitioners.” (Warde 2005, p. 148)

Here lies precisely the idea of consumption practices providing benefits for the construction of masculinities. Consumption for practices may have the fundamental

benefit of constructing selves (Shankar and Fitchett 2002). The question is how and what kind of masculine selves are constructed through consumption practices.

This value of practices and groups has also been explored in recent consumer research. Cova (1997) described tribes as providing 'linking value' for its members. Schau *et al.* (2009) adopted a practice approach for exploring value within brand communities. Criticising a previous focus on individual practices (Holt 1995, 2002) their aim was to address the lack of studies focussing on collective practices. In their framework they take on Schatzki's (1996) concept of practices as entities performed through understanding, procedures and engagement. However, Schau *et al.* (2009) centre their ideas on the brand, not consumers' identities. Moreover, although they explore similarities and differences between brand communities, they do not consider the 'multimembership' of individuals. The question of 'what range of the available practices do individuals engage in, as well as what are the typical combinations of practices' (Warde 2005, p. 149) has not been studied.

Beyond these theories of practice, group dynamics also influence consumption meanings. The following examples explain how individuals may be guided or influenced in their choice of practices. Individual's position within social structures for example affect their 'lifestyle' (Giddens 1991, Holt 1997). In addition to broader social classes, we also experience pressure through relational reference groups or social categories (Solomon *et al.* 2006). Stereotyping, norms and conventions play a role here (Warde 2005). We may be influenced in our consumption through negative experiences such as social ridicule (Wooten 2007) or peer pressure (Elliott and Leonard 2004). Certain social groupings may also be associated with practices in specific spaces (Pettigrew 2006, Eckert 1998). Banister and Hogg (2003) address the relational aspect of consumption in their concept of negative symbolic consumption. Symbolic consumption meanings may be constructed through negative association with an opposed reference group. Through this, boundaries between in and out-groups may be

reinforced that differentiate between legitimate and deviant consumption. Instead of defining ourselves or our group through what we do, we may also construct ourselves through what we are not. This relational construction of symbolic consumption through negative association can be equally translated to practices.

Themes of subcultural opposition followed a similar path (Hebdige 1979). The meanings of 'cool' consumption emerged as negatively related to the tastes of the mainstream (Nancarrow and Nancarrow 2007). This mainstream in turn was assumed as inferior (Thornton 1995). Rather than locating 'cool' on its own, it was often based on what was not 'cool'. Nancarrow *et al.* (2001) also found certain ambivalence in an attitude of 'not caring' in their 'concept of cool'. Most importantly, they suggested that 'cool' was more closely related to the male and masculine than the feminine. The taste or appreciation of 'cool' was highly gendered although their study did not explore this further. This appreciation was related to the idea of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995, Nancarrow and Nancarrow 2007). Instead of defining 'cool' in terms of objects or symbols, it was rather seen as knowledge about styles or practices that was only attainable for a small group outside of the mainstream. Relating this appreciation to subcultural capital is grounded in the notion that subcultures may not only be based on income and social class, in opposition to cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). In fact, Nancarrow *et al.* (2001) found that most innovators of 'cool' did not occupy highly paid positions. Their competence was connected to a knowledge and appreciation that was highly creative, yet may not be related to traditional structures of high and low cultural capital (Holt 1998). Nevertheless, Bourdieu's theory of capital may still hold some relevance for understanding masculinity and consumption practices.

2.4.2. Capital, habitus and fields – contributions from Bourdieu

One of the fundamental aspects of Bourdieu's (1984, 1992) work has been his critical evaluations of structuralism and subjectivism and its relation to objectivism (Lau 2004). While often criticised as deterministic (Jenkins 1982), Bourdieu saw subjective involvement or agency as 'circularly' influenced and yet shaped by objective structures (Crossley 2001). Bourdieu (1977) also used the concept of practice to theorise the hierarchic structures of culture and class relations. Indeed, his theories touched on a variety of different facets of social life (Skeggs 2004), including the power structures that supported 'masculine domination' (2001). His theories may also add to our understanding of gendered consumption which is why some of his concepts are briefly outlined here. Particular attention is placed on Bourdieu's ideas of capital, habitus and field in their relation to practices.

Bourdieu (1984) argued that the accumulation of capital throughout life trajectories is central to the social struggle. Relating the possession of higher and lower cultural capital mostly to class relations (Wenger 1998), he offered the concept of capital as the (often embodied) expression of taste that informs practices. According to this, certain people with higher cultural capital are prone to develop a certain taste for practices that distinguishes them from others with lower cultural capital. Capital has been related to the distinct appreciation and aesthetic evaluation of practices by social groups (Bourdieu 1984). Within this 'aesthetic' distinction, Bourdieu considers the different appreciation of objects, spaces, practices and people. Those possessing more capital also occupy dominant positions within society. Capital as a resource for exchange emerges in a variety of forms (Bourdieu 1986), economic capital being the most concrete of those. More complex forms are social capital and cultural capital, the latter having received the most attention in Bourdieu's work. Cultural capital was described as taking on embodied, objectified and institutionalised states (Bourdieu 1986). In that sense, the

possession of capital can also be viewed as embodied display or objectified and institutionalised knowledge and competence. Possessing a work of art for example can be achieved through economic capital. Yet, the correct appreciation of art, knowing about art and embodying this competence forms part of a person's cultural capital. Social capital in turn is characterised as the accumulation of relationships that can lead to 'material or symbolic profits' (Bourdieu 1986, p. 249). These various types of capital are gathered, exchanged and competed for as they define our place within society.

While capital can therefore be summarised as resources for social exchanges, the concept of habitus describes dispositions in the form of skills or competence of individuals as agents. Within the relatively deterministic concept of capital (Jenkins 1982), Bourdieu's habitus includes the element of choice (Crossley 2001) that negotiates these "structuring structures" and "structured structures" (Bourdieu 1984). The former refers to the notion of habitus as subjectively interpreting and 'structuring' the structures around a person. This however, Bourdieu argues, also leads to objective 'structured structures' that relate to hierarchies in society.

"An agent's habitus is an active residue or sediment of his past that functions within his present, shaping his perception, thought, and action and thereby molding social practice in a regular way. It consists in dispositions, schemas, forms of know-how and competence (...)." (Crossley 2001, p. 83)

In that sense, habitus can be understood as a certain tendency or likelihood to act upon and develop dispositions. These dispositions in turn shape practices. Although habits can be very distinct, Bourdieu argued that they still emerge in collective patterns through similar structures that individuals share. The habitus is thus also an expression of group membership or belonging to one or more categories. Here is precisely where objective and subjective structures become circular. Individuals develop competencies based on their habitus. Through these, they engage in practices that shape social structures. However, these social structures further inform their development of competencies and

habitus. We can rephrase this idea in saying that a person is both a product and producer of practices and structures.

Two important concepts for explaining social relations and structures for Bourdieu were therefore capital and habitus. These two are also heavily connected. Capital can be described as the resources people are endowed with whereas habits are the dispositions, competencies or skills individual agents choose to develop. Yet, possessing capital or rather acknowledging the value of capital is deeply rooted within and affects our habitus. In other words, our habitus or dispositions and competencies influence our own perception of capital. Capital is therefore agreed and shared. Acknowledging capital takes place precisely through social struggle, competitions and exchanges. The sheer idea that capital is worth competing for also means that its value is recognised. Contests thus define capital. Competitions over capital are often compared by Bourdieu to games. These 'games' are summarised in the concept of fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Fields are multiple, interlinked 'games' that people with a certain habitus are likely to engage in. The purpose and form of the game is recognised based on a person's habitus and in turn also shapes the same. Capital is described as exchanged, often competitively, within these games or fields, creating positions (Crossley 2001). Fields are therefore Bourdieu's form for expressing practices in the sense of 'Praktik' (Warde 2005), albeit Warde criticises the concept as 'weakly explicated' (p. 136). Finally, the acknowledgement of stake or value within the game, recognising that the game is worth playing and tying individuals into fields has been described as 'illusio' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Schatzki, Reckwitz and Warde therefore focus on the character and content of practices as their value. Bourdieu's idea of practices concerned how these shaped people's positions as well as their habits and capital (and vice versa). While one may be more internally defining what constitutes different practice and how these create benefits, the

other may relate more to the social hierarchies/distinction of practices and how people come to engage in them.

2.4.3. Bourdieu and masculinity – does it fit?

Bourdieu's theories have found several applications within consumer research (Holt 1998, Allen and Allen 1994, Kates 2001). There have also been some attempts to relate his concepts to gender, mostly in a feminist context (Adkins and Skeggs 2005). Viewing capital as embodied particularly resonated with feminist perspectives (McCall 1992, McNay 1992, McNay 1999). McCall (1992) mentioned in this context 'gendered dispositions' as shaping cultural capital in its embodied state. Gender is fundamentally inscribed into bodies (Skeggs 2004). Bourdieu theories were mostly criticised for viewing gender as a secondary variable relating to the most hidden form of capital, namely symbolic cultural capital (McCall 1992). Gender was therefore symbolically and also institutionally legitimised. A related critique referred to Bourdieu's inscription of women as the bearer of symbolic gendered capital that almost appeared to view women as objectified (Skeggs 2004). Instead of unpacking or deconstructing gender relations, Bourdieu's theories rather explained and seemingly justified them. Those efforts to expand Bourdieu's concepts into a gender arena mostly involved presenting gender as part of social class (Skeggs 2004, Dumais 2002). Skeggs for example studied women and femininities with lower social class backgrounds. Additionally, they often aimed to explore women's positions within social structures. Bourdieu himself argued for the flexibility and abstraction of his theories (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It may therefore be worth outlining some of the parallels between his concepts and those of masculinity.

For one, his relational approach to social structures resonates with certain gender theories. It emerges in his description of capital as classifying taste which also

'classifies the classifier' (Bourdieu 1984). Tastes were however also largely recognised for being expressed in dislikes, distastes or difference to other tastes (Skeggs 2004). Sarah Thornton (1995) developed this idea further within the concept of subcultural capital, describing it mainly as an expression developed in opposition to what it dislikes, in this instance the mainstream. In a gendered context, this can refer to relational practices negatively informing the other. Bourdieu's ideas of habitus also show parallels in terms of understanding gender as skills, competencies and knowledge. In relation to masculinity and capital in its most basic form, capital informs taste that communicates the possession of capital to others. Taste or appreciation is also socialised as gendered. Bourdieu recognised the exchange of capital through the struggle and competition within 'fields' or practices. These contests for capital can equally be related to masculinity. The competitive character of masculinity has already been stressed significantly. Through competitions, capital can be seen as 'agreed' and acknowledged by others. Similarly, masculinity may be understood as competitively 'agreed' within practices. It may be possible to explore masculinity within some kind of capital or currency that is exchanged and contested. A parallel can be drawn with the hierarchy that is established through the possession and acquisition of capital. Gender capital may also construct a hierarchy between gender relations (Connell 2005). One additional parallel emerges from the idea of dispositions as constructed by and constructing practices within social structures. A person can be understood to be both the producer and product of practices, both creator and created by their surrounding structures. This relates very much to descriptions of masculinity as both emerging from existing structures but also being continuously (re)worked and (re)produced. Wetherell and Edley (1999) suggest that "The fact of the matter is, of course, that, paradoxical as it might sound, men are simultaneously the producers and products of culture; the masters and the slaves of ideology." (p. 109) Similarly, capital informs habitus which in turn shapes fields or practices in which capital is exchanged.

However, where does this leave the negotiating character of identities? Although habitus considers individual agency and choice within social structures, even habits are considered as shaping rather collective or shared categories. Similarly, structures or boundaries are very present and real in Bourdieu's theories. He argued that agents emerged from and ultimately constructed objective structures albeit through subjective dispositions. Additionally, capital mostly related to a certain profit, if not economically than socially. Is it within the scope of capital that we may consider a 'profit' within the development of masculine identities? Some additions or alternatives to this can be suggested. As discussed earlier for example, Foucault's 'practices of the self' placed individuals in a more autonomous role for constructing their own gender identities (McNay 1992). More closely related to Bourdieu, Côté (2002, 1996) linked the accumulation of capital with theories relating to the development of identities. Drawing on early studies of identity development by Erik Eriksson and George Herbert Mead, Côté introduces the idea of 'identity capital' that places significant more importance on individual identity projects while also acknowledging the (mostly symbolic) capital involved within this. The negotiating character and individual accumulation as well as appreciation of capital are also recognised in Côté's work. Processes of individualisation and the continuous work involved in the construction of identities are paralleled here to capital 'profits'. 'Identity capital' therefore describes the capabilities of individuals to negotiate identities through fragmented and multiple meanings (Giddens 1991). Côté's 'identity capital' is significantly less politically charged as it does not refer to social relations. Although he aims to create a link between cultural and individual identities, he also provides less information about the different sources of capital. Additionally, the question remains of whether it may be possible to stretch Bourdieu's ideas sufficiently, extending them to previously unrelated areas of study. At the same time, both concepts of capital may be useful in furthering our understanding of masculine practices.

2.4.4. Practices and identities, groups and individuals – a synthesis

This section aimed to provide insights into a number of ideas concerning how to approach the topic of practices and identities. Although these have not always been related to the study of gender, they may help us in approaching the topic of gendered ‘practices’. We can see how practices often related to ‘social practices’ (Bourdieu 1984, Wenger 1998) of broader groups or categories. Other studies suggest a more active role of the individual in constructing meanings of practices and identities (Holt 2002). Relating ‘practices’ to a gender context, we are often faced with the notion that ‘gender identity projects’ are individual (McNay 1992) or collective (Connell 2005). Whether gender identities are collective or individual, they can be viewed as informing one another (Wenger 1998). Translating this to a gender context, Wetherell and Edley (1999) argued that men are both products and producers of masculinities. Masculinity may therefore be found precisely at this interaction of collective and individual practices. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus may offer some explanation here.

The relationship between individual and collective negotiation of masculinity that emerges resembles suggestions of the dialectic between mediated and lived experience (Elliott and Wattansuwan 1998). Identities are described here as constructed through the dialectic experience of lived and mediated resources. While mediated resources may need to be replaced in this context with broader collective resources, the ideas remain similar. Elliott (2004) suggested another framework that may fit more closely for the purpose of this study. He described the role of consumption as ‘symbolic vocabulary’ (p. 135) for constructing identities across a variety of communities of practice. He referred to these practices as ‘sites of the self-in-action’. Identities are constructed in these practices through ‘socially constructed resources of the self’ and ‘structural sources’. With the term ‘structural’ and ‘positional’ sources, Elliott seemed to reflect Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, capital and fields. It appears that structural sources relates to Bourdieu’s ideas of objective structures. At the same time Elliott added that

identities are constantly re-negotiated and developed within changing contexts through the interaction of these socially constructed resources and structural sources. These ideas may be useful for their approach of exploring different identities or selves in action through practices. They also translate to the topic of how different masculinities may emerge through consumption practices and how they differ between groups and individuals.

As different 'habits', positions and 'resources' come together in groups, meanings of masculinity may change. The issue of men as both 'producers and products' of masculinities (Wetherell and Edley 1999) may be very relevant here. At the same time, we need to remain sensitive to how individuals subjectively live and perceive their own masculinities through their own narratives, social backgrounds and selves. As Skeggs (2004) noted, Bourdieu left little consideration for individual contradictions and ambivalence. Subjective interpretations may also contribute to shifting meanings of masculine consumption within groups and vice versa. The theme that emerges through this is the dialectic relationship between 'identities' or the construction of self through varying 'practices'. While these practices often take place within social group contexts, it is also important to view the different combinations or sets of practices forming individuals' 'choices' and identities (Warde 2005). The 'trajectory' or 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger 1998) are at the core of these themes. This leads to exploring the consumption within group practices and the interaction or role of individuals within these.

2.5. Conclusions

A number of insights have been produced for studying men and masculinities, mainly from sociology and gender studies. Particularly the work from Connell (2005, 2001, 1987, 1985) and Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1993, 1995, 1996, 1999) have

been pointed out here. The notion of gender as relational and as a 'place' that is constantly negotiated through practices has been emphasised specifically. For the study of masculinities, Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been described in detail. His theories also relate to the importance of struggle and contest between 'winning styles' for the construction of masculinity. While we have seen a growing interest in exploring men and masculinities in consumer research, there is still a lack of studies of male consumer that explicitly focus on gender issues. Several examples of studies were pointed out where themes of masculinity emerged but remained on the sideline (further examples include Wooten 2007, Pettigrew 2002, 2003). Beyond consumer research this was also noted in other studies of practices such as football (Free and Hughson 2003). Viewing gender as constructed through practices may also coincide with recent studies in consumer research (Schau *et al.* 2009). As Warde (2005) suggested, it may be helpful to consider consumption as embedded in practices and the value this produces for consumers. The review of further literature on practices led to Bourdieu's theories of capital and habitus. These have been discussed in more detail and attention was placed on how they may be translated to theories of men and masculinities.

Throughout the review, a second theme emerged that saw gender, identities and practices as differentiated into individuals and collectives. Within consumer research, we also find tendencies to concentrate on either individual identities (Holt and Thompson 2004, Holt 2002) or groups (Kates 2002, 2004). In fact, a predominant focus on the individual in consumer research was noted by Warde (2005) for explaining his approach of 'social practices'. While the previous separation between group and individual studies was pointed out, literature was also introduced that offered a synthesis of the two perspectives. Individuals are viewed as having a choice for constructing their identities (Giddens 1991, Foucault 1979) yet group identities within broader social settings may also be relevant for shaping identities (Bourdieu 1984, 1986, Crossley 2001). We have therefore seen how a focus on both groups and individuals in practices

is possible. Bourdieu's theories of capital and habitus represent a significant contribution to how individuals and groups interact in practices and their construction of identities. Jenkins' (2004) approach of the internal-external dialectic of identification also offers helpful suggestions. Finally, these theories may further advance our understanding of masculine identities and consumption.

3. Methodology

The following sections describe the approach that was adopted for this piece of research. Initially, gaps identified from the literature review are presented, explaining how these relate to specific themes and discussions in consumer research. These gaps also shape this study's research aims, objectives and questions, guiding the research process. Following ontological and epistemological considerations, the methodology and methods for data generation and analysis are explained. A more critical examination shows how these were adopted and put into practice by the researcher. These sections also describe the choices that further shaped the topic and trajectory of this study. Finally, the study is also evaluated in terms of limitations.

3.1. Research gaps arising from the literature review

The literature review identified several gaps that this research seeks to address. In the first instance, we have seen how men and masculinities have only recently received attention in gender research across fields of inquiry. It has also been described how these insights have mainly emerged within sociology and gender studies. Despite a growing interest of men and masculinities in consumer research, several of these contributions and new ideas have still been insufficiently explored. More specifically, while a number of studies have investigated mediated images of men and masculinities in advertising (Schroeder and Zwick 2004, Patterson and Elliott 2002) less attention has been placed on how masculinities are lived and constructed through consumption in daily life. Those studies that contain themes of 'lived masculinities' centre on certain key areas. These include masculinity in relation to brands (Kates 2004), objects (Belk and Costa 1998), subcultures and communities (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Arthur 2006) or events (Kates 2003). While themes of men and masculinities were certainly described and included in their findings, their focus on the construction of

gender remained mainly secondary. This further limits the number of research efforts that actively sought to understand men in their construction of gender identities through consumption.

Most importantly, viewing masculinity as constructed *through* practices and *across* practices has been largely neglected in consumer research. As discussed by Edley and Wetherell (1995) masculinity is continuously re-negotiated as men occupy several gendered 'places' through practices, often at the same time. Recognising practices as gendered also situates gender constructs within a specific socio-cultural context. Masculinity can therefore be understood as continuously (re)produced through interaction and engagement within these practices. Interest in consumption practices also follows recent directions in consumer research (Warde 2005, Schau *et al.* 2009). Yet, these studies also fail to consider how practices constructed gender identities (for an example of gender practices in socio-linguistics see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1998). Thompson and Holt (2004) took a practice approach for describing how men strived to claim the 'phallus' through consumption. However, they defined masculinity from the outset as men's competitive quest for power through the 'phallus'. In contrast, this research considers masculinities as emergent from meanings and interactions arising from various practices. Kates (2002) also studied practices of the gay community. Rather than exploring gender identities, his focus was on characterising the dynamics of gay subcultures.

A second discussion emerged from this literature review. Holt and Thompson (2004) argued that individual men negotiated their own masculinity as part of their identity. The focus on the individual as consumer was also found in Holt (2002) and Mick and Buhl's (1992) life project. On the other hand, studies of consumption communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001), subcultures (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Kates 2003, Kates 2004) and tribes (Cova *et al.* 2007) have argued that identities are shared and emerge through values and group meanings. Maffesoli (1996) considered that

individualism is lost in the rise of mass media. With a focus on either, it seemed that the relationships between collective and individual identities, their similarities and distinctions, have been overlooked in consumer research. Gilmore (1990) argued that

“the manhood ideal is not purely psychogenetic in origin but is also a culturally imposed ideal to which men must conform whether or not they find it psychologically congenial. That is, it is not simply a reflection of individual psychology but a part of public culture, a collective representation.” (Gilmore 1990, p. 5)

This research, therefore, seeks to examine the collective and individual dimensions of practices and masculinities.

Considering which age or life stage of men to study, the literature review also led to further suggestions. On one end of the age spectrum, young boys, adolescents and ‘schooling masculinities’ have been studied extensively (Frosh *et al.* 2002, Mac an Ghail 1994, Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, Renold 2004). On the other hand, studies in consumer research have often focussed on mature men (i.e. Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Holt and Thompson 2004). The age after boys’ school education was considered of interest for its developmental stage in forming gender identities. Mintel (2003) reported on the phenomenon of ‘thresholders’, describing them as young people, generally between the age of 18 and 24, who were neither adults nor teenagers. This group received special attention for the number of choices it faced after school and the often ‘extended adolescence’ while attending University. This extended youth is however juxtaposed with adult tasks and responsibilities such as dealing with debt at relatively early stages of their lives. This age group has been largely under-represented in research on men and masculinities, but seemed of interest for these challenges.

3.2. Research aims and contributions

The broad aim arising from these gaps is to explore how masculine identities are constructed through consumption across practices and how their meaning is negotiated by groups and individuals. With these gaps in mind, the study aims to contribute to understanding men as consumers who use consumption practices to construct their gender identities. More generally, it also seeks to further an understanding of men as gendered. Approaching this from a feminist point of view, the idea is to ‘unpack’ masculinity as it is lived in situated, cultural, everyday practices. If gender has thus far been more of an issue for women and minorities based on their sexuality or ethnicity, the aim is to understand masculinity as a gender construct. I do not wish to challenge men through exposing their masculinity. Rather, my aim is to present the contradictions, conflicts, contests, competitions and ultimately the fragile and vulnerable characteristics that also characterise men and their gender identities. It is important to highlight the complex processes that also form part of men’s gender identification instead of assuming they are ‘natural’. Challenging monolithic and essentialist ideas of masculinity, this research seeks to point out the multiplicity of men’s gender identities and how consumption plays a role in their construction. The marketing and communication of consumption practices may indeed support men in embracing gender as part of their daily lives. This study therefore also points to the possibilities and responsibilities of marketing in creating masculinities.

Parallel to its contributions to consumer research and marketing, this piece also aims to add to knowledge that may be of benefit for the field of gender studies and social sciences in general. Behind these research efforts lies the fundamental endeavour to help young men accept and express themselves as gendered. In that sense, it seeks to create a dialogue between the analytical findings of the studied world and the social world as experienced by real people.

3.3. Research objectives

From these gaps and research aims, we can formulate the following research objectives:

- To explore and describe how the consumption of young men, aged 18-24, across practices contributes to the negotiation of masculine identities

- To explore the relationship between the individual and the group in young men's construction of masculinity through consumption practices

3.4. Research questions

From these objectives, we can identify two fundamental research questions that have guided the research process:

1. How do young men construct, perform and negotiate masculinities through consumption across practices?

2. How are meanings of masculinity constructed by groups and individuals, and individuals in groups, through consumption practices?

These research questions call for a study that is sensitive to the dialectic between groups and individuals. The questions also ask for a more holistic approach to consumption across a variety of practices. Prior to explaining the methodology and methods of this study, the following paragraphs describe the epistemological stance that was adopted.

3.5. Ontological and epistemological stance

Snape and Spencer (2003) explain epistemology as ‘ways of knowing and learning about the social world’ (p. 13), relating it to such questions as ‘how can we know about reality and what is the basis for our knowledge?’ (p. 13). This study’s epistemology therefore describes the theoretical and philosophical perspectives or ‘Weltanschauung’ adopted to make sense of data and the world it originated from. It also gives insight into the relationship that is assumed between the researcher and the researched. Moreover, the epistemology allows us to make assumptions about the nature of knowledge that is produced. In other words, it describes the extent to which we can claim a certain truth or representation of an existing or non-existing reality (Snape and Spencer 2003, Becker 1996). We can further distinguish between ontology and epistemology. The former has been described as the study of ‘what is’ and the latter as framing the knowledge we can produce about ‘what is’ (Crotty 1998, Ritchie and Lewis 2003). While some suggest that ontology is implied within epistemology which defines the theoretical perspective we adopt for our research (Crotty 1998), others actively differentiate between ontology and epistemology (Snape and Spencer 2003).

Snape and Spencer suggest realism, materialism, idealism and relativism as ontological perspectives. The fundamental distinction between these is the extent to which we can assume an objective reality and the degree to which this reality can be considered accessible to human consciousness. Realism, critical realism and subtle realism, contend that an objective reality exists beyond our consciousness. In other words, what we are studying can relate to an objective truth or reality. Materialism is described as a variant of realism, as recognising reality through material objects. It is suggested that the idealist stance perceives the world through individuals’ interpretations which are socially constructed. Finally, relativism is understood as a variant of idealism (2003). Both fundamentally diverge from realism in maintaining that no objective reality exists outside of social construction and that we only have access to a socially constructed

reality through people’s interpretations. An alternative framework for how to approach the research process, from epistemology to methodology, is offered by Crotty (1998). To guide the reader further in this discussion, a table that outlines the varying research directions is adapted below.

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
Objectivism Constructionism Subjectivism	Positivism (and post-positivism) Interpretivism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic Interactionism • Phenomenology • Hermeneutics Critical inquiry Feminism Postmodernism Etc.	Experimental research Survey Research Ethnography Phenomenological research Grounded theory Heuristic inquiry Action research Discourse analysis Feminist standpoint research Etc.	Sampling Measurement and scaling Questionnaire Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant • Non-participant Interview Focus group Case study Life history Narrative Visual ethnographic methods Statistical analysis Data reduction Theme identification Comparative analysis Cognitive mapping Interpretive methods Document analysis Content analysis Conversation analysis Etc.

Table 1. Research epistemologies and approaches to research, adapted from Crotty (1998, p. 5)

Crotty describes ontology parallel to epistemologies in the form of objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. His description of objectivism resembles elements of Snape and Spencer's (2003) realism in that an objective reality is believed to exist independent of human consciousness. Subjectivism in contrast claims no objective meaning since it is imposed entirely by subjective individuals, often invented out of nothing. Constructionism is similar in its belief that no objective truth or reality exists. However, instead of meaning being subjectively imposed, it is constructed through interactions of subjects and objects. Potter (1996) described some of the key aspects of social constructionism further, viewing it as a way to define ontological issues. His main argument is that in social constructionism reality is seen as created by individuals through their interchanges which are culturally and historically situated.

Burr (1998) also followed the idea of social constructionism as ontological and considers the implications this view has for individual agency. In the case of realism or objectivism, objective structures cannot be changed. If meaning is created through interchanges as argued by Potter (1996), it can be changed by us and between us. Between objectivist and subjectivist stances is where we often encounter Bourdieu's theories of capital and habitus (Lau 2004). The predicament is that individuals may perceive and construct their version of reality in the form of 'habitus' subjectively. Yet, this subjective understanding and hence their agency to change is restricted by objective structures and reality. Relating this to social class, Bourdieu argues that structures and hierarchies can be defined as objective structures. The potential for agency therefore seems limited in objectivism (Crossley 2001, Jenkins 1982). Social constructionism however follows the notion of changing and shifting social structures through interactions. Burr (1998) argues that researchers in social science generally find themselves between what is real, relative or constructed. Depending on each person and the research topic, we may all vary in our acceptance of a certain reality or truth as subjective or objective.

Turning from this discussion of ontology to epistemologies, Snape and Spencer (2003) mention two opposing epistemological stances, namely positivism and interpretivism. A realist ontology relates to a positivist stance that assumes an objective reality which can be tested and verified. The knowledge we can produce about the social world is true and unbiased. Positivist researchers can identify, collect facts and quantify social phenomena. Interpretivism in contrast recognises the production of subjectivities (Butler 1990, Borgerson 2005, Jackson 2004, Frosh *et al.* 2002) through intersubjectivity (Crotty 1998, Tadajewski 2006). The world we can gain insight to is socially constructed and can be explored through people's understanding of it, their perspectives and interpretations. Acknowledging these multiple subjectivities and their interaction with others, the researcher's engagement is also understood as necessarily influencing the research setting through his/her own interpretations. In contrast to the analytical and distanced researcher in positivism, removing the socially constructed understandings of the researcher is therefore impossible. To overcome this, a focus on reflexivity in the way data is generated and analysed is of particular importance for this perspective. Although the researcher's influence and interpretation may be considered a limitation, a unique point of view may also interpret new insights that others may have been unaware of.

Research objectives and questions guided the epistemological and ontological stance of this study. Its exploratory nature means that it is driven by discovery rather than verification (Pidgeon 1996). Gender as the central topic of inquiry in this research has further been acknowledged as socially constructed. As discussed in the literature review, gender is not a fixed, static, monolithic concept but rather interpreted and appropriated in multiple ways (Giddens 1991). The belief in an objective gendered 'reality' would negate the potential for changing gendered constructs. Whether we collectively construct gendered meanings through interactions between us or whether these meanings are constructed subjectively by each individual is the more complex

issue. To resolve this, we may consider Edley and Wetherell's (1996) suggestion of viewing individuals as both producers and products of gender. In one sense, gendered meanings can be understood and shared collectively, even if they are socially constructed and not 'real' as such. At the same time, gender can also be viewed as constructed by each individual subjectively. Taking this view, we take into account the choice of the individual, also for the construction of gender identities. Yet we also acknowledge that these are shaped through interchanges and interactions and are not independent of a socio-historic and cultural background. Different meanings therefore exist between but also within us, making us simultaneously producers and products of social constructs such as gender. This approach also recognises the multi-faceted and diverse identities that are constantly (re)negotiated. The stance is therefore that of social constructionism, acknowledging that not all meaning is entirely subjective but also inter-subjective.

Following this position of social constructionism, an interpretivist approach was adopted. Recognising its positioning within the social sciences, interpretive approaches have also been advocated in consumer research (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy 1988, Arnould and Thompson 2005). Recent movements have further embraced and intensified interpretive consumer research as an accepted research direction (Cova and Elliott 2008), particularly in pointing towards the consequences it has for methodologies and methods (i.e. Pace 2008, Hogg and Maclaran 2008, VOICE Group 2008). Interpretivism is also acknowledged as an ontology, epistemology and methodology at the same time (Tadajewski 2006, Cova and Elliott 2008). Ontologically, it views reality as socially constructed and multi-faceted; epistemologically, it assumes that knowledge of this social world can be accessed through understanding intersubjective interpretations and lived experiences of this socially constructed world; and methodologically, it seeks to grasp this knowledge mainly through qualitative methods (Cova and Elliott 2008).

3.6. Ethnography as methodology

“One of the easiest ways of appreciating the nature of culture and subculture is simply to observe the day-to-day functioning of a group or organization to which one belongs, *as if one were an outsider.*” (Morgan 1986, p.121, added emphasis)

The research objectives of exploring young men’s construction of gender identities through consumption, both collectively and individually, required a methodology that was holistic, flexible and exploratory: holistic in the sense that a variety of practices could be studied as they were lived within a specific cultural context; flexible in allowing the study of group and individual perspectives; and exploratory in its drive towards description and discovery rather than verification. Following these criteria and the epistemological approach, an interpretive methodology was adopted. The objective of grasping practices as they were lived and experienced within a specific cultural context were one of the many reasons for choosing ethnography as the methodology for this study. The following sections describe ethnography in more detail and explain how and why this approach was adopted.

3.6.1. What is ethnography?

Ethnography has become an accepted methodology in interpretive consumer research and Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) for its ability to explore the lived dimension of consumers. As such, it has been widely adopted in a broad range of consumer research studies (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Belk and Costa 1998, Ritson and Elliott 1999, Kozinets 2002a, etc.). Parallel to being described as a methodology (Crotty 1998), it is also used as a synonym for a distinct method or set of methods (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, Stewart 1998). Research paradigms and perspectives can also influence the direction ethnography takes as well as the choice of

topic. These developments led to a number of variants of ethnography such as critical ethnography (Thomas 1993, LeCompte 2002, Foley and Valenzuela 2005, Kincheloe and McLaren 2005) and feminist ethnography (Skeggs 2001). Decisions regarding site selection also saw the emergence of autoethnographies (Atkinson *et al.* 2003), multi-site ethnographies (Marcus 1995) and combinations of these. Similarly, ethnography is not just a methodology on its own but also has the ability to ‘partner’ with other methodologies for approaching data generation or analysis such as grounded theory (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001, Pettigrew 2000) or phenomenology (Maso 2001). Some of the fundamental differences between phenomenology and ethnography lie within the position of the researcher and access to meanings of experiences of the researched. While in ethnography, understanding emerges through participation and co-creation of culture, phenomenology seeks to remove the researcher’s interpretation, leaving only the experiences of informants (Katz and Csordas 2003). In a special session about phenomenological ethnography, Katz and Csordas argued that a number of ethnographies already contained elements of phenomenology through their focus on informants’ experiences.

What is ethnography? Traditionally, ethnography has been seen as the main method of inquiry for anthropology. Essentially, it seeks to understand culture through everyday life and learn about this culture through sharing and co-creation as an active member. Although different ethnographies adopt a variety of methods, the central method has therefore been participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994) which allows the researcher to play a participatory role within the natural surroundings of informants. The researcher experiences and co-creates everyday culture firsthand. To gain insight into the natural behaviour of a population, ethnography also assumes that the researcher spends considerable time immersed into the field. Extended immersion aims at understanding the natural setting and its population through becoming an accepted member. The more time we spend with informants, the closer we can get to see the world through their eyes and the better we can assume the role of an ‘insider’ (Lofland

and Lofland 1984). The insider role, or becoming a fully accepted member (Adler and Adler 1987), is important for the ability to co-create a culture through activities as they are authentically lived. It can be argued that the longer a researcher spends with informants, the more competence will be gained and the better the picture that is described. The more competence a researcher has in the field, the more acceptance is granted by informants who may see the researcher as 'one of us' and behave 'authentically' rather than consciously performing. Prolonged fieldwork therefore aims at building rapport (Springwood and King 2001, Sherif 2001) and even friendships (Brooks 2006). Closer relationships allow informants to behave more naturally. The more natural informants' behaviour, the more truthful may be the ethnographer's interpretation. Also part of active participation is the very detailed, descriptive study of all the elements that form part of this culture including language, objects, rituals, performances, ideas, etc. (Fielding 1993). Describing a culture using 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973) aims at accurately communicating findings and allowing the audience to re-produce the interpretations of the researcher.

Through a process of reflexivity the researcher becomes aware of the culture that is produced on a daily basis. During this process, the ordinary is recognised as extraordinary. The researcher is in a position to gain a unique insight into the often symbolic, taken-for-granted world of meanings and values of informants (Toren 1996). Parallel to accomplishing insider status, the ethnographer also faces the challenge of keeping a distance in order to reflexively understand the meanings of a culture. 'Going native' (Fielding 1993) may be an important objective in ethnography. However, too much rapport can also undermine awareness of 'what it all means'. Unlike informants, the ethnographer has to become aware of the extraordinary within the ordinary. Here, we encounter the danger of becoming too immersed and adopting a 'taken for granted' position. Parallel to being an insider, the ethnographer also requires reflexivity for interpreting meanings that informants may be unaware of. For that reason, the ethnographer is often seen as occupying a privileged position (Atkinson et al. 2003).

Roles are therefore two-fold: the active participant and the researcher, or arguably even the research instrument (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The latter also refers to the task of recording and describing ongoing activities in detail. Agar (1980) described the ethnographer as ‘the professional stranger’. Davis (1973) also discussed the complexity of being simultaneously a ‘Martian’ and ‘Convert’ in the field. Being both insider and stranger at the same time seems highly contradictory and nearly impossible. Yet, a certain element of ‘strangeness’ has to remain within the ‘familiar’ (Geer 1964) which relates ethnography once more to elements of phenomenology and ‘bracketing’ (Atkinson et al. 2003). ‘Bracketing’ is described as the process of distancing oneself to previous understandings or assumptions of everyday life to re-experience its various phenomena and understand meanings of what has become familiar.

Regarding the communication of ethnographic research, the ethnographer tells the story of interpretations that emerge from the field. Beyond that ethnography can also aim to communicate to a wider scientific audience through extending discovered patterns towards theory (Atkinson *et al.* 2003). While the former relates to the ability to grasp informants’ point of view, the latter also entails the translation of these ‘emic’ understandings into ‘etic’ interpretations (Goulding 2005, Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). The ‘emic’ refers to the subjective experiences in the field while the ‘etic’ involves interpreting these experiences to form broader patterns or theory. Stewart (1998) argues that the research in the field becomes a ‘quest’ for exploration driven by discovery of analytic themes. This discovery-driven, exploratory character was the reason for choosing ethnography as the methodology for this study.

Ethnography therefore involves a) the personal involvement of the researcher within a natural setting over an extended period of time, b) the ability to grasp culture in a holistic way, c) interpretations that are sensitive to the context they are found in and therefore d) based on detailed descriptions (Stewart 1998). Further, these descriptions

often provide insights into previously unknown aspects of a social setting or theory that may not have been considered previously (Fielding 1993).

Ethnography was chosen as it shared the objective of following contexts and practices of young men holistically, describing culture through rituals, language, (bodily) performances, objects, spaces and ideas. Understanding gender as socially constructed and deeply embedded within socio-historic cultural contexts further suggested ethnography as the most suitable methodology. Parallel to its holistic approach, its multimodality (LeCompte 2002) meant that it could be sensitive to both group and individual identities. It therefore seemed most appropriate for the objective of exploring how masculinities were constructed through culturally situated, lived practices. Other methodological possibilities were also contemplated such as case studies (Yin 2003, Stake 1978). To a degree, ethnographies can also be considered as single, albeit extended, case studies for their prolonged fieldwork (Burawoy 1991). Other options included conducting focus groups and interviews. While interviews were used as a method for generating data within this ethnographic methodology, the value of focus groups was questionable in this context. For one, they may have not provided the same insight into the natural and lived aspect of masculinity. Any ‘performances’ of participants in front of a female researcher would have only been observed during the focus group and not over a longer period of time (Allen 2005, Gill *et al.* 2005). Finally, discourse analysis was considered as it suited the epistemological stance of social constructionism (Burr 1998, Potter 1996). However, participant observation seemed vital for the direct experience and interpretation of consumption practices.

As part of ethnographic rigour, it is important to explain how this methodology was adopted and how theoretical considerations were put into practice. The possibility of extending findings beyond their description also depends on how well the chosen methods and challenges of a study are presented. The following sections highlight these aspects in more detail.

3.6.2. How was ethnography adopted in this study?

“Accident and happenstance shapes fieldworkers’ studies as much as planning or foresight; numbing routine as much as living theatre; impulse as much as rational choice, mistaken judgements as much as accurate ones. This may not be the way fieldwork is reported, but it is the way it is done.” (Van Maanen 1988, p.2)

Van Maanen refers to a number of different aspects of fieldwork in this opening quote. For one, he describes how the experience of the field often differs from the theory. Researchers tackle situations in the field differently and this also affects the outcome of their study. Fieldwork is as much shaped by surprise, luck and success as disappointment, lack of confidence. He also speaks about how the lived experience of fieldwork differs from the written report. It is important to understand the researcher within the study to fully appreciate the development of ethnographic interpretations. Reflexivity is important here as is communication. The fieldworker can often be found behind the choices or path taken within a study. For that reason, it is also important to emphasise the implications of connecting a researcher to the research setting.

3.6.3. The researcher-researched relationships

Ethnography and an interpretive stance also imply that the researcher’s point of view needs to connect and interact with that of participants. We mainly get access to experiences and perspectives of a socially constructed world through direct contact. Seeking to connect the perspectives between the researcher and the researched requires further explanation of how their relationship is established. Lewis (2003) mentions the negotiation of access to participants as important for this. Further issues emerge regarding ethical considerations of how to manage the relationship between the researcher and researched. Access and ethical considerations are explained as part of the

research choices that follow. In much of the literature, the relationship between the researcher and researched is assumed to be based on certain 'matched' characteristics. Lewis argues that researcher and researched are most likely to connect if they share certain similarities. Ann Oakley (1981) for example built closer relationships with women in her interviews for sharing their experiences of child birth. Often these characteristics can be based on cultural proximity or a shared perception of social structures and positions. Relating these insights to this study, the researcher was a woman while the researched were men. Their cultural backgrounds also differed. I was not from Scotland and had not lived in Edinburgh prior to commencing my studies. This could have led to choosing a methodology that involved less participation than ethnography. However, different gender characteristics may have meant that situations and meanings were less likely to be taken for granted. The notion of gender and sex differences between the researcher and researched was particularly important in this study.

How the relationships between the researcher and researched were negotiated is explained in the context of the choices that were made in this study. Starting with negotiation of gaining access, this section also describes ethical considerations and the challenges presented by gender differences between the researcher and researched.

3.6.4. Negotiating access

The first challenge emerged in choosing legitimate access points to young men's practices. The implications of a female ethnographer amongst men had to be considered. Where could a woman legitimately participate with young men? Gaining access also implied the choice of a specific cultural context which further defined the profile of informants. The first set of choices therefore related to which site and context to study. Following suggestions of 'starting where we are' (Lofland and Lofland 1984), the context of Edinburgh, Scotland was chosen. This also

directed the focus of the study towards exploring young men resident in the capital city, with a specific focus on Scottish men. Concentrating on a specific ethnicity, nationality and age recognised that these also shaped identities (Mac an Ghail 1996). Deciding on the age group of 'thresholders' between 18-24, a University setting emerged as the most plausible place for me to gain access to informants. The researcher was also a student which opened the potential for commonalities. Deciding on the age and ethnicity of informants also recognised how these influenced the construction of gender identities. Although it was clear that decisions defined and narrowed the profile of informants, they were necessary for finding legitimate starting points and determining the context. Access through the University also meant that the majority of informants were students which also led to certain, possibly stereotyped, assumptions about their interests (Piacentini and Banister 2006, Park and Lessig 1977) and social background based on their level of education (Mintel 2003). Being a student myself, I was aware of the variety of experiences that make up the student body.

The setting of a Scottish University provided options for gaining access to informants through its network of societies. These were extra-curricular groups that met socially and engaged in a number of activities based on shared interests or skills. A list of societies was available through the student association of the University. Choices had to be made carefully as informants' involvement in certain societies possibly also defined their interest and the practices that they engaged in. Finding a society that would allow a female to become a legitimate participant proved more challenging than anticipated. A number of male-only groups centred around sporting activities where a female would have encountered difficulties becoming an accepted member, simply based on physical differences. Joining sports clubs such as the rugby club or basketball team was therefore not an option. Moving down the list of possible societies, it also became more difficult to encounter groups that involved predominantly Scottish young men. Interactions between Scottish and other ethnicities/nationalities seemed natural in this multicultural

capital. Yet, the main idea was to explore the identities of one specific cultural, ethnic and age group, keeping it within a certain context. Dancing, debating and drama societies were generally mixed sex as were cultural and music groups. The choices were narrowed down further due to my own skills. Although it is suggested that a degree of incompetence is acceptable and naivety can be of help during the initial stages, some overlap in interests certainly supported access to a group (Fielding 1993). On that basis, other societies were unsuitable such as the chess or pool society. The first society where access was attempted was themed around the Scottish beer brand, Tennents. A second related society was themed around the appreciation for pizza. While good rapport was built with individual members of these societies, access to wider group practices was not granted. This may have been due to a lack of personal connection. Additionally, informants that were observed initially were younger than those where close rapport was ultimately established. It seemed that younger men required space to develop their own friends and networks as they commenced University, without being accompanied by a researcher. One key informant also introduced me to a society of Aberdeen football supporters. Here, I eventually became a participant amongst a group of young Scottish men.

The initial idea was to build rapport in identified groups, accompany them in their activities and subsequently focus more specifically on key individuals within these groups. Rather than gaining access to entire groups, I was introduced to group practices by individual key informants. The selection of groups through these key informants rather followed a 'snowballing' approach (Atkinson and Flint 2001, Arber 1993) that led to the gradual building of a network. Towards the end of fieldwork, this network included approximately twenty informants who are depicted in the figure below (Figure 1). Informants' pseudonyms are mapped here according to how close our contact was. The underlined pseudonyms of key informants are located towards the left and the more peripheral informants towards the right. Further loose and more casual contacts could be added to this chart but those included in the figure played the most active roles for data

generation. This network also reflects the path of this ethnography with initial societies placed further to the top, and Aberdeen football supporters below. The labels of beer society, pizza society and Aberdeen Football Club (FC) denote their connection to each group. We can see from this chart that not all informants were Scottish. The relational and multi-cultural aspect of a University network could not be avoided. Scottish men socialised with other men who were not only from Scotland. These informants then also added insights concerning their experiences of life and culture in Edinburgh. It provided the ability to relate their perspectives to those of Scottish informants and encounter similarities or differences that may have been particular to their own culture. Instead of speaking of an active selection or sampling process of informants, I was not in a position to decide who, when or where to gain access (Wax 1971). It was up to the group to accept me. Acceptance did not mean that everyone spoke to me with the same confidence. As in real life, rather than being accepted by everyone equally, I had closer connections with some informants than others. Without their help, I may not have gained access to group practices.

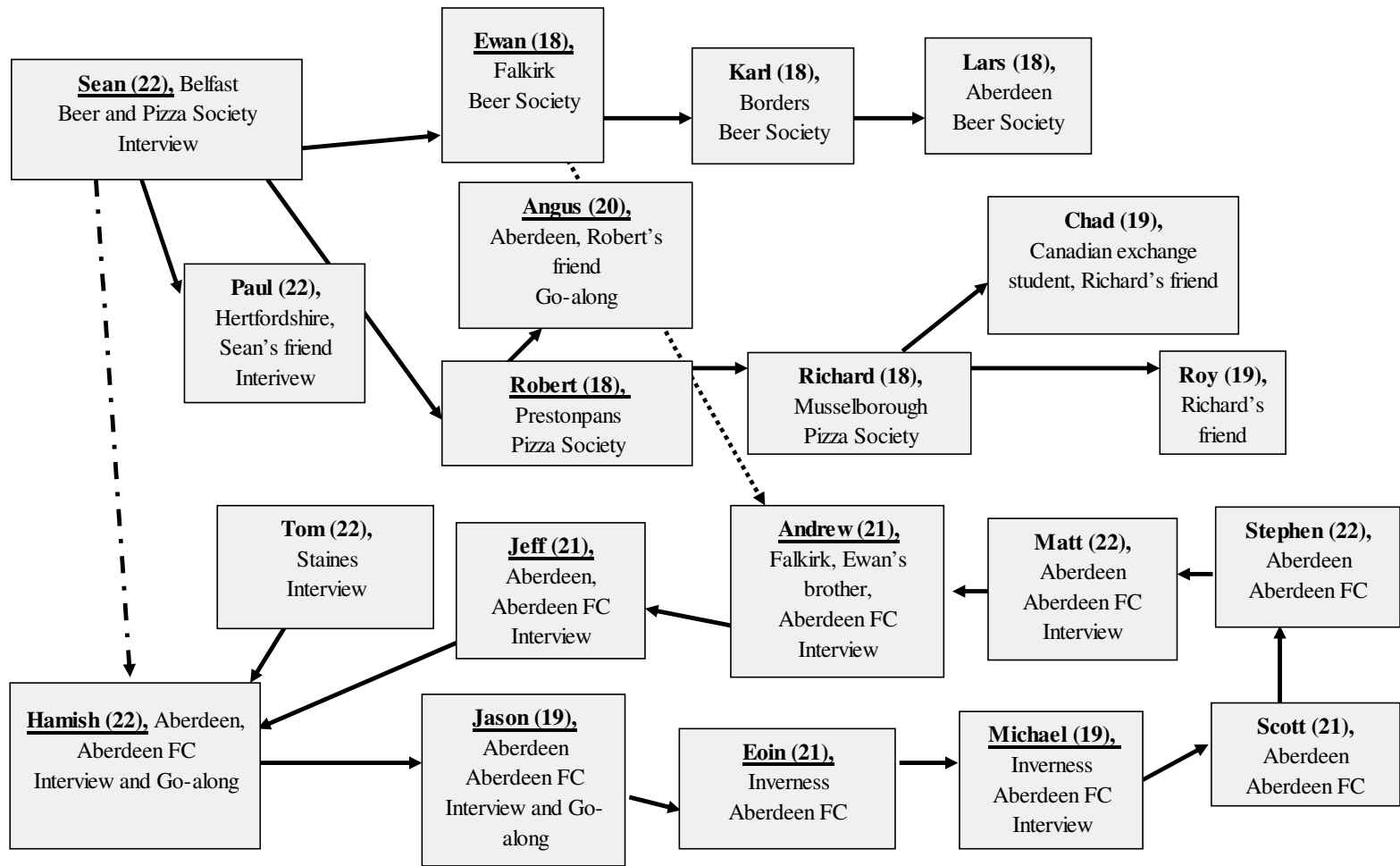


Figure 1. Schematic network of informants

3.6.5. Ethical considerations

One aspect of ethnography concerns the very close, sustained contact with real people. Although the ethnographer may just be another person amongst a group, the role of the researcher also involves generating data. This has to occur under utmost confidentiality and protection of informants. The ethical behaviour of an ethnographer certainly includes being as unobtrusive in the obtrusiveness the role demands. In other words, it is one thing to become accepted and trusted as a researcher. This trust must not be abused, neglected or exploited. It is important as an ethnographer to keep a certain sensitivity, knowing when to probe, whom and when to ask and when another question may be one too many. The ethical concerns are therefore of extreme importance in ethnography for the close contact and the relationship that exists between researcher and researched.

Following a research that required consent from participants care was taken that no informant was under the age of 18. Every individual was made aware of my role as a researcher and agreed to the disclosure of data that was generated. This very overt approach to the ethnography may have further complicated the initial access to groups. However, after this tense period informants gradually became accustomed to my presence. The intention was simply to be as open with everyone as the contexts permitted. Specifically for interviews, informants also gave their written consent for the disclosure of data. Regarding the reporting of data, all names in fieldnotes and transcripts have been replaced with pseudonyms and care was taken to remove any direct association that could lead to identifying individuals. These were only some of the efforts that were made to ensure informants' protection and privacy. Informants were assured of confidentiality during interviews and private talks. It was particularly important not to betray individual confidences to members of their wider network. Further potential consequences that the presence of a researcher in informants' day-to-day lives can have were considered. A loose contact still exists with the majority of

informants. Ultimately, they were not only informants but also friends. Moreover, considerations were made regarding my own welfare and safety in the field. Prior to meetings, I ensured that friends knew where I had gone and what time I had planned to return. I also made sure to have quick access to emergency numbers in my phone.

3.6.6. Negotiating gender differences between researcher and researched

During the first days in the field, I was increasingly aware of my 'biological limitation' and how a female researcher may affect the group's behaviour. Given the added considerations that had been involved in selecting groups, I was aware that the number of legitimate entry points was limited. Voices of colleagues who had doubted my role as a female participant observer amongst men added to this pressure. Other female researchers studying male-dominated settings also described the difficulties they perceived in displaying a 'proper identity' in front of men (Costa 1993, also referring to Goffman 1959). Adapting to group masculinities by women has also been viewed as a form of female resistance to feminine gender which led to images of the 'rebel' (Martin *et al.* 2006) or Tomboy (Griffin *et al.* 2006, Skeggs 2004). Further studies in consumer research however seemed to neglect the potential implications of different gender positions between the researcher and researched (i.e. Pettigrew 2006, Tuncay 2006, Thompson 1996). The pressures of having to justify and 'perform' gender and sex differences led to very nervous 'first days in the field' (Geer 1964, Wax 1971).

Being able to find a comfortable role between 'Martian' and 'Convert' was not easy at first. Endeavours were driven by confidence that the perspective of a female could provide insights into meanings of young men's practices that may not have been perceived as such by a male ethnographer. I had to justify my position as a natural stranger in the field to academics, informants and myself. A male researcher who was deemed to have 'matching characteristics' (Lewis 2003) may not have faced such scrutiny although the potential for him being too immersed and lacking distance may

have also posed equal challenges. A man may have taken gendered meanings for granted in the contexts I encountered (see also Kimmel's (2005a) account of gendered invisibility). Reviewing the literature, it emerged that men were often perceived as accepting their gender as 'natural' or unconscious (Coleman 1990). Women were described as identifying with gender issues, also for their position in society. Differences in sex and gender may have allowed a female amongst men to remain sensitive, also in a gendered sense, possibly unlike a male in the field. David Morgan (1981) for example became conscious of how he had perceived 'invisible masculinity' while being the only man in a group amongst female researchers. He explained that this experience led to an increasing awareness of his gendered self. His 'normal' masculinity had been regularly taken for granted when it was others, mostly women, who were visible and gendered. Gendered meanings could therefore possibly emerge even more within a setting of male/female contrast. As a female researcher amongst men, I was able to keep a natural distance that allowed me to become reflexively aware of the gendered meanings of practices and consumption. Rather than being in a better or worse position, we may argue that this added another perspective or point of view. As fieldwork progressed and a closer rapport was established with key informants, gender differences also seemed to matter less. This was possibly because I was more immersed into the field and adapted to behaviour of informants. It seemed that on an individual basis, I could also be recognised as masculine and feminine in different contexts, similar to informants. Gender differences remained mostly attached to sex (i.e. being feminine as a woman) during early stages of fieldwork which was also the reason for placing importance on negotiating access.

Experience of the field also revealed to me that it took a certain person to be an ethnographer (Van Maanen 1988, Fielding 1993): someone who understood culture as it permeated into their own behaviour and daily life. Practically, it also required someone to fit in and get along with people with whom they would not have chosen to engage with under different circumstances. This specific study also demanded tolerance of

men's behaviour. Through my personal interests, character and life-long close friendships with men I felt sufficiently equipped for this. Nevertheless, actively participating with informants and the task of being the research instrument demanded confidence that had to be maintained throughout the process of fieldwork. The pressures to perform and conform were felt again from two sides; being the researcher who had to discover data and being the active participant at the same time. On numerous occasions, I was uncomfortable with the 'privileged' position of the all-knowing, powerful ethnographer. I often doubted my confidence to interpret young men's practices, perhaps partly because I was a woman. This led to efforts to include more of informants' own interpretations of their experiences parallel to my own. Following theoretical suggestions (Katz and Csordas 2003), it was sought to include phenomenological elements into the study, mostly through the methods for data generation. Through interviewing, shopping go-alongs which will be explained in the following section, and the exchange of photographic and film data, informants were encouraged to explain their own interpretations of perspectives and experiences. Ultimately its success seemed varied, mostly for the difficulty of balancing roles of active participation, generating data and acting as a phenomenological researcher. Yet, several other practical applications helped me to tackle the challenges I encountered as a researcher, as explained below.

3.7. Methods for data generation

Methods mainly express of how theoretical considerations are put into practice. They also follow the research objectives and questions. This section describes the methods that were used for data generation, the process of writing fieldnotes and finally the approach for data analysis.

3.7.1. Multiple methods for multiple perspectives

As suggested by ethnographic theory, multiple methods for data generation were used in this study (Stewart 1998, Hammersley and Atkinson 1995)). This was designed to paint a deeper and richer picture and to explore varying collective and individual masculinities (see table 2 below for a summary and sequence of methods). The practical approach reflected these two goals, like several previous studies of men and masculinities (Gilmore 1990, Wetherell and Edley 1999, Frosh *et al.* 2003). To talk about different ‘phases’ would be inaccurate in hindsight. As discussed later, individual identities also emerged during observation of varying group practices. As previously mentioned, some informants contributed more to data generation than others. Nevertheless, the role of background informants during group observations was also important in creating the various scenes and practices. A conscious effort was therefore made to change perspectives from group observation towards a focus on individuals.

Approximate time frame	Method	Objective
September 2006 – May/June 2007	Initial nonparticipant observation followed by intensive participant observation	Gaining insights into group masculinities and consumption across practices
May 2007 and October 2007	Shopping ‘go-alongs’	Experience shopping from informants’ point of view and gain insight into items/shops of interest or dislike
May 2007 – October 2007	Individual interviews	Gain insight into individual perspective, practices, consumption and masculinities

Table 2. *Summary and sequence of methods for data generation*

Fieldwork began at the end of September 2006, the start of a new academic year at University. This meant that societies were re-organised and open to new members. Some participation at initial society meetings took place at this point. More importantly, the opening period of fieldwork involved nonparticipant observation (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). This mainly took place in pubs where young men watched football games but also at live Scottish league football games in Edinburgh. Insights gained here allowed me to become aware of young men's behaviour and externally visible codes such as clothing choices, common drinks, conversations and performances. This gradually built an outsider's understanding of how to dress and behave in groups that I carried with me when participating in groups. Initial participation was very 'patchy' as I encountered hesitation of full groups to grant access. I participated in seasonal events such as Halloween and later Christmas parties. These one-off activities certainly provided helpful insights, mainly for learning about what behaviour was accepted and how deviance was sanctioned. I also built rapport with key individuals. Yet, I was not asked to join a group in their regular day-to-day activities at this point. It was interesting to observe how the group of Aberdeen football supporters eventually granted access to their activities. Acceptance in this group as opposed to previous groups had many possible reasons. For one, its members were between second and final years of their degrees and therefore also older than those of other groups (see also figure 1 above). As mentioned, younger groups were new to university life and seemed less comfortable with accepting a female to participate and possibly even more so a female researcher. My contact with the group of Aberdeen supporters was also more gradual and less forced. Our first meeting took place in November 2006 after I was introduced by a key member. In the beginning, I participated less frequently and increased participation more slowly. During my initial contacts I was often too eager to become involved. I gradually learned to hold back as fieldwork progressed.

After gaining access to the group of Aberdeen supporters, data was generated during prolonged immersion into the field. Signs of increasing acceptance included being

'invited' to participate in group practices by informants, as opposed to me asking to join. Regular meetings took place on Wednesdays when we mainly watched football games in a public bar or 'pub'. We also came together to play football, arranged poker games and visited nightclubs. Towards the end of the Scottish football season in May 2007, we travelled to live Aberdeen FC football games. The aim during this time was to gain insight into group masculinities across these practices and consumption. Beside the practices that informants actively engaged in, I also asked to accompany three key informants in an activity that was not necessarily a group practice. Following recent insights into the area of 'street phenomenology' and ethnography (Kusenbach 2003), 'go-alongs' were used as a method for generating data during shopping trips. Rather than viewing shopping as a context for a co-creating culture (as shopping activities were not necessarily part of informants' 'chosen' culture), these go-alongs aimed at understanding shopping experiences from informants' point of view. They essentially involved the documentation of their usual path through the shops of the Edinburgh high street. This allowed me to see the type of shops informants *did* enter; the items they *did* show an interest in; the rails they *did* look at; and also those they *did* not. Most importantly, informants explained to me their shopping perspectives. The selection of informants mainly occurred on a voluntary basis. I asked those I had gained a good rapport with as shopping seemed a more sensitive and individual practice. In contrast to the initial two go-alongs, one informant claimed to enjoy shopping. With one taking place in May and two in October 2007, these go-alongs also marked the changing focus towards the individual.

From the end of May 2007, I conducted interviews with nine informants (see also figure 1). Six of these were key informants and three were rather peripheral group members. Being more distanced from the practices that had been observed, their perspectives provided a more differentiated account of activities than immersed members. Three participants were also non-Scottish, one key and two peripheral informants. They were chosen to give some insights into the relational perspective of other nationalities to

practices of Scottish informants. In general, these interviews sought to understand informants' perception of practices I had also participated in. In that sense, they aimed at moving from 'what is' to 'how it feels' (Michell 1999) or rather how it felt for them. It allowed me to understand their point of view for some of the experiences we had shared. More importantly, interviews sought to explore individuals' practices beyond those I had participated in. Apart from two interviews, all took place in informants' homes which also allowed me to observe where they lived. Most informants were students and stayed in shared accommodation or residences. The natural situation of our interview added to their ethnographic character (Becker and Geer 1969). Although some were rather peripheral informants, they were also open to participate in interviews. A significant trust and rapport had therefore already been established with most informants at the time interviews were conducted (Heyl 2001). Parallel to ethnographic elements, interviews followed some recommendations of the 'long interview' (McCracken 1988). For one, they were quite long with the shortest just under two hours (interestingly, with the youngest of them). For their opening, they also followed a very loose script that was adapted for each informant. The points related mainly to observations from fieldwork where a clarification from the informant seemed helpful. This opening also eased participants into the process of being recorded. Subsequently, interviews tried to move away from our shared practices and encourage informants to speak about their own perspectives.

Once more, interviews sought to follow more phenomenological directions. While in some instances, informants certainly seemed willing and able to describe their experiences, interviews often failed to initiate a realisation process through reflexive understanding. It seemed informants had no motivation for becoming reflexively aware of themselves, particularly in a gendered way. They could not remove themselves sufficiently to reflect over the meanings of their practices. This may have also been due to the role I occupied in their lives. It seemed that the interviewer in phenomenological interviews adopted the position of a 'therapist' (Thompson *et al.* 1989). I was certainly

not distanced enough from the day-to-day lives of most participants to change into that role during interviews. Arguably, a reason for this may have also been the discussing of shared practices which reinforced my familiarity with them. Following a more phenomenological route seemed easier with peripheral informants. Nevertheless, interviews generated very rich, detailed data that shed further light on individuals' points of view. They often became more personal conversation that also reflected some signs of closer friendships (Brooks 2006). It also had the advantage that informants seemed comfortable talking to me about very private interests and practices. As we were able to share and relive certain experiences, this created a more intimate setting. All these methods in general allowed me to explore group and individual masculinities and their consumption across practices.

3.7.2. From taking notes to exchanging data – the mobile phone of an ethnographer

“A research project can be as well organized and theoretically well informed as you like but with inadequate note taking, the exercise will be like using an expensive camera with poor quality film. In both cases, the resolution will prove unsatisfactory, and the results will be poor. Only foggy pictures result.” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p. 146)

Throughout the process of data generation, it was challenging to be comfortable in the simultaneous roles of researcher and active participant. Having to take notes during encounters constantly reminded me of these conflicting roles. The complexities and importance of taking good notes have been discussed extensively by Emerson *et al.* (2001). Notes form the essence of rich, thickly described ethnographic data. It has been widely suggested to jot notes during encounters as these serve as memory triggers for the subsequent writing of data (Lofland and Lofland 1984). Considering the detail and depth that is important in ethnography, the jotting of notes in the field can be extensive. Lofland and Lofland (1984) describe this activity as ‘taking stock’ which can encompass minute details of an encounter. Instead of writing notes by hand, a tape recorder has

also been recommended for recording interactions. However, it is also acknowledged that this possibly affects the behaviour of informants (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Photographs have equally been suggested as supporting ethnographic interpretations (Collier 1967, Schwartz 1989). All this emphasised the importance of taking notes that would facilitate the description and writing of data. The problems associated with note-taking emerged already at an early stage of fieldwork during nonparticipant observation. While it was relatively easy to take notes from a passive outsider role, I realised that note-taking could be problematic during participant observation. Taking notes felt unnatural and not easily paired with being an inconspicuous researcher in the field. It also heightened my consciousness of being a female ethnographer amongst men. At the same time, there was certain comfort in taking notes. As much as it seemed obtrusive and intrusive for active participation, it reminded me of my role as a researcher who was there for a purpose.

I gradually learned from my initial mistakes in the field. This learning process may have also been the reason for being granted access to one group as opposed to another. It required me to deal with these conflicting roles in the field. I discovered a tool that would have far greater repercussions on the study than just helping me with the challenge of note-taking. Instead of leaving the scene to hand-write notes, I used the voice recorder of my mobile phone to record any information from the encounter. This involved the same 'stock taking' as written notes, detailing information such as the date, time, location, people present and activity. These recorded notes subsequently served as memory triggers for writing full data sets, but they had several advantages. For one, voice recording took far less time and effort than hand-written notes. I did not have to bring a piece of paper and pen with me. It was also less conspicuous as it appeared to others as talking on the phone. I encountered ease in making a 'quick phone call' rather than disappearing for an extended time to write notes. During other instances, I found myself in a position where I could not leave the scene. These included football games or go-alongs. Instead of using the voice recorder, I jotted notes on the note-pad of my

mobile phone. Writing these notes had the same appearance as writing a text message. My role as a researcher became less conspicuous to me and others. As fieldwork progressed, I also started to record thoughts and ideas that would help me interpret data. I used my recorder the same way as a traditional note-pad, but also as a reflexive journal similar to Stewart's (1998) suggestion of the 'ethnographer's path'. My phone accompanied me at all times and allowed me to record any ideas as they entered my head. In that sense, it also became a tool that would help me for analysing data. Recordings were often not just quick notes but evolved into reflexive data analysis.

Parallel to recording my own thoughts, all interviews were also recorded on my mobile phone. One added advantage here was that the data was digital which allowed me to transfer files directly to the computer. Some interactions and conversations during participant observation were also recorded with my mobile phone. Parallel to recordings, a separate role emerged at a later stage. In an attempt to gain further insight into informants' experiences, I had given two informants disposable cameras to take pictures at activities where I could not be present. I had hoped that this would also provide some indication of how much my presence possibly changed their behaviour. One event was 'Burn's Night', a celebration of the Scottish poet Robert Burns, on the 25th January. The informant had told me that he participated in the rituals surrounding this event and I was curious as women were traditionally excluded from participation. After great anticipation, the event had been cancelled and my informant decided to take pictures of his student residences instead. A second disposable camera was given to an informant to describe his experiences at a beer-themed event where I could not participate. While some of the photos he had taken were certainly interesting, I could see how they served the purpose of being presented to a researcher. They generally showed 'front stage' settings (Goffman 1959) or passive behaviour rather than active processes, events or practices. When we met in the pub to talk about his pictures, he also revealed his own pictures he had taken with his mobile phone. He offered to

transfer pictures from his mobile phone to mine via Bluetooth connection. That evening, a second important role of my phone had been discovered.

I recognised that it was acceptable to take pictures of activities, practices, interactions, informants, scenes and settings. Mobile phone pictures were subsequently taken in pubs and football stadia. I also documented the surrounding signs of the times within the city of Edinburgh. This allowed me to paint a richer picture and become more sensitive to the context in which the study was unfolding. It was acceptable for me to take these pictures because my informants did the same. Moments after entering the football stadium in Celtic Park, everyone around us reached for their phones to take pictures. Mobile phones and cameras had become ubiquitous in the field which made them less obtrusive as a research tool. There was no need to approach informants to take pictures of their experiences as this had become common practice for a lot of them. Their mobile phones took more naturalistic pictures than any camera I could have given them. Informants were not consciously performing for a researcher when posing for their own photographs. They were still performing, but in their own way. The ability to exchange photographs also allowed me to further embrace informants' points of view of practices. I observed what practices were important to them and how these photographs represented this. Informants often gladly gave permission to pass on their pictures and films as it seemed to prove them as experts in these practices. Photos taken with mobile phones from events such as football games were subsequently displayed on their personal profiles on social networking sites. Networking sites and profiles also explained how individuals related to groups and practices and how certain practices emerged as collectively accepted. The role and importance of social networking sites for their identities is further discussed as part of the findings section.

Data therefore emerged in various formats, not just written notes. Photo material has also served directly as data for ethnographic cases (Harper 2003). Recent consumer research has similarly recommended capturing and presenting ethnographies in film

format or 'videographies' (Belk and Kozinets 2005). Here, informants are filmed in their activities and ethnographic findings are directly communicated through this format. Some films, smaller in scale, were also taken during this fieldwork and exchanged with informants, the same way as photographs. Exchanging data this way enhanced the possibilities of embracing multiple subjectivities for the interpretation of ethnographic data. It followed the epistemological stance of social constructionism (Burr 1998) and its expression through this data. One specific incident highlighted how these various perspectives and experiences intersected. Visiting the pub prior to a game of live football was common practice. Here, the usual supporter songs were shared over pints of beer. One informant found a film on the website 'YouTube' that was taken by an unknown supporter beside us with his mobile phone (see also Pace (2008) for using YouTube to study consumer narratives). This informant embedded the film on his facebook page and communicated it to us. There, I found myself in the company of my informants, filmed through a mobile phone. It was such a vivid example of how much this material that we consider as 'data' enriches and has become part of informants' lives. Rapid technological advances may therefore make it possible now to conduct full videographies with the use of a mobile phone.

My mobile phone became a central research tool in this study in a variety of ways. Although it started as a small change in the practical adoption of methods, it had deeper implications that related back to the epistemological approach to the study.

3.7.3. Data analysis

Data generation took place between September 2006 and October 2007. Although this time frame followed recommendations for what qualified as prolonged immersion into the field (Stewart 1998) along with fitting into the timescale for a PhD, it was chosen rather because a certain point of data saturation had been reached. The possibility to

record a multitude of fieldnotes mixed with interview data, go-alongs, photographs, films, often embedded within interaction on informants' social networking websites (Kozinets 2002b), generated an overwhelming amount of data. The chosen time frame also coincided with the new term at University commencing in September. This meant that groups rearranged once more. New members entered the society and a large number of informants graduated. The initial changes this produced were observed until the end of October. During this time, it became clear that further fieldwork would open a new chapter that may have been beyond the scope of this thesis. The decision was made to leave the field although leaving it entirely was as slow and gradual as the initial access. I had made some lasting friendships during my time in the field. Additionally, my own activities had changed towards informants' interest and it was difficult to find a way back. I had come to terms with the behaviour of the field and was confused once I left the field (cf. Wax 1971). It became unclear whether I engaged in practices because I had become used to them or because I wanted to. With more and more data being generated during fieldwork, its sequential analysis also became demanding. To speak in page numbers may only be a very rough indication for how much data had accumulated. Fieldnotes only take account of the data that was written while ethnographic 'living' had produced much deeper experiences than any written texts. Additionally, not all of the recordings were transcribed into written text format but were rather used as a basis for writing reflexive notes. All nine interviews were transcribed, generating 250 pages of data. Fieldwork notes including nonparticipant and participant observation as well as go-alongs led to 181 pages of written data. This was accompanied by photographs, films and more voice recordings. The volume as well as the varied formats of data proved challenging to analyse.

It is generally acknowledged that ethnography produces a large amount of very detailed data (Fielding 1993) and that there are a variety of choices for the analysis and data reduction (Goetz and LeCompte 1981). In this case, the analytical cycle of data management and interpretation commenced parallel to fieldwork (Agar 1986). The

reflexive processing of episodes, encounters and incidents also involved the gradual building of interpretations. To use Agar's (1986) terms, each piece of data in the form of reflexive notes, fieldnotes, interview, films and photographs was labelled as a 'strip'. Every data strip was considered and contrasted for 'disconfirming incidents' (Hammersley 1998) or what Agar called 'breakdowns'. Breakdowns occur when a certain interpretive 'schema' we had conceptualised could not make sense of the following strip and therefore required a resolution or revision. These breakdowns often emerged as practices and contexts changed. What seemed valid in one setting frequently varied to another. Changes in behaviour that related to disconfirming incidents (Stewart 1998) became significant for interpreting findings. The sequential analysis of data during fieldwork hence followed the process of considering breakdowns between strips and finding or changing a schema for possible resolutions. In this case, not only breakdowns but also similarities and repetitions were considered for building interpretations. The schemas that emerged were therefore the interpretive themes or patterns that shaped the analysis during fieldwork. Although Agar's theory provided a good framework for data analysis, it was not as conscious and structured as this in practice. Schemas often consisted of reflexive notes and were frequently found in short notes, communications or recordings rather than in explicitly written fieldnotes. These emerging themes and patterns were also communicated and discussed with a small number of key informants who were able to provide feedback, advancing the analysis further.

As fieldwork progressed, data generation gathered momentum which created difficulties in following this sequential approach. There was often little time between encounters to gain full awareness of underlying meanings. Moreover, a large amount of data was accumulated towards the end of fieldwork during interviews. The analysis was also delayed at this time due to the significant transcription work. Parallel to the sequential analysis, all data strips were also intensively analysed after fieldwork. During this time, Stewart's (1998) approach of 'intense consideration' of data involving

decontextualising, memoing and recontextualising was followed. Using the metaphor of a picture that had been painted during fieldwork, decontextualising involved removing it from its frame, during memoing the picture was cut into puzzle pieces and recontextualising represented the new combination and synthesis of these pieces in an analytical frame. In other words, all data strips were isolated from their chronological sequence. For memoing, new themes along with schemata encountered during fieldwork were sought in strips. Through intensive reading, contemplating, separating and re-labelling of each strip, important data segments crystallised that were able to contribute to the analytical story. Interpreting the range of practices required the careful unpacking and abstracting of essential pieces until similarities and differences emerged that could relate to one another. The process of decontextualising and the development of themes that were then recombined in analytic patterns followed a cyclical approach (Fischer and Arnold 1994). During this iterative process, themes were related, connected, merged and separated again as the new analytical picture became tighter. Recontextualising therefore represented the synthesis and downstream interpretation (Stewart 1998) of data using existing theory. Although this may appear straightforward, it was often challenging to find theories that could support the process of understanding and interpreting the diversity of practices.

Further suggestions had been considered for this analytic process. Specifically, a grounded approach was reviewed (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Pettigrew 2000, Goulding 2005). Stewart (1998) argued that ‘intense consideration’ of ethnographic data went beyond the ‘constant comparison method’.

“(…) getting materials ordered in a temporal sequence and forming a narrative; noticing and labeling; bundling; categorizing, and recategorizing; guesswork, intuition, and metaphorical inference; analysis, logic, and synthesis; and pattern seeking, modeling, and theory building. It would be stretching the word *comparison* to include all these activities.” (Stewart 1998, p. 84, original emphasis)

This process of data analysis may therefore be more in-depth than a grounded approach. It was also the role of theory that led to discarding a purely grounded approach to data analysis. Grounded theory assumes that the researcher enters the field without consciously drawing parallels to theory. Ideally, the researcher should be empty of any knowledge of theory. This was not the case in this study. Theories of gender and masculinity were clearly in the mind of the researcher. Awareness of theory helped me as a female ethnographer to further understand the behaviour of informants during fieldwork. It therefore supported the sequential process of analysis. Although further theories had to be researched as themes and patterns took shape, there was an awareness of theory during and prior to fieldwork.

Analytical themes that emerged during the analysis were also subsequently discussed with informants and outsiders alike. Using informants' 'situated vocabulary' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) for communicating interpretations meant that the analytical story was easily understood. The responses of informants mostly contained surprise. It initially seemed strange to them that someone was able to find as much material and substance in their activities when for them they seemed perfectly normal. They could relate to findings and often added further insights themselves. This emerged particularly in relation to the discourse that was used to negotiate meanings of masculinity and consumption. Their perspectives therefore further shaped the analysis of data.

3.8. Evaluation of the study

As the main method for anthropology, ethnography traditionally also followed positivist assumptions and demanded the evaluation of research according to scientific criteria (Becker 1996). Over time, changing epistemological stances within the social science have shaped different approaches and demands for ethnography (LeCompte 2002).

More positivist perspectives in social science emphasised the importance of generalisability, reliability and validity of methodologies (LeCompte and Goetz 1982, Goetz and LeCompte 1984). In this context, ethnography was frequently criticised for being too subjective as it placed the researcher in the powerful position of the all-knowing, all-interpreting research instrument (Hammersley and Atkinson 1994). The depth and detail of ethnography often also meant that only a small sample could be studied (Fielding 1993) which raised questions about its potential to generalise findings to wider populations and contributing to theory (Burawoy 1991). As epistemologies in social science changed, researchers started to criticise these as criteria for evaluating the quality of social research (Schofield 1993). Some rejected them entirely (Hammersley 1992). Others modified them in line with shifting expectations of how much of the social world we may expect to gain insight to. More suitable values emerged such as 'fittingness' (Guba and Lincoln 1982) of relating findings to theory or the 'comparability' of detailed information and its 'translatability' to other settings (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). Stewart (1998) also dealt with these issues in detail and recommended a number of alternative suggestions for evaluating ethnography. Although his considerations need to be viewed critically, they provide a basis for describing in more detail what may constitute a 'good' ethnography and how efforts were made to follow suggestions.

Stewart (1998) preferred 'veracity' as an objective instead of 'validity'. Rather than validating the performance of one method over another, ethnography sought to communicate an authentic account of the setting (Hogg and Maclaran 2008). Veracity also implies that the ethnographers' interpretations are credible, reproducible and as truthful as possible. Stewart (1998) suggested multiple methods for generating data, changing contexts and re-visiting the field were suggested to refine the picture we are trying to paint. A variety of different methods were also adopted for this research to explore the varying perspectives between groups and individuals. These also aimed at communicating a more truthful account. Similarly, changing contexts and practices also

formed part of the research activities. Participating across a variety of practices formed part of the research objectives. Re-visits to the field also took place. However, towards the end of fieldwork, efforts were made to gain further distance for reflexive analysis of data. Knowing that we are in fact studying what we set out to do can also be improved through prolonged immersion into the field (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Fieldwork spread over a 13-month period which has been acknowledged as sufficient time for an ethnographic study (Stewart 1998). Further participation and a more immersed position could have been gained, for example through sharing accommodation with informants. However, personal and private considerations were also balanced with fieldwork. While efforts were made to establish close rapport with informants, not all of them were equally open to share their experiences or 'drop their guards'. At the same time, this also formed part of the research findings.

Stewart also argued that 'objectivity' was more suitable than 'reliability'. Reliability can refer to striving towards non-bias and objectivity and also to findings that are consistent over time. Stewart rejected consistency over time as a valid aim for ethnographic findings. Ethnography needs to be sensitive to the socio-historic context in which fieldwork takes place. Over time, culture is changing, people are changing and we may therefore find a different picture if we were to revisit a site. Rather, he pursued the ethnographer's objectivity or non-bias. Working towards objectivity can also be questioned (Fielding 1993) since settings typically involve multiple subjectivities. In fact, the aim of objectivity may ignore our own unique perspective and interpretations of the field. Rather than striving towards objectivity, we can argue that multiple subjectivities, perspectives and interpretations should be embraced. Being a female in a group of men also provokes some thought as to how performances may have changed towards me as opposed to a male researcher. While ethnographic accounts and experiences may certainly differ, informants would have also performed to a male researcher. We may not be describing 'the truth' but one of many 'truths'. Instead of claiming objectivity, we can aim towards describing our perspective as a researcher and

stress reflexivity within the interpretation process. Hogg and Maclaran (2008) use the evaluative criteria of plausibility and criticality for communicating research findings. These take more of a reflexive analysis into consideration than striving for 'objectivity'. Geertz's (1973) 'thick descriptions' also play an important role in this context. The more detailed and rich descriptions can be, the greater the possibility for an outsider to re-construct the scene. The duty of description also affects ethnographers in their practical note-taking activities (Emerson et al. 2001, Emerson et al. 1995). Effective note-taking is as important for researchers as their role as a participant (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983). Practical methods for probing inter-subjectivity also include requesting feedback from insiders in the field as well as outsiders (Stewart 1998). This resembles a form of member checks (Belk et al. 1988) which were also applied in this research.

Finally, Stewart replaces 'generalisability' with 'perspicacity'. Findings may not be universally generalisable, but they may be translated into other contexts (Goetz and LeCompte 1984). 'Relatability' may also be a possible alternative. The ability to relate findings to theories and populations mainly depends on the abstraction and analysis of ethnographic findings. Efforts were made to follow Stewart's suggestion of 'intense consideration' of data for the analysis along with Agar's (1986) sequential analysis and the development of 'schema'. It is recognised that findings in this study are contextualised within a specific cultural context that may have unique characteristics. Care was taken to communicate themes in detail so that the reader has the ability to follow the progression of research findings and understand how it was linked to theory. This also relates to Hogg and Maclaran's (2008) criteria of 'plausability' which has been taken into consideration.

3.9. Conclusions

This section considered in more detail the gaps in literature that this study seeks to address. Based on these, aims and objectives for the study were formulated. The task was set to explore young men's consumption across a variety of practices and their construction of individual and collective masculine identities. Previous literature mainly discussed identities either of groups or individuals. With gender part of every individual's identity but also a much broader cultural and collective concept, it was sought to place an emphasis on both.

The ontological and epistemological stance chosen for this research was social constructionism and interpretivism. The notion of gender as socially constructed, multiple and changing over time already contradicted positivist and essentialist ideas of gender as fixed and objective. An interpretive approach was adopted as it followed the objective of exploring these lived identities through consumption. Rather than working from a theoretical framework that was verification-driven, this research was exploratory and discovery-driven. The various facets of the chosen methodology were discussed in detail. To provide an overview of the chosen route from epistemology to methods, table 3 below provides a brief summary. Regarding the implications of the chosen methodology, emphasis was placed on explaining how a female ethnographer could adopt a participating role in young men's practices. The criticism that had often been raised was that a female amongst a group of male could lead to changes in men's interactions. What may often be neglected here is to consider the potential effect that a male researcher could have in a male group. The discussion raised a number of advantages for a female ethnographer amongst men. A woman may be in a better position to keep a natural distance and avoid the danger of becoming too immersed in the field. Moreover, a man may not necessarily recognise certain gendered meanings as they could be 'natural' to him. At the same time, being a woman posed a number of practical challenges for finding access points where legitimate participation could take

place. Sex and gender differences were recognised as an important aspect for negotiating the relationship between the researcher and researched in this study. However, it was also noted that previous studies in consumer research (Tuncay 2006, Pettigrew 2006, Thompson 1996) with similar scenarios had not engaged with the potential implications gender differences had in their studies.

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
Constructionism Subjectivism	Interpretivism	Ethnography	Observation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant • Non-participant Interview Go-alongs

Table 3. *Research epistemologies and approaches to research, adapted from Crotty (1998, p. 5)*

This chapter also highlighted the practical decisions for this research. They included the choice of access through societies at a Scottish University. Decisions further shaped the study in choosing a site and population with specific characteristics. In-depth ethnography required the further narrowing of a specific, context-sensitive site. As a result, the population in this study may be relatively small. Yet, it was the detail that made the findings and patterns more relatable and understandable, not the amount of people that were included. As well as building rapport with a number of individual key informants, ultimately a membership role was achieved in a football-themed group. Being a female researcher amongst a group of men also posed many practical challenges for fieldwork. The role and implications of a mobile phone for data generation were explained in detail. Most importantly, the use of a mobile phone permitted further insight into the perspective and experiences from informants' point of view parallel to interpretations of the researcher. Data was analysed during and subsequent to fieldwork in an iterative process of decontextualising, memoing and recontextualising of data

strips. As a result of this, themes and patterns emerged that were related back to relevant theory. It is this story told by these analytical themes that forms the core of this research.

4. The Findings: Presentation and Interpretation of Data

The following sections explore how young men constructed masculinities through consumption practices. This first chapter addresses how collective identities emerged in group practices and is followed by a closer look at individuals and their consumption. To tell the analytic story embedded within the context, data are presented together with interpretations based on theoretical concepts outlined in the literature review. These data excerpts also highlight the 'situated vocabulary' of informants (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995) and further contextualise findings within a specific cultural context. Efforts are therefore made to balance significant moments of fieldwork with theoretically informed interpretations which will allow us to draw wider conclusions.

This first chapter presents those practices that groups were found to identify with. Initially, it describes the different practices that were observed in general followed by how they became recognised as constructing masculine identities.

4.1. The group perspective: collective consumption practices and masculinities

Jenkins (2004) described identities as emerging from the continued process of identifying ourselves as 'the same' and 'different'. Themes of being the same as everybody else or 'ordinary' yet different from others were also found across studies of men and masculinities (Wetherell and Edley 1999, Gill *et al.* 2005). This recognises the relational nature of gender identities and practices (Connell 2005). Similarly, this study produced insights into practices where informants identified themselves as the same and also different from specific groups that formed relational 'other' (Renold 2004). Masculinities were therefore found in consumption practices that were actively sought,

but also those that were rejected or avoided (Banister and Hogg 2003). At the same time, this relational avoidance also led to certain practices. Considering both sides therefore provides a detailed insight into the various practices informants were found to identify with. The initial sections describe these practices and the construction of masculinities followed by explanations of how these practices related to other gendered groups.

4.1.1. Young men's practices and collective identification as 'the same'

A number of practices were identified where informants shared a common interest. Although individuals often aimed at distinguishing themselves in the sense of outperforming one another, these efforts also marked those practices that mattered to them. A brief initial description locates these practices within a cultural context, followed by an account of their role for constructing masculine identities.

The student societies that were observed were themed according to specific interests in beer, pizza and football. Regardless of these themes, all groups showed a strong homogeneity in their consumption practices, such as meeting in the pub and drinking beer. This was often combined with watching televised football games, mainly by the football society but also by other groups. All groups also met to play games in pubs or their homes including poker, computer games or quizzes. Group meetings in pubs were regularly used to exchange information about music, football and several other topics of interest. Equally, all groups met to play football either in the park or in football halls. Less frequently but another common practice involved members going to nightclubs together. Although the level of commitment to each practice varied across groups and individuals, activities were strikingly similar. From an early stage of fieldwork, these consistencies contributed to the notion of practices forming consumption constellations (Englis and Solomon 1996) or rather appearing in typical combinations (Warde 2005).

4.1.2. Constellations of consumption practices

One specific example of consumption practices included the choice of lager or beer as informants' drink in pubs. Lager seemed to be a 'natural' choice across groups, not only for members of the beer society. Several incidents highlighted how beer had been collectively adopted as the normal drink amongst group members.

“I noticed again that the majority of the people were all lads and nearly all of them were drinking pints of beer, mostly lager.” (fieldnote, participant observation, lager society meeting, 26.10.06)

“All the lads uniformly drank some type of lager; I could see pitchers on two tables ahead of me and to my right. (...) [As the game progressed] More and more pitchers were brought to the tables, noise-level and conversation increasing continuously.” (fieldnote, nonparticipant observation, watching football in a popular pub in Edinburgh, 11.10.06)

These notes from very early stages of fieldwork highlighted the prevalence of lager as the chosen drink. Although students' lack of funds may have explained settling for a rather inexpensive drink such as beer, informants' preferred bars generally offered alternatives such as wine and spirits for the same price. These initial observations also indicated how drinking beer, meeting in the pub and watching football often accompanied each other. They created a 'normal' constellation for informants. One informant even spoke about drinking because everybody else did, emphasising his conformity to the norm. 'That's just what we do' was another frequent statement. There was a certain expectation that 'every young man enjoyed a drink'. The notion of lager as a kind of uniform drink emerged in several instances.

“I: Ok. And what kind of drinks would you drink? Also in the pub...

A: Well, I'm more a beer person, so I just drink beer. Eh, Marcus and Jimmy, most of us have beer. Usually, that's the main thing and we'd have nothing else.” (Andrew, Aberdeen football group, interview excerpt, 10.6.07)

Andrew established a type of exclusivity here in the sense that he and his circle of friends drank beer and nothing else. Other people may have chosen different drinks, but he was 'more of a beer person'. This suggests that beer and its meanings formed part of his identity. Andrew also responded here to the question of what drink he would choose in the pub. The 'lager only' rule often changed in different contexts. Although he left some room for ambiguity, frequent answers such as these from informants highlighted the importance of publicly rejecting other drinks than beer. Beer as a uniform also received its symbolic value for being noticed by others. It communicated similarity. Cases where other drinks were chosen were also observed and these were punished with teasing comments (Wooten 2007), which often re-affirmed and reinforced the norm. Another noticeable uniform that emerged was their clothing. Informants across groups seemed to have universally adopted a T-shirt, trainers and jeans rule. Clothing codes were generally plain, without any bright and noticeable colours or brands. In fact, it soon became clear that informants avoided overtly branded clothing. Shopping for clothes was also mainly presented as a chore rather than leisure. I soon adopted these two rules and felt more comfortable in the group. They appeared to facilitate greater group cohesion through communicating a shared understanding.

Accepting lager in the pub or a specific type of clothing uniform seemed passively accepted. These topics were rarely talked about or seemed of no matter during interactions. Alcohol consumption was of more interest in nightclubs. Here, the lager rule often varied towards drinks with higher alcohol content, such as Vodka shots. Although the chosen drink may have differed, it was still accepted by the whole group as 'their' drink. Other practices were equally more heavily pursued, also in changing contexts. One of these was football.

“I: Football?

S: Football. Football comes up a lot; football’s a good general topic. Everyone, especially blokes like, everyone likes football more or less.” (Sean, beer and pizza society, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

As initially observed, drinking beer and watching football in pubs were common practices across groups. Although Sean was a member of the beer and pizza society he also shared a football interest with his friends. The general consensus that any young man would be interested in football highlighted its status as a normal and normative activity. In this cultural context, football also took on the meaning as the Scottish national sport (Finn and Giulianotti 1998, Dimeo and Finn 1998, Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001, Giulianotti 2005). Interest in football was generally linked with three activities: watching football, supporting one or more teams and playing football as a sport. All informants across groups regularly joined to watch and comment on any kind of televised football game in the pub. Active Aberdeen supporters also met to watch other teams parallel to their own and followed other players and performances. They used the occasion of football games on Wednesday nights to meet friends in the pub and discuss a variety of topics. Watching football in the pub and being an active supporter were therefore two distinct practices. While all informants enjoyed the social aspect of football, actively supporting a team varied in levels of commitment. Richardson and Turley (2006) described these different degrees of dedicated football supporters as ranging from ‘barstool fans’ to being ‘one of the lads’. Some informants appeared to be ‘barstool fans’, as they mainly supported the team of a friend and followed their games in the pub. Members of the Aberdeen supporters’ society on the other hand regularly travelled to football games across the country. Meeting for ‘away-games’ played outside of Aberdeen was one of their main activities. They were ‘one of the lads’ and proved themselves as such throughout their supporting activities. Similarly, playing football ranged from hiring semi-professional football pitches to playing in the park. While all informants played football in some of these capacities, some showed more

commitment than others. What remained the same was the interest everyone seemed to have in these practices.

Other practices that brought groups together included games. While playing arcade games during pub meetings was a frequent occurrence, informants also engaged in playing computer games. These games were often linked again with their football interests. Examples included 'Football Manager' where their abilities as a manager were put to the test and 'Fifa Pro Evolution' where football games were simulated. Playing poker also became a regular activity amongst informants across groups. Computer and poker games were mostly played in informants' homes while some also engaged in more public Poker events in pubs. A competitive streak often became evident in these games. Parallel to these practices that seemed 'natural', informants also shared an appreciation for specific media, for example 'Indie' music. 'Indie' was the label for 'Independent' music that some considered as more commercial pop-rock, others as music by smaller underground groups. As part of the broader 'Indie' genre, some also included British Pop as popular in the 1990s in this. The band Oasis was of particular interest here, similar to several other bands from the 'Britpop' or 'Madchester' genre (Luck 2002). Some episodes highlighted a direct connection between this music and their interest in football, showing how shared practices were all interlinked and constructed a certain profile of these young men. Football was linked with music and equally related to drinking lager. Computer games related to football. The books they read, films they watched and ads they enjoyed also linked to these interests. As much as any of these practices were 'natural' or normal for a young man in this cultural context, they were all connected to form a configuration with which they identified each other as 'the same' or ordinary. They created a linking value (Cova 1997) that brought them closer together.

Although informants shared a common interest in these practices, the question remains of how they constructed collective masculine identities. Masculinity was not just about drinking lager, playing or supporting football, or listening to a certain type of music.

Rather than what they did, it was also important to view how these were practised and how they constituted a practice. Using characteristics of practices as understanding what to say and do, possessing know-how and competence, displaying often emotional engagement in the task and re-enacting performances (Schatzki 1996), the following sections describe the value and importance of these practices in more detail. While this highlighted how practices constructed masculinities, Bourdieu's concepts of capital and fields are also adapted. Both approaches carried the identification of masculinities in these consumption practices forward.

4.1.3. Practices and their construction of masculinities

Group interactions placed emphasis on the correct display of competence and knowledge of practices. Indeed, it was often conversations and interactions that shaped practices in relation to knowing what to say and do. Knowing the latest album of a popular band and having the ability to talk about it were essential. Similarly, it was vital to know which drink to consume across various situations. Playing poker required competence in playing the game, but also knowing how to talk and act within that context. As football supporters, informants knew when and what to chant at specific football games. 'Being masculine' emerged across all consumption practices in the form of this competence and knowledge. The following excerpts provide some insight into this characteristic.

“The opening of the pub was the kick-start to heavy drinking preparation. Jason mentioned again that it was a shame the pub had only opened at 12.30 on the Sunday as, if it had opened earlier, he would have been there from eight in the morning. (...) He also pointed out that the pub was not as full as it usually was at this point, probably due to the changing weather. If he could still hear people talking to him on the phone then the place was not yet fully packed. Looking at the number of different people in the pub, old and young from all backgrounds, I pointed out (...) that there was a great variety of people around. Jason smiled and said that ‘this is football’. ” (fieldnote, participant observation, drinking in the pub prior to Hearts v Aberdeen football game, 6.5.07)

This episode describes the pre-drinking activities that regularly took place prior to football games. It was interesting to observe how a variety of men across age groups and social classes shared this practice despite their differences. The pub here was known amongst away-supporters when playing against Hearts in Edinburgh. The ritual typically involved drinking large volumes of alcohol, this time in a shorter space of time as the game took place on a Sunday when pubs opened later. Supporters required a variety of know-how for pre-drinking activities. The custom of drinking prior to attending a game changed depending on where the games took place. For away-games against Hearts, supporters knew this specific pub as the designated away-supporter pub close to the stadium. Playing against Hibernian FC in Edinburgh, a different pub took on the role of housing away-supporters. Considering the number of stadia Aberdeen visited during the season, this called for remembering a range of pubs around Scotland. Know-how in this context involved 'knowing where'. As the members of the society mostly travelled together to away-games, this knowledge was shared, as were the experiences of pre-match drinking in these pubs and subsequently celebrating a win or consoling a loss. They had learned together about which pubs to attend and which specific custom was attached to playing against different teams. They also knew when and, more importantly, when not to show their Aberdeen colours to avoid any potential disputes with other supporters. Playing against different teams equally involved knowing the different chants for each occasion and their meaning. Growing together in this knowledge of away-games in general increased informants' competence as Aberdeen supporters (Wenger 1998).

The detail of know-how and the importance of understanding what to say and do as a supporter were very important. Rituals of chants and drinking also represented the kind of performances for re-enacting practices of a football supporter. The following scene continues in the same pub and explains more of the procedures and the emotional engagement that supporters shared.

“I found myself surrounded only by men, all taller than me, singing at the top of their voices. An older man behind me looked at me with a comforting smile, expressing something similar to ‘we’ll look after you’. I did not know what he meant until the last verse of the song started and the mass of tall men turned into a jumping circle where I got a knock on the back of my head, nearly fell over and just about made it out of the bunch. (...) The atmosphere came to a climax, just shortly after 13.30 when the first people started to leave, making their way to the stadium. At this point, some seats freed up, young men started to stand on benches, holding up their jerseys and T-shirts and proudly showed off their beer bellies. We finally saw some of the floor again which was very wet, dirty and full of broken glass, while the inflatable ball still circulated at all times. It landed beside a young man standing close to the bar who decided to give it a heavy kick. Instead of kicking the ball, he slipped on the wet ground and fell which made the crowd erupt.” (fieldnote, participant observation, preparation drinking in the pub prior to Hearts v Aberdeen football game, 06.05.07)

This gives further insight into the emotional build-up and the performances that were involved in pre-game drinking activities. It subsequently emerged that the song described in the beginning of this fieldnote was the children’s song ‘Ten men went to mow’ which was a tradition shared amongst Aberdeen fans. The song generally climaxed in the last verse which was always anticipated with great excitement. A number of weeks after this scene had taken place in the pub, one informant found a video on the website ‘YouTube’ that captured this episode. I saw myself and a number of other informants being pushed and shoved and was excited to see that there existed a documentation of our experience. The atmosphere prior to a game resembled that of a bonding ritual (Lyman 1987). Rules were reversed and turned into absurdity. Body contact in this context was suddenly permitted as supporters hugged, danced and sang together. These specific aspects resembled a carnivalesque mood. The rules of the context shifted again and what was seen as normative behaviour for men in this context was not the same as under different circumstances. Nothing could have appeared ridiculous at this point. As Horrocks (1995) pointed out, certain practices became a refuge or channel for men to legitimately express their emotions. In this cultural context, the football setting and shared support for a team, often amongst strangers, permitted them to step out of the expected within the expected so to speak. There were no fears of association with homoeroticism as men shared euphoria, undressed without embarrassment, all within the comfort of a legitimate context which eliminated any

association with deviant behaviour. In this instance, the space for emotional expression was created without threatening their 'normal' masculinity.

These were practices that portrayed them as young, heterosexual, Scottish men even if they stepped outside the boundaries of what was usually permitted. Being a football supporter therefore allowed these young men to express emotions. We can also see how practices demanded different kinds of consumption (Warde 2005). Supporting a team at this level involved drinking lager in the pub prior to a game, buying football tickets, purchasing jerseys, scarves and other fan material, etc. This builds an understanding of practices as the driving force for consumption, allowing us to view them as 'consumption practices'. While these objects were important, it was also important to be competent in terms of their meaning and use in practices. Possessing a scarf or a jersey did not construct a supporter. In fact, objects that displayed their support were far less significant than the experiences of attending games, of participating in pre-game drinking and communicating this competence to fellow supporters. Instead of focussing on brands and objects, emphasis was placed on gathering further knowledge through real-life experiences in those practices these young men pursued (similar to Thompson and Holt 2004). While the example above also expresses the emotional needs that some practices satisfied, it does not explain why informants chose these practices as opposed to others. It appears that Schatzki's (1996) framework of practices as understanding, know-how, emotional engagement and performances for (re)production gives more insight into what constitutes a specific practice and the consumption involved, but not necessarily how the variety of practices encountered here related to and constructed identities. It was informants' decision to become involved in these consumption practices. Although their involvement in practices may have directed their consumption choices, they were still active agents in choosing these practices. We may therefore need to consider how they interpreted them as 'normal' or even valuable, in order to understand their role for constructing masculinities.

4.1.4. Towards masculine capital

Practices may have directed consumption but they were also the driving force of masculine meaning. Masculine meanings of practices were however equally determined by the groups themselves. The above discussion highlights the importance of competence, know-how and experiences in practices. Each practice required different kinds of knowledge or understanding of rituals and procedures and often embodied skills that informants were eager to accumulate. The development and accumulation of this competence was observed across the constellation of practices. Some invested more heavily in becoming a respected football player, displaying competence in the latest football results or knowing of the latest bands or albums, etc. Within these ‘same’ practices that were accepted by groups, they were often seeking distinction. We can also understand competence in practices as indicating various forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Drawing parallels between Schatzki’s ideas of practices and Bourdieu’s capital offers a more comprehensive view of practices.

4.1.5. Economic capital

Although we may assume that students had limited access to monetary funds, certain purchasing priorities were observed. These investments mainly related to gathering further competence and experience in practices. At various occasions, this was met with respect from others in the group. During the time of fieldwork, I was fortunate to see the Aberdeen football team progress to compete at European level in the UEFA cup rounds. This meant that parallel to games taking place in Scotland, Aberdeen also played in other countries across Europe.

“When I asked for the others both Jason and Eoin told me that Jeff had travelled to the game. He had paid £400 for the plane ticket to go to Dnipropetrovs’k in the Ukraine

where Aberdeen was playing against the club Dnipro. To attend the game he had to fly to Kiev.” (fieldnote, participant observation, watching Aberdeen’s UEFA cup game against Dnipro in the pub with Aberdeen supporters, 4.10.07)

We can see that few costs were spared when it came to travelling to matches, including those taking place in more unusual places. Aberdeen continued their European round against Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid that season. Various members went along to those games and recounted their experiences from travelling to Germany and Spain. Travelling to these places involved spending larger sums of money than usual and was one form of presenting utmost loyalty. This proved their dedication as Aberdeen supporters to others. Jeff was the only supporter who had travelled to the Ukraine. Through this, he differentiated himself significantly from others. At the same time, Jason as an avid supporter often criticised the groups’ lack of commitment for travelling to watch Aberdeen home games in the Pittodrie stadium. He often pointed out that he had never missed a game at home, even when others stayed in Edinburgh. This was as strong a claim to competence and commitment as travelling to Kiev. In general, attending games was one way of expressing status as a supporter and competence to others. Investing economic capital was only one way of further developing this.

Moving away from supporting football, informants’ investments were also spread across other practices. Shopping go-alongs provided further insight into what informants found worthy of spending money on.

“As we walked into HMV, he went straight to the shelf that displayed the ‘new releases’ and picked out one CD, Ian Brown’s new album. He explained that this was the front man of the Stone Roses and showed me a few songs. One particular song, ‘Illegal Attack’, he continued, was against the war in Iraq sung together with Sinead O’Connor. He told me that Radio 1 was ‘too afraid’ to play this controversial song but that he had heard it on XFM. He pointed out other songs that had been released from the album. The second CD was from the band Babyshambles. (...) Both CDs were regularly priced at approximately £15. When I asked him if he wanted to have a look at any of the sale items he said that there were only two good CDs available on sale and he already had those. (...) He added that he had considered purchasing the CDs in a supermarket, Tesco for example. He could have gotten them cheaper there. However, he would have had to wait another few days

before being able to listen to them. He wanted to have them now. (...)" (fieldnote, shopping go-along with Jason, 6.10.07)

Through these investments of economic capital, informants expressed their taste for what they deemed important to purchase and also what was perceived as accumulating further competence. In the case of football, the experience of being present at games was sought while they also portrayed the know-how and social networks required to obtain tickets for games that were in high demand. It seemed that for the practices where informants sought distinction, funds were regularly available. In the above example, Jason placed importance on possessing the latest CDs as soon as they had become available, even if this meant having to pay a premium price. Although these CDs added to his competence, it was just as important to display the knowledge of which albums were worthy of his investment. All along, it was striking to hear the detailed information informants possessed about 'Indie' music. With his music collection he portrayed further competence. It was also interesting to observe how informants had learned their route around shops. The sale items were not of interest to him. All informants who participated in shopping go-alongs seemed to follow their path around certain shops where they knew they could find items that would be of value to them. While paying a higher price in this instance was an option, other purchases followed a much tighter regime.

"He told me that he had bought a coat recently and that he would have thought a coat would be £40, but the one that he liked was £80 so he chose not to buy it. Instead he bought one he liked the best for the lowest price, namely £40." (fieldnote, shopping go-along with Jason, 6.10.07)

It emerged how other items were not perceived the same way as 'investments' in contrast to previous examples. With the budget being tight for a coat, this emphasised further how the allocation of economic capital also expressed their taste and priorities in what to 'invest'. Economic capital was therefore concentrated on gathering competence in certain practices only.

4.1.5. Social capital

Social capital was also considered as expressing ‘taste’ and competence. Direct association with certain people increased informants’ reputation and credibility as competent in a practice. Some Aberdeen supporters for example prided themselves on being acquainted with semi-professional football players. At one occasion, a young player from the Dundee football team was brought along to our football game. Informants often spoke with pride about who they knew in the Aberdeen football club. It seemed that being associated with certain people further defined and shaped their own image. Social capital was also expressed through networking sites such as Facebook and Bebo (cf. Reynolds 2007). All informants had created profiles of themselves on either if not both websites and connected these to a number of friends. Especially Facebook emerged as an important resource for receiving all kinds of information. For example, it allowed informants to invite one another to parties or list events. While this provided access to social capital in one sense, informants also displayed social capital through suggesting these events. They were able to identify and organise parties that were of social interest to others. Social networking profiles were also used to list interests and hobbies. Comparing these profiles across informants, they were often identical in terms of favourite bands, TV shows and films. It seemed that through these and other websites informants learned about socially accepted practices and used them to communicate their competence to others.

Apart from social and economic capital, Bourdieu (1986, 1984) described cultural capital as existing in three interlinked forms: the embodied, objectified and institutionalised state. Embodiment as “dispositions of the mind and the body” (Bourdieu 1986, p. 243) represents the embodied skill of a person in relation to their capital. The objectified state is linked to this embodied state in the sense that possessing certain objects is reflected in how capital is embodied. In other words, we may possess

certain objects that allow us to embody capital. The institutionalised state refers to institutional and structural justifications of social class, for example through certified levels of education. As Bourdieu's theories mainly concerned class distinctions the institutional state of capital was highly relevant for educational studies. Transferring the concept of capital to how meanings of masculinity were constructed, fewer incidents highlighted how masculinity was 'institutionalised' in this study. Masculinity can however be related to embodied and objectified states of capital. Adapting Bourdieu's concept of capital from describing tastes and dispositions as manifesting social class, we can also understand these young men as striving for capital. This capital in turn was also an expression of their gendered tastes and dispositions.

4.1.6. Cultural capital in embodied and objectified states

Informants regularly displayed and furthered their embodied skills, for example in their ability to play football. It appeared 'natural' that any young man was able to kick a ball, some better than others. Embodied skill therefore also represented a certain competence. Sport and football specifically have been extensively discussed as constructing specific versions of masculinities (Parker 1996). In this sense, sport also presented a form of institutionalised masculinity. Football and sport in general have been considered male-dominated areas that traditionally served as sites for the construction of masculine ideals and identities (Carrington 1998, Free and Hughson 2003). The connection between sport and embodiment also relates to performing and displaying physically able, embodied forms of masculinity which in Connell's (2005, 2002) description formed part of 'true masculinity'. It reinforced the sustained link between gender and sex. In addition to displaying their football skills, playing football also provided a rather ambiguous space for these young men:

“At the end of the match, Hamish went over and shook my hand, patting me on my back exactly as I had seen footballers on TV do after a match. Everybody did the same, some

even hugging each other. I was happy that there was no grudge from either side [for winning or losing] and it seemed to be a very peaceful atmosphere. (...). I also saw him [Hamish] hugging Andrew later, not just for an instant but holding on to each other for quite some time. I thought this was most unusual although others had hugged as well after the match. It appeared as though the barriers had shifted on the pitch.” (fieldnote, participant observation, playing football with Aberdeen supporters, 28.2.07)

Hamish and Andrew shared a more intimate moment as both were very competent football players who played on opposite teams that day. Their behaviour had the appearance of ‘making up’ after the game. Playing football in general provided the space for individuals to engage in more body contact. It had the ability to balance overt heterosexuality and emotional sporting rituals without fearing homophobic references (Parker 1996). Football in this instance thus became a bonding practice (Lyman 1987). Rather than being consciously perceived as an emotional outlet, the imitation of professional football rituals made it ‘natural’ for these young men to hug. It formed part of iterative performativities (Butler 1990) in the sense that football competence was imitated through embodied performances on the field. Acceptance of embodied convention was also found in wearing and appreciating the uniform of jeans, T-shirt and trainers. While they did not seek distinction in this uniform clothing, football clothes allowed them to portray competence. In the context of playing football, informants also wore football shirts from a variety of clubs. This was therefore one instance where embodied and objectified states of capital went hand-in-hand. However, displaying physical abilities or dispositions were not always as important as the work that was performed in the mind. While sports may have constructed a certain ‘brand’ of masculinity (Parker 1996), informants in this context rather trained their heads. The display and possession of knowledge was often a practice in itself.

Although it also required a degree of embodiment, capital was mainly expressed and sought through meetings and conversations. This also related to the characteristic of practices as understanding what to say and do (Warde 2005). Being able to engage with and ‘talk’ football was expected for watching football in pubs. It was recognised as a necessary skill that granted participation in these settings. Meeting in the University bar

to watch games on the big screen had grown into a weekly activity amongst Aberdeen FC supporters. Although none of the televised games involved Aberdeen FC, we still met to watch English Premiership or Champions League games. Minute details of football information were absorbed and exchanged in 'football talk' in these settings (Kennedy 2000b). It was the ability to do 'the talk' and present competence in these settings that distinguished one person from the other. This required each person to display the knowledge they possessed and argue the case for or against any football team or other topic. In these instances, knowing the result of a game was insufficient. Every pass between individual players, their background, their teams, their trainers, their managers, their strengths and weaknesses had to be taken in. Obtaining the latest sporting information was vital for being able to engage in football talk and displaying knowledge that was respected. Presenting the most up-to-date knowledge also mattered in their music practice as we saw in the example of Jason purchasing the latest "Indie" albums. Other sports had a similar attraction. One informant revealed his plan to get up at six a.m. on a Saturday morning to watch the Grand Prix as Lewis Hamilton could have reached the champion title that day. He was meeting his friends later at an Aberdeen football game in Pittodrie. Although he could have watched the highlights of the Grand Prix that evening, he wanted to be able to present his first-hand knowledge when he met his friends later that afternoon. It was the detail and amount of information that was important.

“[When I arrived] Everybody faced the TV where a football game was shown. It was the night of the European friendly games and we watched England playing against Spain. When the referee blew the whistle for half time, the match on TV still continued with fifteen minutes to play until half time. Confused, I asked what we were listening to. They explained that we had the commentary from the radio that covered the Scotland v Finland B team which was not broadcasted on TV. The commentary of the TV was muted. It took me a moment to come to terms with the amount of activities that filled the room: they were playing poker while watching a game on TV and listening to the radio coverage of yet another football game.” (fieldnote, participant observation, playing poker with Aberdeen FC supporters, 7.2.07)

This excerpt highlights very well how capable informants were in dealing with multiple sources of information. Subsequent conversations showed how vital it was to know about the various games that were being followed. These examples gave insight into objectified and embodied states of capital (Bourdieu 1986) through the competence and know-how in practices (Schatzki 1996). Possessing knowledge emerged as an important attribute of objectified capital. Although being a football supporter involved objects such as jerseys and scarves, more importantly informants knew where and when to wear them. Through this knowledge they continuously sought to express their rightful place as a supporter. Moreover, they had gathered the experience to back their claims. The following example highlighted how experience was also important in other practices.

Capital was found in their ability to talk of experiences and present know-how that demanded respect from others. Experiences also formed part of this objectified capital. Informants engaged in the shared practice of getting drunk together (Piacentini and Banister 2006). Especially in nightclubs, large amounts of alcohol were regularly consumed. This practice did not result in the possession of objects, but of experience. One informant described this as gathering ‘war stories’.

“I: (...) What’s special about a big night out?

S: Get wrecked. (laughs) It’s hanging out with your mates, I mean. It wouldn’t be a big night if you headed out on your own, I mean that would be pretty rubbish I would think. I mean, going to a pub or going to a club on your own, drinking yourself silly on your own, and then going home, would be rubbish, wouldn’t be any fun at all. So, having some of your mates to hang and getting drunk while you do it and then being able to say ‘god, I felt so rough the day after, blablabla’, or ‘I woke up with this’ or ‘I fell over’ or whatever, just you know. Like, like war stories almost I suppose. Um, yeah. And, eh, being a bit rowdy I suppose as well. Not necessarily getting into trouble but, just you know, doing stupid things and what-not. Just being generally stupid. (laughs)” (Sean, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

Stories allowed members to ‘brag’ in front of one another about their experiences of drinking alcohol, similar to displaying knowledge of football or music. They were recognised as commodities that served as badges of approval. The practice of getting

drunk together on the other hand also strengthened the group bond as it created unique, shared moments that were lived and retold at various occasions. Sean commented here that group interactions could often become 'rowdy' under the influence of alcohol, possibly indicating a more aggressive element of masculinity and alcohol consumption. At the same time, being drunk equally created more ambiguous spaces, similar to playing football, which allowed informants to step out of the boundaries of normative behaviour. 'War stories' such as these were similarly encountered in football contexts of attending games. Here, even the stories of parents expressed capital. Experiences often became more objectified in the form of photographs of nights out with friends or of attending football games. Their badging (Schau *et al.* 2009) or trophy character was further enhanced as informants eagerly displayed them on their social networking sites. These experiences in turn allowed informants to claim competence in practices. It was important to know about the latest football statistics and about what topic of conversation was acceptable socially. In some contexts, the 'lager only' rule also changed and it was those who had the greatest drinking experience who could make these decisions. Across these practices, there was not one form of capital. Their capital resided in knowledge of how to 'do' socially accepted masculinity across contexts.

The competence, detailed knowledge, embodied skill and experience presented here all formed part of a certain 'masculine capital'. Although this capital is broadly similar to 'cultural capital' which focuses on the distinct dispositions of social classes (Bourdieu 1984), it described practices which constructed specific cultural versions of masculinity. Although the display of capital was certainly performed, the focus was not solely on its embodied state. Most importantly, objectified capital took on a different shape. Instead of relating it to the possession of specific objects or brands, it was knowledge and experiences that were valuable to informants. This type of capital was actively sought, accumulated and displayed across the range of practices or 'fields' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). We can use it to understand what all these consumption practices had in common. They allowed informants to gather and advertise their capital.

Consumption was directed towards accumulating capital that was sought and valued in relation to the practices they chose. These practices seemed natural, almost constructing a masculinity that was objectively agreed. They defined masculinity that required capital which was then re-invested to reproduce practices. This seemed to reflect a circular process of production and re-production of their consumption practices and masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 1996). Consumption practices and masculinity were therefore inextricably linked to capital. In this circle, informants' appreciation of capital also re-affirmed that practices formed a central part of their lives as young men. Through the display of capital, they collectively identified each other as 'the same'.

In summary, the consumption practices that were identified as accumulating capital constructed a specific masculinity. What kind of masculinity did this capital construct in groups and why was it important? How was masculinity constructed through this?

4.1.7. Displaying and 'agreeing' on masculinity through games

The concept of capital thus served to explain the hierarchies that groups established (Bourdieu 1986, 1984). Parallel to seeking and displaying knowledge, competence, experience and skills, participants were engaged in competing and contesting over who possessed more capital. It was precisely through these contests that meanings of masculine consumption were established. Through competitions, the capital that defined practices was recognised as important for the group. Those consumption practices that were considered masculine were in a sense jointly 'agreed'. Rather than being violent or aggressive, these contests often resembled competitive games where capital was measured and allocated according to appreciation. Participation presented capital but also offered the chance of winning. Practices and their character as contests or games thus resembled Bourdieu's concept of 'fields' (Crossley 2001). They not only provided the site for accumulating and gathering capital, but were also where the struggle took

place to define masculinity. The possession of capital therefore shaped hegemonic ideals or 'winning styles' (Connell 1987). Those who won possessed more capital that shaped the ideal. Winning mattered immensely. One incident emphasised how the most unlikely activities were transformed into competitions. As part of a group project for university, one informant decided to conduct a focus group amongst his friends. He asked two other informants, Michael and Jason, to participate. The topic involved brand awareness of headphones. Jason explained that when none of the participants had purchased headphones recently and were unable to give brand names, he provided Sony as an answer. As he was the only person able to give a brand name of headphones, he subsequently stated that he had 'won the focus group'. Of course, his comment was not entirely serious. Yet, it also emphasised the importance of winning in group interactions. The following examples provide further insight into the games and competitions of informants.

Football talk was a contest in itself. It involved the exchange of often statistical and highly technical knowledge, leading regularly to heated arguments. Knowing more details than the other was vital in these instances. It established a person as a better, more knowledgeable football fan, and this demanded respect from others. The forms of capital featuring in these games consisted mostly of knowledge, competence or skill. Another instance where football knowledge became important was in playing Fantasy Football. Although Sean was not an active member of any specific football society, he and his friends had established a group of players on the Internet and he was proud to achieve the second place that year. As with Aberdeen supporters, it was important to possess up-to-date statistics to be successful in Fantasy Football. Games were not always as overt as these football competitions. In several instances it was difficult to identify what was involved in contests and who emerged as the winner. Verbal disputes were at least as important for measuring capital as the game itself.

“The ongoing football activities placed the poker game initially into the background. £5 was the amount they had initially agreed on bringing into the game. Jason lost nearly all

of his money in one hand to Jeff who kept a relatively unimpressed face. He admitted later on that this had been his only 'big win' for the night as he subsequently only lost or won small amounts. Jason bought himself back into the game with another £5 and I could see that the others responded with both amusement and admiration for his behaviour. Several other games took place alongside the actual poker game. At some point, Andrew was laughed at for not 'cutting' the deck appropriately, particularly by Jeff who was sitting beside him. I had never played poker before and had no idea what 'cutting' the deck involved in this context or what Andrew had done incorrectly. But I understood that one simple mistake could place you in a very uncomfortable position in this environment. (...) Throughout the night, particularly Jeff, Jason and Scott picked on Michael for not knowing the rules or playing poker well enough, despite the fact that he was winning most hands and money later on. On one occasion, he did not know that he had a 'flush' and thought he had lost. Over this instance of ignorance he had to accept a lot of remarks throughout the evening as the lads kept 'slagging' or teasing him with 'Are you sure you have this card?' or 'Now Michael, you have to have xxx card to make a flush, just so you know.' (...)." (fieldnote, participant observation, playing poker with Aberdeen supporters, 7.2.07)

After the initial phase of football talk, the importance of poker competence emerged in this example. Monetary stakes were relatively low, but the potential for loss of respect was considerable. Knowing how to play poker was one form of capital in this game, but understanding the further implications of the game and being able to display competence went beyond playing poker itself. Michael eventually emerged as the winner that evening. However, he certainly did not win in terms of poker competence in the eyes of the group. Winning the game here seemed almost less valued than possessing poker experience. Along with the poker game, verbal games involving put-down humour and teasing were also played. Games produced certain pressure to conform to a norm and become competent in order to 'stay on top'. In this instance competence also involved revealing the weakness of others. Winning styles were decided through the recognition of others. Laughing and engaging in the discourse represented complicit behaviour. It was the group who came together to 'agree' on which competence was respected. Jeff, Jason and Scott were the far more confident players in this game and although they lost, their ability to 'talk the game' rendered them as winners. Everyone had learned the necessary skills for a poker game with these lads. As one informant pointed out during his interview:

“I mean (...) athleticism goes out the window with poker and it’s like, you know, a different, different ball game. You can’t be good at everything.” (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

Not everyone possessed the capital to be successful in all practices, but there was a constant drive to be competitive in practices where a common interest was shared. It was this motivation that indicated their appreciation of practices. The drive to better the other led to the continuous measuring of poker, football and music knowledge, but also of physical abilities such as playing football. Each informant sought to distinguish himself in his way and carve a position of respected expertise. Jeff did so by travelling to the Ukraine, Hamish through being a better football player. And although he may have failed more in poker, he was still striving to increase his competence. Playing football was one example of physical display of capital. In one specific encounter, physicality and competition merged.

“(...) Jason and Eoin decided to play the ‘boxing game’ which was located beside our table in the corner of the alcove where we were sitting. It was another pub game where a punching bag was lowered once money was inserted, and players had to hit it as hard as they could. Each punch was measured and after three attempts they were able to find out who was hitting the target with more strength. Jason had played this before and was excited to give it a go again. Eoin however had informed me previously that he had quit playing football, explaining that his wrists were too fragile. Considering their different physiques, it was no surprise to see that Jason was able to hit the punch a lot harder than Eoin who told me after hitting it the first time that it was actually quite painful. Jason stated that the last time he had played the game he had set the record and was looking to break it today. As it turned out later on, the machine established a new record for every game that was played. The score of the player who had reached the highest of the group was still displayed after the game had finished. Jason and Eoin vacated the boxing game after only one round. Having attracted some attention, particularly with the noise of hitting the bag, more groups of men came over to play. Jason stayed behind for a few minutes to see if any of them were able to reach a higher score than him. He left before he saw anyone beating him. (...) After we had sat down again, another pair of men came over to the boxing machine. One of them got notably frustrated when he was unable to hit the score of a previous man he had watched. He kept on trying again and again, physically hurting himself in the process. The boxing machine remained in action throughout the duration of our stay.” (fieldnote, participant observation, pub visit and watching a football game with Aberdeen supporters, 4.10.07)

Although there were few instances where games involved the display of physical strength, this episode provided further insight into the different types of capital and how they constructed masculinities. While capital such as competence, (verbal) skills and knowledge mainly shaped competitions, in this context it was measured according to pure strength. Similar instances of competitions involving bodily strength and endurance were also found when playing football. This was especially the case when playing in purpose-built football halls which had more of a professional, competitive character than playing in the park. In these instances there was often an observed departure from the game as a shared 'fun' experience into a serious competition. As we saw in the boxing game, competitions could also lead to physical injuries. This relates to Horrocks' (1995) description of the destructive or harming side of masculinity. Although informants admitted that punching the ball was painful, they continued playing the game. It seemed that the ability to ignore the pain of boxing was part of displaying a tough masculine character. Being 'cool' (Pleck and Sawyer 1974, Lyman 1987), in the sense of not caring about physical damage, became part of other group practices. A similar destructive side emerged in competitive drinking in pursuit of 'war stories'. It appeared that masculinity was often the reward for, or recognition of, some kind of suffering. Games in general thus often involved competing over who could endure more than the other, even if this meant hurting oneself.

These examples also shed light on the varying types of masculinity that these contests constructed. Each practice displayed and required different kinds of capital. This drive for capital and recognition equally shaped the practices informants engaged in. One informant for example pointed out that he had left various sports societies as they had become too competitive. He was not interested in competing on the physical level. Rather, he sought to test his social skills in drinking practices that required experience. More direct competitions over social capital were equally observed. As I got to know more informants, I used social networking websites such as Facebook to maintain in contact with them. I connected my profile page with theirs. Gradually, my network and

number of friends built. I observed that some informants had gathered vast numbers of friends. This appeared to be yet another site for competition in terms of who had more friends. The number of friends seemed to indicate social involvement which also communicated competence. I spoke to Sean and Paul about Facebook during one meeting in the pub where I recorded our conversation.

“I: Is that a ‘no-no’ like, that you can’t really reject somebody [on Facebook].

Sean: Pretty much.

Paul: He knows... well, it’s just a bit nasty, isn’t it?

I: Yeah.

Sean: It’s not like you ever have to talk to them. People you don’t like...

Paul: It could be just to add more friends. Some people’ve got like 300 and something friends from [this] University. And I’ve got what – 60? 70?

I: Is there a competition?

Paul: Oh yeah, it’s like...

Sean: You know how many friends other people have. It’s not like people don’t know.”
(interview excerpt, participant observation, meeting Sean and Paul in the pub, 2.3.07)

This and several other instances showed how eager some informants were to accumulate contacts on social networking sites. The type of capital that was sought through consumption was therefore not only knowledge, experience or competence. Social capital also mattered. Possessing more friends than another person expressed popularity, to the extent that it commanded respect from others. As Sean pointed out, Facebook at this level was not even used to communicate with one another. Rather, personal profiles displayed a social ranking through the number of ‘supporters’ they displayed. Both informants also spoke about the number of friends as indicating the social calibre of a person. Social ranking in this instance was also seen as objective, quantifiable and comparable through metrics. Accumulating contacts formed part of yet another competition, one that was monitored online.

Precisely through these group contests, practices were shaped that constructed their masculinities. In these instances, there were often very overt displays of capital. Competitive games marked those practices where distinctions were sought and shaped the consumption practices where they were achieved. Some forms of consumption were

considered a legitimate investment in masculine competence which gave informants the confidence to compete with others. Displays of capital earned them respect and recognition from the group. Competitions were thus connected with the ability to claim and define masculinity. Receiving approval from others in the group for superior capital shaped hegemonic masculinities. We can therefore adapt Connell's (2005) theories of masculinity here. Those who were found to win contextual games were deemed as possessing the 'right' capital to define legitimately masculine consumption practices. Yet, it was the group who decided who had more or less capital and which kind of capital was respected. Hegemonic masculinity and the complicity of others were reciprocal. Playing along in games was one way of admitting the 'ideal'. Although not everybody was active in competing, agreement and engagement with practices sufficed to demonstrate approval. Based on the varying practices and capital, the competition for hegemonic ideals constructed group hierarchies in each context. Different people 'won' in different occasions. A certain pressure was perceived to stay 'on top of the game' across practices. This pressure further led to the homogeneity of interests and the group pursuing certain practices, as opposed to others. In a sense, they had all 'agreed' to prove and approve the masculinity of others in their practices.

Thompson and Holt (2004) previously emphasised competitive behaviour in consumption practices amongst men as claiming the phallus. The findings in this study similarly showed that the various contests revealed masculinity through consumption practices. At the same time, masculinities varied across practices with different types of capital sought and displayed. There was not only one version of masculinity 'played for' in these contexts. Rather, different games over multiple masculinities took place that found their expression through social or embodied capital. These different masculinities also emerged in shifting consumption. As much as informants' consumption seemed to construct objective and natural meanings of masculinity, it was constantly re-negotiated and newly agreed by groups across contexts. What was permitted in one setting changed in another as masculine ideals fluidly shifted. As we

saw previously, playing football demanded a greater level of physical capital while for nightclub visits and parties, social capital was important. In each context, different competencies were pursued that shaped their behaviour, performances and consumption. The norm was situated within each practice and collectively agreed and adopted. One example of how different capital changed informants' consumption was observed in the context of a nightclub visit.

“I asked the lads what people would normally drink in [the University nightclub] and was told that ‘diesel’ was the signature drink: half cider, half lager and red syrup or blackcurrant mixer.” (fieldnote, participant observation, visiting the university nightclub with Aberdeen supporters, 23.3.07)

Changing from the ‘lager only’ rule, the practice of visiting nightclubs required a different drink than for meetings in the pub to watch a football game. In nightclubs, it was not important to display knowledge of football and a rather a different kind of social competence was contested. The winning style here was to have fun in other ways. Varying practices and contexts required different capital that also changed meanings of legitimate consumption. This highlights again how masculinities and consumption were deeply rooted within and changed across the various contexts of practices.

4.1.8. Competition and co-operation

Agreeing on the value of capital indicated a shared belief in the importance of these games, similar to the concept of ‘illusio’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Through this appreciation they re-affirmed a shared group identity. Games in this sense created moments of identification (Jenkins 2004). As aggressive and hostile as they may have seemed at times, competitions equally introduced a co-operative element that brought groups together (Cameron 1998). As we saw during the poker game, the type of put-down humour, teasing and mocking often seemed particularly harsh. Yet, informants were also observed to open up to one another in these instances, sometimes disclosing

more vulnerable sides to themselves. One competitive discussion for example led to an informant disclosing information about being bullied at school. Co-operation appeared to emerge through the 'joint production of discourse' (Cameron 1998, p.279). Rather than being necessarily hostile competitive conversations provoked participation and the expression of opinions. The discourses that negotiated masculine consumption practices therefore also created shared masculinities across varying contexts. While Thompson and Holt (2004) found that men sought out 'identity vacations' in practices that were less competitive, in this cultural context competitions themselves led to group bonding (Lyman 1987).

“[After discussing lads’ magazines such as FHM] They continued their chat talking about music. This was a topic both seemed to be equally competent to discuss. Jason mentioned that the band Oasis was the best band in the world and that any competition between this band and Blur had always been nonsensical. Andrew disagreed. Jason challenged Andrew to name songs that would compare to the successful titles of Oasis. When Andrew was able to deliver, Jason started arguing that when it came to the quality of albums produced, Oasis would always beat Blur. Both eventually had to agree to disagree.” (fieldnote, participant observation, meeting in the pub to watch football with Aberdeen supporters, 22.11.06)

Andrew and Jason both managed to express their musical knowledge during this exchange. Through their display of competence both affirmed their shared interest in music and their way of arguing. Andrew specifically prided himself for being able to spark good arguments. Games that were played together, such as arcade games in pubs also joined players together. These disputes and games appeared to test the commitment of others. As one informant explained, by knowing more about Aberdeen FC than the other person, they proved their status as supporters to others. Similarly, through games across practices they proved their masculinity and commitment to their practices to each other. At the same time, the shared element of games implied that all players were worthy opponents. They all learned from one another and about the other in these competitions. One example included discussions surrounding the computer games 'Football Manager' or 'Champ Man'. Although these were single-player games

informants competed over who could perform better. This also led to the exchange of strategies and expressed shared identification.

4.1.9. Conclusions

This section described those consumption practices that allowed informants to identify each other collectively as ‘the same’. ‘The same’ related to a preference of similar constellations of practices. It also referred to perceiving these practices as ordinary or normal for young men (Wetherell and Eldey 1999). While some practices were described as rather passively accepted such as clothing or lager as their choice of drink, other practices were more important. These practices emerged as the source of capital informants sought to accumulate. Capital did not present itself primarily through objects or brands but rather knowledge, competence and experiences of consumption practices. Describing this capital as ‘masculine’ related to the competition and contests that took place in the group over distinction and recognition in these practices. The display of capital created hegemonic hierarchies, also through the complicity of others. Competitions further shaped those practices that were approved by the group. Practices and capital were collectively ‘agreed’ to be valuable for them as young men. Hierarchies and the ideal capital were however contextual and consumption changed and shifted across practices. Competitions then also created moments of collective identification that brought groups closer together as being ‘the same’.

4.2. Collective identification of ‘the same’ against ‘different’: practices of gendered other and gender relations

If these practices constructed what informants perceived as legitimate versions of masculinity, other practices constructed different masculinities and gender identities.

Socio-linguistic research has shown how men constructed shared identities in conversations through the creation of in- and out-groups (Coates 2003). Competitions measured the different levels of capital and those who were perceived to possess less capital were put down, mocked and teased. Mocking activities referred to several out-groups and arguably also monitored the behaviour of the in-group. Wooten (2007) described these effects of social labelling on collective consumption without focusing on gendered behaviour. The construction of out-groups also involved referring to practices that were not 'us'. While we can understand meanings of masculine consumption practices as 'agreed' by the group, common identities were additionally strengthened in relation to practices of 'other' (Renold 2004). Mocking and teasing formed part of what Renold described as 'othering' techniques. While these developed group coherence, they also created pressures to conform to group practices, thereby creating normative masculinity. Gendered groups of 'other' were perceived to engage in practices that were deviant and different to those of informants. Practices of these other groups further defined those that informants identified as masculine. Following Jenkins' (2004) identification process as being 'the same' and 'different', these were practices against which informants related themselves. They also led to understanding masculinity as a place within gender relations (Connell 2005). In relation to consumer research, informants constructed boundaries against groups of 'other' and 'safe zones' where their consumption remained free of any association (Rinallo 2007). This also relates to Banister and Hogg's (2003) concept of negative symbolic consumption. To understand consumption practices as constructing masculinity, we have described those practices these young men identified with. Yet, other practices that were passively or actively rejected and avoided also offer insights into how informants placed their masculinities.

4.2.1. Practices of relational masculinities

The notion of multiple masculinities through varying forms and levels of capital has already highlighted that there were many ways of ‘doing’ masculinity. While informants shifted and changed their own masculinities across practices and contexts, they negotiated these in relation to practices of several other masculinities that emerged in this cultural context. In other words, the practices of other men also affected the meanings of informants' masculinity and practices. They reaffirmed their practices as establishing their collective masculinity. Hegemonic and complicit positions also emerged in relation to subordinated and marginalised masculinities (Connell 2005). To understand these categories of gendered ‘other’, we have to remind ourselves that gender as an identity construct is found at the intersection of age, class, ethnicity and sexuality, to name a few (Segal 1990, Haywood and Mac an Ghail 2003, Rutherford 1988). Identities are further embedded within their cultural context that holds socio-cultural meanings of masculinity. This influenced how masculinities were experienced, also in their construction to relational gendered other.

4.2.2. Other men’s practices in relation to age, class and cultural background

Games and interactions in general revealed how informants rejected practices of other groups of men. These practices constructed what informants perceived as deviant and different versions of masculinity. They further situated informants’ masculinity and their practices. A closer analysis linked other masculinities to different expressions of age, class and ethnicity for example. Although these related to Connell’s (2005) concept of subordination and marginalisation, other men were not always considered as inferior. Informants related their own practices to those of other men but often accepted them as parallel versions of masculinity they simply did not identify with. An example of this included practices associated with men of other ages.

4.2.3. Other generations and their practices

Both older and younger men were perceived to engage in specific practices that defined their age differences and were hence avoided. The purchase of 'lads mags' or men's magazines such as *FHM* and *Loaded* (Rogers 2005) was for example associated with younger men. These magazines covered topics from the 'New Lad' genre such as cars, booze, gadgets, football, women and sex (Nixon 2001). While informants may not have associated with this specific culture, it may seem surprising that they also avoided any reference to football magazines. It seemed that their real-life experiences were more valuable as their capital was earned from the 'front row'. Possessing magazines may have actually communicated incompetence in these practices (Stevenson *et al.* 2000). Informants had gathered sufficient football knowledge that they did not require magazines as a resource for capital. This mediated form of experience was therefore a sign of weakness. Magazines also seemed to lack the element of sharing and displaying one's competence to others. They could not provide instant feedback as group interactions did. In that sense, they also neglected the social element of practices and contests. The age of other men equally emerged as a deciding factor for choosing the space for their practices (cf. Pettigrew 2006). Deciding on the pub with the right atmosphere and clientele revealed several categories of other men. One of those was found in their opposition to 'old-man-pubs'. This was an expression that constantly reappeared during interactions and interviews. Andrew was one of many informants who explained the concept of an 'old-man-pub' during his interview.

“What’s an old-men’s pub? Sorry, I wanted to ask that-

A: It’s very eh, it’s very more so quiet and less, there are, I mean it’s just typically more, you can tell more so by a bit more like people in their forties and fifties all around and no students or whatever. It usually tends to be a bit smaller and less of the lively music or whatever.

I: What’s, like if you were to look at the places you like going to, what does that place have that an old-man’s pub doesn’t?

A: It'll be more so lively music, that's, usually the light is a bit more contemporary. Usually there's younger bar staff. Usually it'll be a bit bigger as well. Um, a bit more bright colours and that thing as well and just more posters or that on the wall, something like that." (Andrew, interview excerpt, 10.6.07)

It was surprising to hear so many informants reject 'old-man-pubs'. Andrew pointed at some key indicators here for what constituted a good pub in contrast to old men pubs. It was often easier for informants to describe what they liked in relation to what they disliked (Banister and Hogg 2003). The surroundings of the pub, but particularly the company played a significant role for its selection. This highlighted the function as a social space where informants were keen to interact with others who shared their interest. They also shared the competence of identifying which pub was 'right' for them. Other informants spoke about big screens for showing televised sports as positive markers. Music, screens, sports symbols were all signs with which they identified their practices. 'Old-men-pubs' did not provide the arena for them to display and gather the capital they sought. Neither would old men be able to compete or value their games. They were not able to grant them their masculinity and evaluate their performances as other men their age (Kimmel 1994). Along with the 'right' company in the 'right' space, their drink equally differed from the stout and ale older men were generally associated with. This may have also contributed to informants' choice of lager as the drink that defined them. Older men's clothing practices were similarly perceived as differing to those of informants. The ability to identify other men's clothing practices seemed to contradict their general attitude of 'not caring' about clothes (Rinallo 2007). Shopping go-alongs often highlighted how their clothing was carefully selected to avoid associations with 'older' men.

4.2.4. Other social classes and cultural backgrounds: Edinburgh 'Yahs'

The selection of spaces and clothing practices were also negotiated in relation to other cultural categories of men. In some cases, this relationship was more aggressive than

was the case for comparisons they made with the practices of older men. As the majority of informants came from the North of Scotland, Edinburgh was often an alien place for them for several reasons. The relationship between the North and the South of Scotland was not without tensions. Moreover, the population at the university included a large number of students from the South of England. The historical conflicts between the Scottish and the English also influenced informants' relations with these students. English students were often derogatively labelled as 'Yahs'. Sean described this group during his interview in detail.

"I: The 'Yahs' (S: Yeah.), [you said] they get up your nose?

S: Yeah, they get up my nose a bit, they do a bit.

I: What way can you think of?

S: What way? 'Cause they're so bloody privileged most of them. They're rich, a lot of them, the way they dress, um, the way they get on, their accents can be really annoying and they tend to be really stuck up as well. That is a sweeping generalisation but that is my experience. Being down in [my faculty], there's not that many 'Yahs' down there. There's hardly any in fact cause they tend not to do real sciences. They tend to stick to 'History' or 'Arts' and 'English' and stuff like that. I remember in [student residences], there was a guy who lived down the corridor from me who was doing 'History of Art' and he came to university because his friend who was coming to university agreed to do his washing if he came (laughs) cause he didn't want to have to do it himself. And his dad owned a very large firm, I don't know what it was called. And at Christmas in first year, he threw out a massive pile of clothes. He just left them in the kitchen area in our halls, and some of these hadn't even been worn. I mean, he didn't even give it to charity, he just threw it out which seems like a huge waste. (...) But I mean, the 'Yahs' are particular. They tend to be English but they don't have to be cause, I mean, there are some Scottish 'Yahs', not loads but there are some. You can generally spot them by them wearing pashminas and stuff like that. That's the girls obviously but not the guys, and, you know, polo shirts with the collars sometimes tucked up and it's not that brilliant" (Sean, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

Sean illustrated several characteristics here of how 'Yahs' were generally perceived. Although this group also included women, male 'Yahs' were found to engage in specific practices that communicated their masculinities to informants. For one, 'Yahs' were generally perceived as upper-class and rich. Their accents were often described as artificially performed, and the way 'Yahs' dressed was mainly referred to negatively. Shopping go-alongs saw many occasions where clothes were rejected for being too

'Yah'. Examples included clothing with Pringle patterns which were described as 'golfy'. Specific brands projecting heritage and upper-class such as Pringle cashmere were discarded for possible association with 'Yahs'. Their clothing practices also reflected this opposition. Choosing unbranded clothing was therefore another reason why informants stuck to their understated and simple jeans/T-shirt/trainers rule. Their non-branded jeans/T-shirt/trainers meant they were not mistaken for 'Yahs'. Although a few informants came from well-off families, it was frowned upon to display wealth. None of them sought to boost their status by adopting conspicuous symbols or relate to sports such as golf. These were practices mainly associated with 'Yahs'. Further, brands, particularly upmarket and luxury brands were often disliked for their association with upper class which they also related to 'Yahs'. Specific pubs and entire areas of Edinburgh were equally avoided for their association as 'posh' or 'fancy'. Informants frequently referred to specific bars that 'Yahs' frequented.

"I: So what kind of places would you go to?

A: Usually the Craggs or Tron or the Three Sisters or [the student union bar], quite good as well. They're usually good places. Preferably where- they have to be affordable as well of course. (...) We actually just can't afford to go to any of the rich places. (...) Most are there around George St, Rose St, Queen St, down around the area. We don't tend to go there, actually at all." (Andrew, interview excerpt, 10.6.07)

It seemed that specific categories of men were allocated to different spaces within the city. Similar to the spatial division of social groups observed in school yards (Eckert 1998), informants identified and distanced themselves from defined areas in Edinburgh. Andrew mainly mentioned the lack of finances for avoiding certain places. That may have been true for some exclusive bars 'Yahs' frequented, but 'Yahs' also went to student bars where prices were not that different. Although informants did not come from poor backgrounds, they often described themselves as 'working class', mainly in relation to the perceived affluence of 'Yahs'. As a contrast, informants kept themselves inconspicuous as Hamish described:

“H: (...) I also think that there’s, I don’t know, this trend of going to cocktail bars now having all these fancy drinks and going to wine bars and stuff like that and I think ‘what the f***’, you know. Again, it’s my working class, I like a pint, that’s, I don’t’ like drinking spirits, cocktails or anything like that. I just like a nice pint (pause) of Tennents (laughs). It’s cheap and I like it.” (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

Informants’ choice of pints therefore also expressed their pride in working class connotations they wished to display against practices of ‘Yahs’. Cocktails, wine and ‘fancy’ drinks were representations of deviance. Parallel to the upper-class perception of ‘Yahs’, Sean added that most ‘Yahs’ were English. Indeed, informants often saw themselves as being in a minority in the university and in Edinburgh in general. Although they lived in the capital of Scotland, they perceived a greater dominance of English culture compared to their own. One informant regularly referred to Edinburgh as ‘Englandburgh’. Parallel to the historic conflict between Scotland and England, these tensions were fostered by the political developments during the time of fieldwork. This further situates informants’ identities and practices into the specific time and context. Informants’ nationality formed part of the way they expressed their gender as a specific Scottish masculinity. 2007 saw the 300th anniversary of the historic union between England and Scotland. This union represented the formal declaration of the United Kingdom between both Scottish and English crowns. The shared nationality between Scottish and English was henceforth British. However, England dominated in this union through its larger industrial power and size: 85% of the population in the United Kingdom was English (McCrone 2001). Scotland was often perceived as inferior in contrast to this English dominance which “undermined Scottish culture and created an inferiority complex among many Scots.” (Burnett 2007, p. 4).

The 300th anniversary reminded Scotland of its position as overshadowed by this more powerful nation. Parallel to this, the Scottish National Party dominated in the opinion polls before the general election in 2007. This represented the growing desire of contemporary Scotland for further independence towards the complete devolution from England. In 2005, only 14% of the Scottish population claimed to feel British first and

Scottish second (Burnett 2007). Companies that contained the word 'British' in their trading names were forced to adapt these in Scotland (McCrone 2001). Informants' practices also reflected their negative associations with England. Clothing and brands that depicted the Union Jack flag were explicitly rejected, one example being the trainers brand Reebok. Moreover, informants regularly expressed a preference for Tennents lager, similar to Hamish above, which was a Scottish brand of lager. Most importantly, they sensed a pride that the Scottish national sport was football, the same as in England (Finn and Giulianotti 1998). This was perceived as taking on the English in their own national sport. They were filled with hostility when Scottish sport did not receive the same media attention as English. English sporting events often took preference over Scottish. If an English football game took place at the same time as a Scottish game, it was often the English game that was televised in Edinburgh pubs. The cultural dominance of the English was similarly perceived in ads as the following excerpt describes.

“(...) I remembered the advert for Lucozade sport that involved several known sports celebrities in Ireland. When I asked whether they had a similar advert in Scotland, I was told that it was the same. Only in the UK they used English sports personalities. This made Jason particularly angry, commenting that ‘this is what you get when you’re not living in a free country’.” (fieldnote, participant observation, after a game of football with Aberdeen supporters, 28.2.07)

This episode reflected the relational construction of Scottish men's identities through their relationship with English sports culture. The media informants consumed was often produced in England and distributed across the UK as we saw in this example of Lucozade sport. Jason's anger was based on his own identification with football and sports as a practice, which was also the reason for purchasing Lucozade. However, he could not identify with the mediated images of the brand. The product that formed part of their practices failed to recognise informants' culturally situated masculinity. Informants were often disappointed to find their culture, practices and identities under-represented in the media. This emphasises how consumption practices constructing masculinities were also embedded within their cultural and historic context (Kimmel

2005a, Carrigan *et al.* 1985). How masculinities were lived today was heavily influenced by their history. It equally produced insights into the place that informants negotiated in relation to dominant English discourses in this cultural context. From the outside, we may have perceived their Scottish masculinities as marginalised against hegemonic English masculinities. On the other hand, informants had also learned to embrace their repertoire and collective identification as the ‘underdog’. Scottish culture had gained strength from this position. Being the ‘underdog’ who overcame the favourite was a narrative often re-enacted by informants in practices such as supporting and playing football when the stronger team was beaten by them as outsiders. Instead of perceiving themselves as subordinated, they placed themselves in a hegemonic position where the dominant was transformed into the inferior. Similar dynamics were observed by Edley and Wetherell (1997) who found non-hegemonic boys in schools to perceive themselves as superior, while they considered the dominant sporting ‘jocks’ as weak. Informants in this study also used the solidarity of the group to identify themselves as strong and hegemonic. The collective bond gave them support in their affirmation to claim hegemonic masculinity parallel to other versions.

At the same time, the notion that the dominant had to be converted into the weak also meant that another hegemonic discourse of masculinity was used to increase their status. Hegemonic masculinities could not be based on weakness. Informants constructed themselves as stronger and replicated hegemonic hierarchies in viewing the other as inferior. For example, English sports and sporting personalities were often described as effeminate and soft, often embodied through personalities such as David Beckham. Wetherell and Edley (1999) found a similar theme amongst their Scottish participants who classified English men as ‘Southern Soft Bastards’ (SSBs). This image and practices were notably rejected as less masculine. English men were also perceived as more fashionable even on the sports pitch, to the extent of being labelled as utterly deviant and metrosexual (Conway 2004). Informants could not identify with football or sports mixed with effeminacy. Scottish sporting masculinities were rather rated for their

display of strength and toughness that were possibly also more 'working class'. Sports and sporting bodies had no connection with physical attractiveness and vanity (Gill *et al.* 2005) unlike many English footballers. To informants, this was not masculine but 'gay', and this was also the case for the sports of 'Yahs' and English men.

"H: I don't play cricket, cricket's for gay boys. You know cricket, (...) it's just cricket, rugby, hockey. I probably said this to you at some point, but eh, if it's not football - I only ever wanted to play football and I didn't care about anything else. And (pause) I played other sports at [my school] and I said, for once I didn't just say 'ah, hockey, that's for f***ing girls'." (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

The use of the term 'gay' reappeared in several instances, not just in reference to relational categories of other men. 'Gay' denoted anything that was subordinate to the masculinity of informants. In this respect it also related to Connell's (2005) concept of subordination. Cricket, rugby, hockey were sports informants considered as inferior to football. They did not form part of their hegemonic masculinity. Rugby players at the university were loathed for their jock culture and also in relation to their upper-class inspired clothing and drinking practices (Nauright and Chandler 1996). At the same time, it frequently emerged that 'gay' did not refer to homosexual men. Rugby players, English 'Yahs' and other categories of men labelled as 'gay' were not homosexual. Rather, the term was used derogatively to put down any consumption practices that were perceived as less masculine. 'Gay' indicated a masculine scale or grading system (Cameron 1998). Informants used this system to place their own masculine practices they collectively identified with in relation to those of other men. Calling someone 'gay' was therefore an 'othering' technique (Renold 2004), a put-down or a tease. However, it did not necessarily position the other person as actually homosexual. Similar to the term 'cool' (Nancarrow *et al.* 2001), a specific label or in this case stigma that served to express 'masculine taste' had moved into common language and had lost its original meaning.

4.2.5. Other men's practices and external markers

Parallel to practices of older, younger men and 'Yahs', informants also recognised another group of men in 'Neds'. Although informants regularly referred to themselves as 'working class', this identification mainly emerged in relation to 'Yahs'. In contrast to 'Neds', informants perceived themselves as more educated and mainly less violent. Practices of 'Neds' were thus equally considered deviant. Particular clothing styles such as striped T-shirts and brands of alcoholic drinks were avoided as a consequence (see also BBC 2007). Similar to 'Yah' places, certain areas in Edinburgh were also 'Neddy'. This mostly referred to nightclubs, discos and bars that were rejected. All these groups represented certain boundaries or limits between which informants negotiated their gender place (Connell 2005, Visconti 2008). Their classification as 'Neds' and 'Yahs' highlighted that either was identifiable through externally visible markers such as clothing, alcoholic drinks or their association with specific locales in Edinburgh. Each pursued their own version of masculine capital and displayed their appreciation of practices differently. Understanding how their practices related to one another, informants' clothing choices also emerged as more carefully selected than they admitted. Shopping go-alongs stressed this through the type of styles informants did not choose. They could not wear clothing they associated with 'Yahs', no 'old-men' cardigans, no sports branding they did not recognise and no striped shirts that may have been 'Neddy'. Choosing their clothing was a long negotiation process between the various discourses of other masculinities they collectively perceived. Remaining 'unmarked' and not associated with either group further narrowed their options. It was easier to choose clothing in relation to what they did not like. This revealed their careful efforts to stay within 'safe zones' (Rinallo 2007). Wearing their jeans, T-shirt and trainers uniform kept informants safe without being misjudged as a 'Ned' or a 'Yah'. It also gave them a certain flexibility to remain 'hidden', unbranded, unplaced into any category themselves. At the same time, with these efforts they signalled their own collective identities through shared appreciation of deviant practices of other men.

These examples offer insights into the multiple versions of masculinities and their construction through parallel practices in this cultural context. They influenced each other in the construction of their masculinities. Identities of other men, parallel to those of informants, were expressed differently depending on age, ethnicity, culture and nationality. Classifying other collective masculinities led to the construction of social categories (Jenkins 2004) stigmas (Goffman 1963) and stereotypes (Tajfel 1981). At the same time, the practices of other men were not always different from those of informants. 'Other' men equally frequented pubs, engaged in sports and chose clothing with care. They may have chosen different external markers of identification, but their practices seemed broadly similar nevertheless, and each category pursued their own capital and hegemonic claims through their practices. This resulted in the more parallel character of multiple masculinities in this cultural context, although they competed in relation to one another. Informants constructed masculinity through their practices and sought hegemonic distinction this way. As part of their collective identification they also perceived other masculinities as less masculine. This is where the current analysis diverges from Bourdieu's (1984) theory of capital. Bourdieu argued that throughout our life we strive to accumulate further capital, although certain social classes are born with more capital than others. We cannot argue that informants possessed more or less masculine capital or that any other cultural category of masculinity had more masculine capital. Informants never expressed the desire to become a 'Yah', even if that meant being more affluent. Rather, masculinity was achieved, fought for (Gilmore 1990) and established hierarchies in pursuance of different capital that defined multiple versions and practices of masculinity in this cultural context. Once more, there was no objective masculine capital but its meaning was collectively and culturally constructed, and also negotiated in relation to other groups.

4.2.6. Relational communities of other men

Informants encountered other groups of men and practices that were similarly linked to age, social class and cultural profiles, although their members represented a greater cross-section or variety of these. Informants negatively related to subcultures such as 'Emos' (Salzman *et al.* 2005, Hebdige 1979) who had little connection to class and cultural background. Their dislike was expressed again through avoiding clothing styles or music associated with this subculture. It appeared however that 'Emos' and 'Goths' were perceived as younger than informants. Relational 'other' however equally emerged in the form of football supporters of other teams than the Aberdeen FC. These had more of a 'neotribal' character (Cova *et al.* 2007) as they included men of all ages and class. Football supporter groups were often transitory (Kozinets 1999) and based on new values and shared beliefs of football culture. Yet, in contrast to these neo-tribal characteristics these groups were also deeply rooted within Scottish history and culture. In that sense, they were similar to traditional communities (Maffesoli 1996), possibly even brand communities of football teams (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). Football supporter groups also included a number of women. However, these women did not generally engage in the same competitive drinking practices, contests over football knowledge and at times quite aggressive support for a team. Football supporters could arguably also be viewed as a form of subculture although their activities often lacked an opposition to the mainstream (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001, Thornton 1995). What cannot be argued is the role of other football teams for informants' identification as Scottish men through the Aberdeen FC.

Several informants considered themselves as active contributors to the community of Aberdeen FC supporters. Through this, they also established their identities as entrenched in the culture of North Scotland. This culture was significantly different to that of the South which was also the reason for their ambiguous relationship with Edinburgh. These distinct cultures were grounded yet again in the history of Scotland.

The union between England and Scotland in 1707 resulted in further repercussions for Scottish identities. Support for the union came from a powerful minority who benefited from it, mainly wealthy businessmen and aristocrats in Edinburgh and Glasgow in the South of Scotland. The rest of the population, a large percentage in the North, opposed the union with England. Industrial and political powers in the South overwhelmed those in the North, leading to a greater division within Scotland. Further industrial developments also led to the stigma of the rich South and the poor, yet authentically Scottish, North (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001). The South was considered to be 'handing over' its Scottish culture for the sake of progress and wealth while the North held on to its traditions (Burnett 2007). Although several structural and industrial changes took place during those 300 years, this image may have also played a role in informants' perception of themselves as 'working class' during their time in Edinburgh. It was equally significant for their identification with Aberdeen football. Informants regularly pointed out how Aberdeen FC represented an entire part of the Northern region, not just the city of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Some informants came from Inverness and further north as Aberdeen was the only northern team representing their region when they grew up. Other teams such as Inverness Caledonian Thistle only started up in recent times and did not compete in the Scottish league. Aberdeen FC thus characterised their heritage and pride in the North of Scotland for them.

In each football game, their support and identification with Aberdeen FC was regularly placed in relation to or against another team from the Scottish Premier League. Informants often stated their dislike for Glasgow due to its dominance in football. Glasgow housed the two biggest Scottish Premier League clubs that formed the 'Old Firm' of Celtic FC and Rangers FC. Both also enjoyed the largest amount of supporters and highest revenues in Scotland (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001). The football focus on Glasgow was buttressed by the majority of smaller teams located within the area such as St Mirren, Motherwell, Hamilton Accies and St Johnstone. As a consequence, media coverage and interest remained concentrated in what informants referred to as "West

Coast Bias”, which also contained a sense of neglect for the North East of Scotland. Celtic and particularly Rangers were loathed, partly due to the sectarian rivalry between these two clubs. The feud between Rangers and Aberdeen FC was also fuelled by further associations. Aberdeen achieved a spate of successes during the late 80s which raised expectations for the North Eastern region in terms of tourism and commerce. Rangers FC in contrast saw a decline in support and chose to exploit Aberdeen’s increasing popularity. They did so by transforming their confrontations into theatres of violence and aggression (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001). This produced a deep-seated hatred by Aberdeen fans towards Rangers. Similarly, informants commented on the commercial potential of Aberdeen football for their region, especially when their team progressed to play in the European competition after their 06/07 season. They also recognised Celtic’s antagonistic relationship with Rangers but also their mutual benefit of supportership for either side as a result of this. Each team grew in support for their opposing relationships. Both clubs heavily contributed to the financial situation of Glasgow and informants considered their region as deprived of this privilege due to their persistent conflict. Rangers and Celtic fans that came to Aberdeen to support their team were mostly noted for the violent and vandalising behaviour which often presented further costs to Aberdeen FC for the maintenance of their stadium.

Furthermore, the different football teams had also come to represent distinct cultural identities within Scotland. Celtic and Rangers, as most football clubs in Scotland, were based on their association with either Catholic or Protestant beliefs (Armstrong and Giulianotti 2001). Aberdeen FC on the other hand remained its religious neutrality which emphasised again its relational difference (Giulianotti and Gerrard 2001). The image of Scottish authenticity and pride in regional heritage was similarly seen to characterise Aberdeen FC in relation to the unionist Rangers FC fans who expressed their loyalty to Britain at every game. This was generally despised by Aberdeen supporters. Elements of the historic conflict between North and South and the conflicting identities that resulted from this lived on in football. In addition to the

cultural divide between supporters, informants experienced the consequences of violence that had shaped Scottish football (Finn and Giulianotti 1998, Dimeo and Finn 1998). The aggressive rivalries associated with Scottish football had led to multiple regulations including strict safety procedures around stadia and restrictions or recommendations of wearing and displaying club colours (Finn and Giulianotti 1998). This further emphasised informants' competence of knowing when and when not to cover their jerseys or scarves. It also explained the minor focus that was placed on purchasing fan material and objects that denoted fandom. Informants had accepted that displaying club colours was charged with meanings. Equally, confrontations with other supporters were avoided at games through spatial division. Informants behaved according to these regulations and there was no desire to 'become rebellious'. Examples included the designated routes to and from stadia and the establishing of away-supporters' pubs in contrast to those of home-supporters. The territorial distinction between home and away-supporters was equally fostered by the grounds themselves. The home area of Pittodrie for example displayed various comedic scenes depicting Rangers fans being put down.

Relations between the teams and their effect on practices and identities of a football supporter were particularly marked while attending a game in Glasgow against Celtic FC. As opposed to the regular practice of meeting and drinking in pubs prior to a game, pre-match drinking was not allowed before our trip to Glasgow or in Glasgow itself. Some fans had previously attempted to continue their drinking practice on the bus to the game and got into severe trouble over this when arriving at the stadium. This behaviour was now heavily policed and strictly prohibited. Informants repeatedly described how games against Celtic and Rangers had to be accepted as a 'sober affair'. This was also noticed during the game itself which was followed by informants with a quiet and rather subdued attitude, unlike some of the other Aberdeen matches experienced before. Informants had become competent in how to behave against other teams and this knowledge became vital against Celtic and Rangers. All friendliness between fans was

eliminated when it came to playing against Celtic and especially Rangers. Travelling to Glasgow to attend football games felt like going to war. The songs, the drums, the flags, the contested territories in stadia, pubs and their surroundings all formed part of this. Football games were often more about the contests between supporters than the actual sporting competition between teams. On our return from Glasgow, away-supporter buses were escorted by the police to guide them in their direct way to the motorway. I was told that extreme measures were regularly taken to ensure that ‘no supporters’ bus gets lost in the city’.

In some instances, these deep-seated oppositions against categories of ‘other’ were not only confined to the context of football games. At times they permeated into other situations that were not necessarily marked by football. During a shopping go-along for example, Jason commented on the Rangers and Celtic fan shops in Edinburgh. It seemed peculiar to him that either team had a shop in Edinburgh when their home was in Glasgow. Aberdeen fan material was only distributed through the shop in Aberdeen’s stadium Pittodrie. It seemed that their shops reminded him again of the commercial dominance these two teams had established in Scotland and how other teams were pushed to the margins. He concluded that if any of them opened a shop in Aberdeen it would be burned down. Below is another example of how their relation to other football teams directly affected their consumption choices.

“He was looking for a new pair of sports shorts and would have liked a pair with a logo of a football team on the side. He found a few but they were all for kids. He also showed me the Irish and Swedish jerseys. The Swedish jersey was popular in Scotland because Henrik Larsson had been playing for Celtic. All the other shorts he found as well as a number of jerseys were all Celtic-branded. He refused to wear the colour or logo of another Scottish team, particularly Celtic and Rangers, but he would buy the jersey of another international club or team. He was looking at a largely reduced jersey of a Portuguese club.” (fieldnote, shopping go-along with Hamish, 10.5.07)

In this context, Hamish’s search for football shorts was a much longer process than anticipated. It was acceptable for informants to purchase clothing that related to football

as a display of competence. However, for their association with Aberdeen the number of choices was limited yet again. Adhering to certain rules of loyalty created further boundaries or 'safety zones'. Under no circumstances would it have been permitted to wear the logo of another Scottish team. With regard to international clubs there was more scope for negotiation. For example, during a different shopping go-along Jason purchased an AC Milan jersey. Others had previously played football in Real Madrid shirts. Hamish perceived the same rule that merchandise of other national or club teams were permitted to be worn. Purchasing football clothes associated with Celtic or Rangers FC was however strictly prohibited.

4.2.7. Shifting relations, masculinities and consumption practices

Being an Aberdeen supporter deeply shaped the practices and identities of informants. It marked them as young Scottish men with a specific cultural background. Although the practices of other Scottish fans were not always significantly different, it was rather the spatial division and symbolic identification through logos and stadia that created opposition. Stories of confrontations with other teams were also important. Along with their own experiences, fathers and families of informants came to pass on their stories. This further cultivated the relationships against other teams. Stories connected informants within their group and identified them collectively as 'Aberdeen supporter'. At the same time, stories changed depending on the opposing team, with Rangers and Celtic being the most severe antagonists. For each game, the rituals and consumption practices were re-negotiated as the boundaries shifted through varying opposing teams. Similarly, it was mainly in activities relating to football that other teams emerged as relational other. Although informants' practices interlinked, Celtic and Rangers were mainly recognised as relational 'other' in football contexts and practices. Possibly also for living in Edinburgh, 'Yahs' and their practices often represented a stronger relational target. 'Yahs' on the other hand had no relational meaning when it came to football.

Relational groups of other men thus continuously changed across practices and contexts. Connell (2005) summarised this the following way:

“I emphasize that terms such as ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and ‘marginalized masculinities’ are not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships. Any theory of masculinity worth having must give an account of this process of change.” (p. 81)

These changing configurations of practices and relational groups also translated into shifting masculinities and consumption. For example, going to the Roseburn pub before an Aberdeen game was accepted as common practice. However, Jason stated in his interview that he once visited the same pub outside a football context. All he encountered were “a few ‘elderly’ men sitting in the corner, talking about their local golf activities.” (interview, Jason, 6.5.07) This was generally not the environment informants sought for a night out in Edinburgh as stated in their aversion towards ‘old-men-pubs’ (and golf). The meaning of the pub changed in the context of football practices, placing the ‘old-man’ into the background. Another example was their relation to ‘Neds’. In a football context and in contrast to ‘Yahs’, informants were proud to describe themselves as ‘working class’. Moreover, football had the ability to bring the most diverse people together. The group of supporters that surrounded us during games similarly came from different class backgrounds. In a football context, the distancing from ‘Neds’ seemed to dissolve, as long as they were on the same side. (‘Neds’ from Glasgow of course remained in the opposition throughout.) At the same time, informants were eager to distance themselves from ‘Neddy’ clothing. Again, it was important to view the meanings of relational groups within each context and practice. The boundaries (Visconti 2008) and ‘safe zones’ of consumption (Rinallo 2007) continuously shifted as practices and relational categories against which these practices were negotiated changed. In some instances ‘Yahs’ and ‘Neds’ shaped these boundaries, in others Celtic and Rangers fans. This also meant that consumption

practices were constantly re-negotiated according to changing configurations. These contextualised relations then also shifted informants' meanings of masculinity.

4.3. Masculinity and women's practices

Other men's practices were recognised as masculine, even if less so than those of informants. In several instances, certain practices were ranked as inferior and declared as effeminate or 'gay'. Connell (2005) also recognised the proximity of homosexuality and effeminacy to femininity. They presented a continuum of masculinity with one extreme being not being masculine at all. Practices perceived to be for women could not form part of informants' construction of masculinity.

4.3.1. 'Shopping is for women'

Shopping, particularly clothes shopping, emerged as a difficult subject to address during participant observation. As discussed earlier, choosing clothes often became a complex task. The several possible configurations of other masculinities often left informants with little choice. We encountered few clothing that was 'unbranded' or unmarked in terms of not being associated with other men. Informants therefore stuck to their 'safe' practice of dressing in the uniform T-shirt, jeans and trainers. The difficulties of choosing clothes meant that shopping for clothes was often avoided. The excitement of shopping was also missing for other reasons. Clothes and shopping for clothes remained unmentioned during group conversations. It was not a topic worth talking about amongst friends. It certainly was not a group practice for informants. Further insights into practices that were avoided or rejected in terms of 'doing' and 'saying' (Warde 2005) were therefore obtained from shopping go-alongs and interviews. Comparing some of the interview data, the similarity between informants' responses was striking yet again. A rejection of (clothes) shopping seemingly formed part of their collective script.

“I: What do you like shopping for?

H: Nothing, I hate shopping, I’m afraid. I don’t like shopping at all. (...) And my Dad hates shopping as well. Maybe I get it there, that’s probably what I’m like. I’m just trying to think maybe why I hate shopping. But, eh, he’s exactly the same. Um, Tom, I don’t think Tom particularly likes it. I don’t think Jeff, well, I’d say, I think it’d be better if you went with your girlfriend. I don’t know why but unless one went but otherwise it’s – because, men know that women like shopping. I mean, if they, if they know, that they’re doing something that a woman would quite like to go around the shops, and they think that they’re kinda making their girlfriend happy. But I, the majority of men that I know do not like shopping. They would only do it to kinda please the girlfriend.” (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

Like many informants, Hamish expressed his dislike for shopping. It was interesting how the general talk of ‘shopping’ was avoided during interviews, often without any mention of what kind of shopping. In most cases it seemed to be automatically interpreted as clothes shopping. Hamish also revealed how this attitude connected him with his friends who shared the same rejection. The mention of Hamish’s father disliking shopping hinted at a domestic socialisation into what did and what did not constitute masculine practices. He underlined that shopping was a practice associated with women. Accompanying the girlfriend in her shopping activities was justifiable to other men as taking on the role of “whining and waiting” (Otnes and McGrath 2001). Girlfriends helped informants choose their clothing and vice versa. Admitting to shop with the girlfriend to others resembled the practice of ‘name-dropping’. Having a girlfriend in the first place seemed to elevate informants’ status and engaging in shopping activities with her was not seen as actively becoming involved in a feminine practice. Without a girlfriend, shopping was less acceptable for men. The idea that it was a women’s activity was further enhanced once informants spoke about who shopped for them. Whilst fathers often socialised their sons to reject shopping, their mothers often took the responsibility for some of their shopping. Some informants either went shopping with their mothers or had items purchased for them. This potentially reinforced their notion that shopping was a female practice. Moreover, women appeared to have more authority and competence in the realm of fashion. Informants believed that

they cared about their clothes and appearances. This also led them to oppose any association with doing the same.

I: And when you buy clothes where would you go?

J: (pause) Nowhere in particular. I'm not a very fashion-conscious person. (laughs) I'd just wear whatever. You can probably tell that I don't really care what I look like.

I: Well, you know...

J: Fashion, fashion statement in itself. I don't care what people think of me, apparently. (...)" (Jason, interview excerpt, 28.5.07)

Claiming not to care about appearances emerged in other informants' interviews and conversations as an explanation for their dislike of clothes shopping. Frith and Gleeson (2004) also encountered similar themes in their study. Jason's statement of not caring about what he looked like and what people thought of him seemed to be a fashion statement in itself. Not caring about looks also represented informants' investment in a public reputation that portrayed them as independent of other people's opinions. It presented them as 'cool' (Lyman 1987, Nancarrow *et al.* 2001). Once more, it also reaffirmed their collective appreciation for what was masculine. A man was in control of himself and was not guided by what others thought. Seeking independency and rejecting fashion for fear of the feminine also had some Oedipal undertones (Freud 1952, Chodorow 1978). While independence and control were certainly important themes, 'not caring' also constructed an image that distanced them from those who were perceived to care about appearances. Caring projected an image of vanity that was often stated to be unacceptable. Gill *et al.* (2005) encountered similar rejections towards appearing vain or caring too much about men's bodies. Vanity seemed to produce connotations of self-love in a more narcissistic sense (Nixon 1992), translating into enhancing one's features and trying to display a flattering figure, etc. Informants did not want to be perceived as making efforts to attract others with their external appearance. They did not want to place attention on their exterior. Rather, they preferred to remain 'invisible' in relation to practices associated with women.

4.3.2. Other visible practices

Along with their dislike for clothes shopping, informants also disliked clothes shops. Some informants became quite specific about the shops they avoided.

I: Um, what do you think of shopping, or what kind of shopping do you like?

A: I hate clothes shopping, that's the main thing. All that goes with it, when you want to go around town, if you want to go around town sort of Princes St thing most of all, I just hate that.

I: Who does that?

A: Well, girls are the worst, not just the girls, but even some of the guys are now, they just go to into USC and that kind of clothes and all that. I just can't be bothered with all that sort of thing at all." (Andrew, interview excerpt, 10.6.07)

Andrew, similar to Hamish previously, equally associated shopping immediately with clothes shopping and stated his dislike. He expressed here that shopping was a women's practice, but also that men had started to engage in shopping activities. A number of shops on the high street in Edinburgh, Princes Street, had started to specialise in men's clothing. USC was a shop that was specifically loathed by informants, mainly because it stocked popular upmarket clothing brands such as Lacoste, Diesel, Bench and Fred Perry. This type of expensive, high-class and conspicuous clothing was of course also associated with 'Yahs' and rejected on that basis. However, wearing brands and caring for appearances was a characteristic that in informants' eyes decreased masculinity of 'Yahs' as it related to effeminacy. Informants often stated that the willingness to pay premium prices for branded clothing was nonsensical. Brands seemingly portrayed an investment in looks, but investing in appearance did not form part of their masculine capital. Another shop that was avoided was Gap. Jason even stated during his go-along that Gap was commonly known amongst his friends to be the abbreviation of 'gay and proud'. Those practices informants associated with women were generally labelled as 'gay' for men. The colour pink for example was entirely deviant. Indeed, any bright-coloured products seemed to make informants more visible. Members of the beer

society claimed to dislike the bottled drink WKD mainly for being neon-coloured. During a shopping go-along, Hamish pointed out a pair of pink trainers which made him erupt in laughter. Engaging in women's practices such as wearing pink and being seen in any of these shops made informants 'gay' in the sense that it decreased their masculinity. Moreover, Hamish's reaction to pink trainers represented a form of overt rejection. Their distancing from women's practices often had to be made public and explicit.

Another practice that did not relate to clothes or shopping but equally produced a certain visibility was the consumption of cosmetic or hygiene products. To introduce the topic in interviews, informants were asked about their daily morning routine and encouraged to mention the type of products they used during this process. This aimed at avoiding any leading words such as 'cosmetics' or 'beauty products' which may have inhibited them to talk more freely. At the same time, after more than a year of fieldwork in some cases and intensive familiarisation with informants they seemed open to engage in conversations about their personal routine. 'Grooming' products in particular were often declared to be purchased by their mothers or given as gifts. Either of these meant that informants had little involvement in the purchase of these products. Receiving them from others, or at least claiming this, also represented a distancing of themselves from actively choosing such things or being competent to do so. The statement that frequently followed was that any of these products generally lasted for a long time as they made little use of them. Specifically, moisturiser emerged as a deviant product in this context.

I: What do you think about lads then that wear pink and use moisturiser?

H: (immediately) Gay. (...) I'm really sorry but eh, no I just don't want to accept it at all. If they like, if, if they – actually, at the end of the day it's up to them. If they want to do it, then fine. But you won't see me wearing moisturiser. (...) I'm sorry. I mean, thing is – I know, I know, it's a bit of a sad way but, I suppose I've got to, I've got to dislike somebody for something cause I like everybody. I like everybody but I've got to dislike some people.

I: No, that's fine.

H: And I probably, probably in other things, I'm not, I don't feel so strongly about but I really do not feel that a pink shirt should be worn by a man or moist – you know. Unless, they've got skin problems but it's just like, I suppose I've got a stereotypical 'David Beckham' kind of guy in my head. A guy, a pretty boy who thinks 'ooh', you know, 'moist'- there's nothing wrong with his skin – and 'ooh, a bit of moisturiser' (gestures with his hands over his face). Well, probably nothing wrong with his skin cause he wears it, but eh, you know, a very vain kind of guy who really does care what people look, think of him." (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

Hamish presented here almost a protest against men who wear pink and use moisturiser. He changed towards a more permissive stance when he stated that everyone was entitled to their own choices. David Beckham representing the metrosexual ideal for him was subordinated here again. Other themes included the deviance of men's vanity in their efforts to be 'pretty'. While the corrective use of products on the basis of health reasons was acceptable, Hamish described a narrow line between applying moisturiser for this and its aesthetic or 'beauty' purpose. This also resembled findings from Gill *et al.* (2005) who found that men required an instrumental justification and rationalisation for body modifications. To Hamish, moisturiser represented efforts of becoming more attractive with the danger of appearing 'vain'. This was where he drew the boundary, very explicitly. Other examples included Jeff claiming to refuse women's shampoo as he feared receiving 'funny looks' by people on the street. Being more attractive, caring about looks and receiving attention for their attractiveness had deep associations with femininity for informants which was the opposite of what they sought. Hamish immediately classified men who engaged in practices perceived as female as 'gay'.

The concept of 'gay' therefore represented a scale where perceived women's practices were found at one extreme and informants located their practices at the other. For the masculinity they constructed, these practices represented the most un-masculine. Even further, they threatened their masculinity. If masculinity meant anything to them, it was not wearing pink, shopping for clothes in Gap or applying moisturiser. But defining masculinity through what they liked was often more difficult to describe. It was often easier to define what they did based on what they disliked (Banister and Hogg 2003).

They were able to describe those practices that were visible to them, while their own were invisible (Kimmel 2005a, Morgan 1981). These then were also practices they recognised as gendered, while theirs were ungendered. Their practices represented the 'malestream' to them (Hearn and Morgan 1990), the standard or default. Their invisibility was set as a norm against those that were visible. Concepts of 'gay' and women's practices threatened to downgrade this masculine norm. 'Gay' practices were therefore not necessarily rejected because they feared the feminine, but rather because of the threat they posed of becoming visible to others, of losing neutrality as 'unmarked' and invisible. Their reaction was often to revert to gender stereotypes themselves. Informants regularly removed associations with femininity by referring to themselves as rational and instrumental shoppers concerned with 'getting ahead' (Pleck and Sawyer 1974). They claimed only to purchase clothing they needed and did not waste time on browsing. It seemed that these essentialist masculine stereotypes were used as a refuge in relation to their own stigmatising of other men's practices as 'gay'.

Just as masculine practices and capital were agreed collectively, so were the practices that were not masculine. Previous sections described how meanings of masculinity were granted or conferred by other men through continuous games and contests (Gilmore 1990). Masculinity required and was constructed through the affirmation of other men in what Kimmel (1994) described homosocial enactments. As much as masculinity was 'agreed', contested and played for, un-masculinity was equally evaluated and judged by others. In that sense, informants cared for what others thought. They feared these judgements of other men in their evaluation of un-masculine practices. Every struggle, every piece of ground that had been won in the struggle to achieve recognition and hegemonic masculinity had the potential to be reversed by a passing comment or remark. Other men may have had the confidence to claim masculinity in women's practices but for informants, these constituted the opposite of what they sought (Segwick 1995). The overt and often intense display of rejecting deviant practices formed part of this affirmation of their masculinity to others, as they judged and were judged by others

in their groups. Teasing, mocking and labelling practices as 'gay' also represented the ranking and challenging of other men's masculinity. Through this, they monitored each other's practices (Nixon 1992) and shaped what they perceived as normative, invisible behaviour. Claiming not to care about appearances also represented one of these efforts of becoming invisible. Fearing visibility, they reverted back to norms that made them 'safe' (Rinallo 2007).

4.3.3. Becoming invisible

For informants, being visible meant being exposed for their un-masculinity. Visibility related to women and association with women's practices threatened their claim of being masculine. Their uniform of 'jeans, T-shirt and trainers' represented precisely these efforts to remain invisible. Against the notion of caring for looks, going shopping or appreciating branded clothing, informants rejected any of these associations through normative clothing. Their aim was to display incompetence and lack of know-how as opposed to the competence they possessed for practices they favoured. Of course, portraying this incompetence was a skill in itself.

“Again, I pointed out a few [pairs of jeans] to him and he answered once more that they all had a strange cut, coloured stitching, creases on the top, glitter or were ripped which seemed absurd to him. On one occasion he said that the pair of ripped jeans was exactly like another pair that he had accidentally ripped and that probably everybody was thinking that he had bought them in this shop. He would not pay the same price for a pair of ripped jeans as for an ordinary one. He disliked any extra pockets or stitching, nothing that included colours. He preferred plain and simple, nothing obvious. (...) We walked over to the T-shirts and had a look around. I pointed out a few to him and he rejected the majority for various reasons: the first ones looked as though they had 'crystals' or shiny metal plates attached. He would not wear anything shiny.” (fieldnote, shopping go-along with Jason, 6.10.07)

Being invisible was not always easy. As much as Jason claimed not to care about looks, he cared that others knew that he did not care. His ripped jeans were unacceptable for

that reason alone. Shiny plates, creases, extra pockets, even stitching, were similar elements that made jeans visible. The clothing choices available on the high street were often too intricate for informants' tastes. It seemed more complicated to escape the market (Kozinets 2002a) as it seemed to direct men towards more fashion-conscious clothing. The capital associated with these practices was not 'valuable' masculine capital that could gain them respect but it rendered them as visible and gendered. The fear of this visibility translated into the cautious selection of external markers, the display of brands or any sign of competence. The effort that was involved in rejecting, avoiding or disassociating from deviant practices then also formed part of their masculine capital. It further defined their taste and their appreciation for what was masculine, only negatively. My own efforts of dressing in their uniform were equally an expression of 'ungendering' myself. As a result, I felt informants were more open to talking to me, either because I felt I fitted in more or because others saw me as more like themselves. The affirmation conferred through this uniform seemed to foster collective identification.

Shopping go-alongs revealed those shops where they purchased their invisible clothing. Once more, it was interesting to observe that informants often chose the same shops although shopping was not a group practice. Moreover, many of these were shops I had not noticed previously. In the centre of Edinburgh, they were mainly smaller discount shops in shopping centres adjacent to Princes Street. Informants similarly expressed a preference for shopping in Matalan, a large discount store that stocked mainly clothes. Supermarkets such as Asda and Tesco also emerged in some instances. It appeared that even being seen in shops created visibility. Many informants spoke about being uncomfortable in shops. This may have contributed to their preference for large stores or smaller unknown shops. Purchasing clothes on the internet was another alternative chosen by some informants. Through this, they avoided public settings, removing themselves from the scrutiny and judgement of other men. Hamish mentioned the role of sales people in this context:

“H: (...) But if, you know, if you buy convenience foods you go ‘oh my god’. And then, clothes as well, I just, I don’t know. In some ways I’m mostly embarrassed. I hate going in, into places and then, you know, instantly, always instantly, maybe I’m just trying to walk out ‘who the hell this guy is, that looks like a robber’. But I always get hassled by the staff there. ‘Hello Sir, is everything ok’, ‘Yes, everything’s fine’, ‘Would you like to try this on?’ I’m out, you know, I just – urgh. I just hate it. I hate sales people.” (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

This description indicates how informants often felt judged for their appearances, specifically in shops. Their deliberate 'incompetence' in fashionable clothing also led to an appearance that opposed that of fashion-conscious men. In the context of clothes shops, Hamish seemed to become more conscious of this. He described the sales assistants as scrutinising his appearance and possibly viewing him as unsuitable for their shop. Clothing shops created a context where looks mattered, even for men. He did not want to compete with other men in shops over appearances. Neither was he looking for recommendations to improve his look. Clothes shops were certainly not perceived as environments for endorsing informants' masculinity. While clothes shopping represented the most unacceptable type, shopping for other items remained often not recognised as such 'shopping'. Legitimate purchases mainly concerned shopping for items that they related to masculine capital. The purchase of CDs, DVDs and books for example often did not form part of what constituted 'shopping' for them. Similarly, football shirts, sports clothing and some clothing relating to their music taste also required a certain competence that was acknowledged. Wearing football tops allowed them to display their knowledge and allegiance to others. Shopping for football tops was therefore acceptable even though it was generally not a group practice, as when Hamish sought out new football shorts. It seemed that their quest for masculine capital justified these practices and therefore lost their association to women's practices.

Certain brands also emerged as invisible. They were simply accepted along with the default and on that basis not recognised as brands. Similar to Coupland's (2005) study of invisible brands, these brands had become so pervasive that they had blended into

informants' lives. For example, their football teams remained unrecognised as brands. Two additional brands similarly emerged that related to grooming practices.

"P: (...) I've got my Gillette Mach 3 and my gel, shaving gel and stuff. Um, otherwise that's it. Um.

I: Hmm, so Gillette then.

P: Yeah, well, just because it's, well, I don't know, it's just there, isn't it. (laughs) I mean, um, yeah. I was supp-, I suppose any other product is yeah, it's just that. That's what I started first using cause it was, yeah, it's what my dad uses, like, you know, and just saw that's what my dad uses so I used it as well. For everything else it's just exactly the same." (Paul, interview excerpt, 8.6.07)

Paul seemed almost surprised in this instance to realise that he had been using Gillette shaving products all along without knowing any specific reason. Like Paul, informants often mentioned that their fathers had taught them to shave. All informants that were interviewed named Gillette as the brand of their shaving products. While the mention of brands in relation to grooming or clothing would have been avoided or rejected, the brand Gillette was often named without hesitation. Gillette had become almost generic, a synonym for shaving for informants. The second brand was more complex. A number of informants also claimed to use Lynx deodorants or shower gels. It often seemed that when informants mentioned Lynx, they were more embarrassed about it as opposed to Gillette where they seemed comfortable in naming it as their choice. It appeared Lynx had more connotations of a cosmetic or 'grooming' product than Gillette which may have made them less comfortable in justifying their use of these products. Lynx was often commented on for its marketing campaigns. Informants additionally claimed that their mothers or girlfriends bought it for them, which made it easier to disassociate. Yet, Lynx ads were actively watched and talked about within the groups, particularly during televised football games in the pub. This football-related context possibly also transferred more product acceptance. Ads appeared to be accepted by informants for entertainment purposes as they were often exchanged in social contexts, similar to 'war stories'.

As a brand for male cosmetic products, Lynx had become known for its highly creative, witty and ironic ads. Their irony was generally rooted in their theme of presenting regular ‘lads’ who attracted the attention of often model-like women. These men were displayed as using Lynx and becoming the object of desire of attractive women, although it was the women who ultimately appeared to be commoditised in these ads. However, the irony and ambiguity of Lynx ads seemed to communicate a shared sentiment informants could identify with. The general topic of women and sexual attraction was often complicated for informants. A lot of them spoke about being shy and generally uncomfortable approaching ‘the other sex’. They all identified with lacking confidence around women and saw this as a weakness they shared. Talking about these ads appeared to give them confidence. It allowed them to talk about women without insecurities and removed the severity of the topic. In this sense, ads created an ambivalent space where they could tackle their perceived lack of confidence (Stevenson *et al.* 2000). They appeared to communicate a ‘constructed certitude’ (Rogers 2005) which led them to believe in their attractiveness and success with women without changing their appearances, by using Lynx. Yet, the message of the ads seemed to be delivered in a non-patronising way through their highly ironic messages. These ads, and possibly also their products, appeared to confer on them the ability to perform confident masculinities. For some informants they even converted into a source of capital or social currency in their own right as Lynx ads often became the topic of conversation. This may have helped Lynx become a more acceptable brand of ‘grooming’ products.

4.3.4. Negotiating invisible practices

As contexts changed so did the associations with deviant practices that opposed their masculinity. For each context, their behaviour was re-negotiated according to what was

perceived as least masculine. Again, the boundaries were continuously re-set. For example, informants claimed to use deodorant when going to nightclubs. One informant ironically stated that he disliked guys who ‘put on another layer’ of after-shave for nightclub visits. The context of nightclubs specifically seemed to shift grooming and clothing behaviour. Some practices similarly emerged as neither safe nor deviant here. The use of hair gel was one example of this. While using hair gel was permissible, it was also recognised as a grooming effort. It was mainly rationalised in instrumental terms, as keeping hair out of the face.

One specific incident highlighted how informants introduced invisibility into a deviant practice. After a football game in Glasgow against Celtic, we returned to Edinburgh and subsequently the university pub. Shortly after our arrival, the TV screens broadcasted the Eurovision Song Contest, a musical competition between European countries. Informants protested vehemently and initially refused to stay. The contest had run for several decades but in recent years had developed a large gay fan base across Europe. Although this was not commented on by informants, a singing contest of this kind had more effeminate connotations for them. We eventually decided to stay. However, instead of following the songs of each country, informants chose to use the programme to entertain themselves differently.

“It was also a surprise to see how the lads dealt with this programme. Instead of following the songs by each country, Eoin and Michael decided to play a game: whenever a new country presented their song, they each had to name a football player from that country. They took turns in giving names until one of them ran out. They would then have to finish their pint and get a new one. The only country where neither of them could name a player was Armenia. Tom arrived at some point and was surprised to see us watching this particular programme. I asked him whether he did not like Eurovision. He told a story of Hamish and him betting on a song that nearly made it all the way.” (fieldnote, participant observation, 12.5.07)

It was interesting to see how informants became involved in this programme. The occasion was transformed into a football and drinking game which was far more exciting

for them than following the songs of each country. It seemed that introducing a connection to masculine capital had the ability to transform deviant practices into fun.

4.3.5. The meanings of homosocial spaces

We already saw the symbolic meaning of spaces and spatial divisions in relation to other men and their practices. Certain spaces also had homosocial meanings in the sense that they excluded women. These spaces were therefore recognised as invisible or ungendered. A seemingly 'natural' or 'normal' element of masculinity was often fostered in these 'male enclaves' such as sports bars (Sherry *et al.* 2004, Belk and Costa 1998), or in this study places such as pubs, football halls for playing and training or stadia. Women were not necessarily excluded but rather marginalised in these settings. There appeared to be an expectation that women could not appropriate masculine capital in those practices informants engaged in. This marginalisation of women and the seeming lack of gender consciousness emerged in several incidents during fieldwork. The most striking of these occurred in a purpose-built football hall called 'World of Football' on the outskirts of Edinburgh, where the Aberdeen group and friends often played. Playing here presented a change to the regular play in the park. Once, I was invited to join the group for a late-night game. Arriving at 'World of Football', we waited some time for our pitch to become vacant. I asked Jason for the location of the ladies bathroom. Below is the excerpt from the original strip of fieldwork which describes this situation.

“Jason said that I should just go into any changing room as I would find toilets inside. The doors seemed locked at first but when I gave it a push, it opened. I had to open another door then which led into the large open changing area which consisted of one big room filled with wooden benches and coat hangers. One man sat inside and tied his shoes. He was still red in his face from playing and showering. I walked further towards the middle of the room and saw open showers. One look towards the back wall I noticed a row of cubicles but no toilet. I could not see any doors indicating toilets. Starting to feel 'out of place' I left immediately through the same door I had

entered. The thought of accidentally bumping into someone in the shower made me uncomfortable. I walked back to Jason and the others who had walked over to the entrance of our pitch which was in the middle of an alley that went through the centre of the football hall. From this alley all the other pitches were accessed as well. I asked them again about the location of the bathroom, this time specifying that I was looking for the 'ladies' toilets. They replied that they had not known that the changing rooms were for men only without any female bathrooms. They looked around and could not answer my query. There were no female changing rooms or toilets at all in this hall. (...) I asked Jeff who seemed more familiar with the place about female toilets and Andrew answered that they would have some inside the main club house. I had to leave the hall to make my way over to the bathrooms." (fieldnote, participant observation, playing football with Aberdeen supporters, 28.2.07)

The space in this instance further reinforced playing football as a male activity. It seemed normal that there were no female changing rooms because apparently no women played football in these halls. The gendered awareness of informants also emerged. Women had not participated in their football games before and there was no need to consider the location or availability of female changing rooms. These spaces enhanced the notion of their practices as 'naturally' for men and also shaped normative masculine ideals through their opposition to women. In these spaces masculine validation acts took place and masculinities were affirmed by the group (Gutman and Viveros Vigoya 2004). At the same time, the behaviour of informants often shifted in these contexts; we have seen for example how they hugged after games. Similarly, it was permitted for men to dance, sing and undress in pubs where pre-game drinking practices took place. Nightclub settings often also produced more ambiguous and emotional behaviour amongst informants. It appeared that these spaces provided a certain safety as they were approved locations for practices associated with 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Connell 2005). Informants' participation in these practices and their competence may have already communicated their masculinity in part to others. The fear of homoerotic connotations seemed less intense which may have permitted them to change their behaviour (Parker 1996). Spaces such as pubs and football halls therefore provided the setting for expressing and channeling emotions (Horrocks 1998). On the other hand, they also reinforced certain practices as natural for men which led to normative masculine ideals pitted against deviant practices.

4.3.6. Conclusions

In contrast to categories of other men who represented relational masculinities, practices perceived to be for women emerged as unacceptable for informants. These practices seemed to introduce a deviant visibility that threatened their masculinity. Whereas certain practices constructed masculinity, these were recognised as un-masculine and association with them was punished with labelling and ridicule. Informants' practices re-affirmed their collective identity as 'invisible' in a gendered sense. In contrast, engaging in women's practices rendered them visible and vulnerable. Avoiding this gendered visibility led to normative consumer behaviour which involved the careful selection of external markers such as clothing or drinks. Further refuge was also found in expressing stereotyped masculine roles such as the 'man as the rational shopper'. While this may have arguably represented their fear of the feminine, it rather emerged as a fear for their masculinity. Different contexts also shifted those practices that defined 'safe zones' (Rinallo 2007) once more. Knowing which practices would be perceived as deviant in certain contexts and how to avoid, reject or distance themselves from those practices was part of their masculine capital and allowed them to label and monitor others in the group. The notion of informants as rational and instrumental shoppers seemed to disappear in their pursuit of masculine capital where displaying markers of distinction seemed to find more approval. In contrast to deviant contexts such as shops, homosocial spaces emerged in the form of pubs or football grounds. In these settings, seemingly natural consumption practices and normative ideals became re-produced. While these spaces situated practices that validated masculinity, they also seemed to create room for shifting meanings and boundaries of appropriate behaviour. Here, expectations of public and overt rejection of femininity seemed to change again.

Group masculinities and consumption practices seemed to be constantly re-defined and located at the intersection of the feminine/masculine dichotomy along with relational groups of other men and masculinities. The resulting practices that constructed the masculinity of informants seemed to relate to normative ideals, in the sense that they had to be adhered to for avoiding any association with deviance. On the other hand, normative masculinity also related to those practices where informants appeared to pursue masculine capital. The practices that seemed permitted as part of this collective identity often seemed restricted and narrow. Any change or difference may have left a person vulnerable to being put down or labelled by others. This raises questions concerning the role of individuals in the construction of masculinity and consumption meanings.

4.2. Individual perspectives: individual masculine identification and consumption practices

Resonating with Jenkins' (2004) concept of identifying through being 'the same' as others, informants collectively identified themselves and each other as 'the same' through shared practices. At times, however, this created the impression of a lack of tolerance for diversity amongst informants. Where was their individual expression of themselves outside of the 'pack'? Did they always remain within the realm of what was collectively approved and legitimate? Additionally, what was their individual role in creating norms and masculine practices? It emerged that within all these apparently collective, shared meanings of masculinity and agreed norms, informants had their own individual backgrounds, life stories and narratives (Connell 2000a, Connell 2005). Although practices and contexts often constructed normative expectations, incidents emerged which offered insights into the identities of individuals and the idiosyncratic meanings associated with masculinity and consumption practices. Each person had his own way of changing, challenging and contesting group norms. This section is structured according to the themes that summarise their individual behaviour and masculinities. It explains how individuals often differed from normative ideals even as they negotiated collectively shared identities. Taking a closer look at individual perspectives and moving away from the group approach, further insights are offered into the shifting meanings of masculinity and consumption practices.

4.2.1. Individuals, multiple practices and shifting groups

Informants appeared to manage multiple practices and groups that reflected their own particular interests and facets of their identities; in other words, they emerged as agents within their own 'nexus of multimembership' (Wenger 1998). Within the observed groups, some individuals engaged more regularly in activities surrounding music and

films, others displayed a greater interest in playing football, and others enjoyed sports or simply socialising with different groups of friends. Different interests meant that the composition of groups was not fixed but changed according to context, with fluid movement across groups and practices that constructed varying masculinities (cf. Caldwell and Kleppe 2006). Some practices were more concealed than others. Individual informants followed their own interests which often led them away from the groups I observed. They interacted with a range of friends, groups and communities of practice (Wenger 1998). Through these, they constructed their own portfolio or constellation of practices, shaping their own identities. These changing compositions also led to another characteristic of groups. Across practices, each group consisted of a core of closely connected, regular members in addition to the wider group where peripheral friends would join in different activities. Depending on the changing presence of others, individual behaviour also changed. Some informants were often explicit in their interviews about which contexts they preferred: the wider group including individuals from the peripherals or the more intimate, closer core settings. Their different behaviour then equally influenced the construction of masculinity and consumption practices which will reappear throughout this section.

Informants differed in terms of the meanings each activity had for them, and this was related to their individual connections with others. Jeff for example was an active Aberdeen supporter and valued the group for that reason. Andrew from Falkirk did not support Aberdeen but came along to meet his friends who supported Aberdeen. A sense of individual bricolage emerged in how individuals managed their various groups according to activities, practices or interests. Andrew for example had become involved in a group of friends who went to concerts and as a result associated them as his 'music friends'. Another informant organised his friends according to those who liked football and those who did not. In each case, groups came together who shared their interests and became 'the same' in their own way. Individuals expected different practices, behaviour and meanings in each context. However, individuals' identification with

various practices was not always expected to be understood across groups. Several informants spoke about keeping practices apart as each group was different. Some even kept certain involvement secret from others. Individuals were often found to be more flexible or adaptive than groups as they reconciled apparently contradictory practices. While the 'pack' may have had their norms and individuals were expected to conform, individuals often talked about doing so only for the sake of participating in that particular context. Individuals frequently blurred and broke with normative behaviour through their engagement in different groups. These contradictions then also revealed their ability to participate in consumption practices that constructed one version of masculinity in one group despite participating in other contexts that may have constructed this masculinity as deviant. Individuals may not have even been aware of this as they labelled certain behaviour as deviant in one instance and subsequently broke their own rules. Such contradictions revealed their gender identities as complex, layered and fragmented (Giddens 1991).

Keeping these movements of individuals across groups in mind, this section is structured according to incidents where informants were found to adapt to normative masculinity in their own way, followed by contradictions to the norm and finally the active construction, challenging and contesting of masculinity and consumption practices.

4.2.2. Individual adaptations to normative masculinity

Normative masculinity based on collectively 'agreed' consumption practices was often acknowledged by informants in different ways. Some perceived it as a mask or even a shield against gendered 'visibility'. Group norms provided comfort for them. Others also experienced its rigidity, lack of tolerating difference and hence pressures to conform. This perception also varied across practices. This first section describes the various ways that individuals adapted to normative consumption practices.

4.2.3. Being a 'fake' or a 'fraud': apparent acceptance

Invisibility and being accepted by others as a 'normal lad' was important and group practices were a way of achieving this. However, the dominance of normative expectations in collective contexts often represented a constraint on individual choice. Pressures to conform to group norms and practices often left little room for difference, particularly in light of the threat of appearing deviant. Some individuals sacrificed or concealed their own interests for the sake of being seen to identify with collective masculinity. Through conforming to the collective construction of masculinity they received public approval from others. Informants were also found to participate in practices without necessarily sharing the same motivation as others. Some seemed willing to place their individual differences aside, but others also consciously recognised the constraints. In interviews they described this as 'faking' an interest or being a 'fraud'. These informants often seemed to be searching for consumption practices that constructed a collective masculinity they could identify with as an individual. One informant described his behaviour amongst the group of Aberdeen supporters as 'putting on a front'. Deviation from the norm was often observed or described by key informants in interviews. Matt, for example, was a rather marginal member of the Aberdeen group based on his connection with Jeff. He wore a rugby jersey during his interview which immediately made him stand out from the others. Speaking about his individual position within the group of Aberdeen supporters, he started with explaining his reasons for joining the group.

“M: Um, I joined it because, I don't actually, a lot of people join the Aberdeen society cause it's a connection with home. Um, it's, you know, it's one aspect of my life. I don't particularly care about football that much anymore. But maybe at that time I was still sort of, it's interesting sometimes because, it's having that thing in common where you can go and speak to someone about something that's happening in the North East and they'd all relate to it whereas, and that's nothing to do with football, you're basically, most of us there are from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and most of us have grown up with

the same roots in terms of the way our schools are run, in terms of our main city being Aberdeen. We all know the local towns and areas, we all understand the local, um, problems so, (laughs). So if you can relate to each other quite well and, um, and, and I mean I joined the society cause I thought ... for a laugh like, well, not really for a laugh but just sort of 'oh there's something that I've got interest in, I'll just join that'." (Matt, interview excerpt, 20.9.07)

Matt's reason for joining the group was not necessarily his interest in football but rather a search for other people who could identify with 'home'. Similar to other young Scottish students in Edinburgh who were missing a connection to their cultural background, he saw this as an opportunity to connect with others in the same situation. Matt continued to describe how he behaved and felt during his initial participation in the group. In order to do justice to Matt's insights here, a relatively long excerpt has been added:

"M: (...) like if I was with the Aberdeen society sort of, I find it a very masculine, 'uuaar we're men' group and I didn't particularly, all of that, eh, **I play along with it. Cause the only interest in football, like, I played along with the interest in football, you know, whereas I wasn't as big, as interested as I was making out to be.** Like, I can sit there and chat about football. I don't give a s*** about it but I can sit there and chat about it and I can, eh, pretend I know stuff about it which generally I don't, and especially now when I don't even, I rarely, eh, I mean I don't read the sports pages, I don't read the Aberdeen websites, I don't read, you know, eh, I don't. (...) **sort of I don't become someone else because that'd mean that I just sort of put on a front to a certain extent, um, especially in the initial meetings.** (...)

I: What way, what's, what sort of entails putting on a front?

M: (...) **I have in the past definitely put on a front to try and involve myself in the conversation because otherwise you're an outsider, otherwise you're, you won't be part of the group who are all sitting there and all discussing whether, you know, X and Y should go to that football team.** You know, and, and that is, unless I particularly enjoy watching X and Y play football or, um, unless it's specifically related to Aberdeen and even I couldn't name you who Aberdeen has signed all summer so I don't know even that anymore, you know, it wouldn't particularly interest me, wouldn't bother me. (...) I suppose I have in the past pretended that my interests are a lot deeper and sort of, in a way you make them recount their, eh, undoubtedly huge knowledge of football because you know nothing so you don't put on a front but you do know something. You sort of say a small number of statistics you know. So in fact that's the relative knowledge to move the topic onto something you know slightly better about football. Or you sort of just eh, help, help them just tell you how much they know about asking the right questions and that. (...)" (Matt, interview excerpt, 20.9.07, emphasis added)

Matt spoke about various aspects that highlighted his individual behaviour amongst the group of Aberdeen supporters. In the first instance, he referred to them as 'very masculine'. The practices of the group were not 'natural' or normal to him. He recognised the effort involved in 'football talk'. Practices were acknowledged as gendered performances (Butler 1990) that he could not necessarily identify with. He did not share the same interest or drive to better the other person in terms of football knowledge as others around him did. Yet, he knew how to contribute so that others could assume his interest and accept him. He described this as his ability to 'play along'. The 'play' for masculinity emerged less here in the sense of a game or contest, but rather related to the theatrical 'play' (Goffman 1959). Matt 'played along' with normative expectations through 'putting on a front' of masculinity. As part of this, he also played along with the consumption that was involved for participation such as going to pubs, ordering pints of beer and reading Aberdeen fan material, following football news, etc. He recognised that a 'front' or compliance with collective masculinity was necessary to belong to the group and acknowledged these norms as performed through contextual consumption practices. For him, what mattered most were the people around him with whom he could identify. He pretended or 'faked' an interest in football in his search for identification. This 'front' then seemed to relate to an external layer or meaning of collective masculinity. His own meaning behind this front was different.

Of particular interest here is Matt's awareness of the 'front' he puts on. It was even more interesting that others often seemed unable to describe their frustration when they felt compelled to behave in a similar way. Coleman (1996) criticised Goffman's description of gender as conscious theatrical performances. Masculinity for informants similarly seemed more of an unconscious, 'natural' act. Matt was one of the few who became aware of - or was willing to admit to - performing according to masculine norms. Nonetheless, other informants also commented that they felt 'uncomfortable' in certain contexts, mainly when they spoke retrospectively. These feelings often resulted

in them leaving the group. Matt was able to adapt to the contextual norms of masculinity and consumption, compromising on his individual interest in order to fit in with the group. Other informants felt and behaved differently. Sean for example spoke about his experience as a member of the Frisbee club.

“Um, sports, I used to do Frisbee, um, so whenever I’d play Frisbee I’d hang out with the Frisbee people and I still see them from time to time but, but because I haven’t been back, I haven’t actually played Frisbee in about two years – no, can’t be as long as that – but I haven’t played Frisbee in a long time so I’d be a bit of a fraud if I’d turn up all the time. I stopped playing Frisbee but kept going to the social stuff for a while and then stopped doing that as well. Um, but I hang out with a couple of them from time to time, um, and that sort of stuff. But they tend to talk a lot about Frisbee (laughs). (...) And I’ve always said ‘oh, I should try and get back into the Frisbee’ but they’re all a bit too eager. I think football down in the park is more my style, you know, not quite so hardcore. They started training a lot and that put me off. I prefer just to play games and yeah, so football down the park would be better I think.” (Sean, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

Regarding this ‘front’ management, moments of identification took place when similarities emerged and masculinity appeared more ‘natural’ and less laboured. Moments where differences were encountered may have led to a greater awareness of different masculinities. Thus, Sean started to feel uncomfortable with the competitive focus the group had gained. As previously mentioned, competitions played a significant role in the affirmation of masculinity established by groups. However, this was a practice that Sean could not identify with. He continued the social practice, removing himself from the competitive sport, but even this became dominated by ‘Frisbee talk’. It resembled the notion of ‘football talk’. Sean mentioned feeling like a ‘fraud’ for pretending to be more interested than he personally was. The idea of Frisbee as a competitive practice did not correspond with his individual sense of what he as an individual wanted to do or be. Whether he felt inadequate as he did not possess the necessary Frisbee skills or not, he was not motivated to become as competitive as the others. Instead, he preferred the less competitive, more casual practice of playing football in the park. Similar to Matt, it seemed more important for him to accumulate social capital as opposed to playing a competitive sport.

To adapt into groups, it seemed that the capital the individual valued had to be balanced with that of the group. Conformity to group norms may be a common occurrence, but here this emerged specifically in the context of masculinity. Matt also spoke about having to adapt more in the wider group contexts. The norm and expectations seemed stronger amongst larger groups of men. Having to adapt to social expectations equally emerged in incidents where individuals had to acquire capital for participation. Paul's father for example rejected football for its association with hooliganism, but when he came to university his friends took great interest in football. He spoke about having to learn the necessary skills to engage in football talk, such as gathering football results and knowing what questions to ask. While he had to accept football as a social practice with others, he did not watch a game on his own. Football formed part of his social but not his individual identity. This highlighted that informants often conformed according to what they perceived to be expected in changing contexts, groups and practices. They often disregarded their personal interest for the sake of social acceptance. Either consciously or subconsciously, they adapted their behaviour according to a norm or else rejected the practice and group.

Hearing Paul speak about acquiring football skills also reminded me of my own role across groups. I thought of several instances during which I felt compelled to interact in a discussion that I often knew very little about. The purpose of my talk, my interaction, my performance was to be accepted. In my efforts to become accepted as a researcher and a person, I wanted to 'be the same' and along with adapting my clothing I began to take a greater interest in football. However, these instances also made me realise that others around me behaved in a similar way. I was not the only one who was not 'naturally' able to kick a ball or 'talk football'. Normative practices of invisible clothing and drinking beer were part of putting on a front behind which informants could hide individual differences that may have been perceived as deviant. Compliance aimed at the construction of a socially accepted masculinity and being accepted in the group.

Belonging to a group seemed important for giving them confidence and confirming their own masculinity. At the same time it also led to informants such as Matt feeling restricted in their possibility of being themselves.

4.2.4. Individual interpretations of masculinity

The notion that certain consumption practices conferred unambiguous masculinity was also used by informants to introduce their own meanings of what was masculine. Acknowledging this masculine front helped them to behave according to their individual interpretations. This led to several instances of rather ambiguous behaviour. Mainly, informants claimed to comply with a certain group norm but seemed to stretch its meaning, often to the extent of contradicting themselves. Examples of this were found across practices such as when selecting a pub or nightclub, choosing a drink, supporting football teams and purchasing brands. Again, some of this appeared unconscious such as claiming not to care about what to wear when they cared rather a lot. Individual differences mainly emerged in informants' involvement in a variety of groups and practices. Hamish for example told me in one occasion when we met in a more private context that he had joined several other societies, among them also the 'Swing Dancing' society. Only his good friends seemed to know about this and he was keen to keep it that way. He explained that even those friends regularly teased him for his involvement in what was collectively perceived as a deviant practice. His justification or compensation then was to state that dancing allowed him to meet girls whereas his football friends were simply too shy to interact with women. This was his way of legitimising and rationalising his interest in 'Swing Dancing' to his friends. He did however conceal his involvement in wider social groups and was also keen to keep his practices and groups separate.

Other examples of individual differences emerged in the context of ‘grooming’ products. Their consumption was more private and therefore it also seemed easier to deny or cover up any use of products that may have been collectively perceived as deviant. After all, informants felt very strongly about men who used cosmetic products for increasing their attractiveness. My question to informants during interviews about their products was generally met with some hesitation. Some claimed that they did not know the names of their products. When visiting informants, I also had the opportunity to look into their bathroom. One informant possessed no products besides a bottle of ‘Head and Shoulders’ shampoo, a toothbrush and toothpaste. He did not even own a comb. Tom and his flatmates were different. Apart from Paul, Tom was the only informant from the South of England. He was a good friend of Hamish’s but remained peripheral to the group of Aberdeen supporters who considered him to have a rather ‘Yah’ image, partly because of his circle of friends. I interviewed Tom to gain insight into his perspective of the group and also the practices he was involved in. Like other informants, he was reluctant initially to talk about the cosmetic products he used. However unlike the others, Tom was able to provide a long list. He also seemed more aware of the brands of products he used, although he made efforts to display ignorance and a lack of interest. Additionally, he justified his own behaviour by claiming that his flatmates had a similar amount of such products.

After talking extensively about cosmetic and hygiene products, Tom invited me to take a look at what they had in their bathroom. A variety of products lined up in a row beside the shower and covered most of the side of the bath. Each person in the house seemed to have his own specific shampoo and shower gel amongst other cosmetic products. The sink was equally well stocked with a myriad of products. Tom’s initial reluctance to talk about grooming practices was not reflected in the availability I encountered here. His different tolerance in relation to grooming may have been due to his different cultural background and masculine ideal. Nonetheless, he was also hesitant at first to disclose any information and claimed to possess the ‘normal’ amount of grooming products.

Normal appeared to be relative, in this case to his flatmates rather than the group of Aberdeen supporters where I had met Tom through Hamish. Tom was not the only person whose reluctance to speak about grooming products contrasted with their actual grooming practices. Once individuals started describing and naming the products they used, it became clear that while they all saw themselves as 'normal', they were certainly not the same in their tolerance or usage of products. Jason openly admitted to regularly purchasing a brand of women's shampoo, which was not an option for Jeff. One informant even spoke about using a moisturiser although he rationalised this by describing it as a cream that helped him with 'rough skin'. Another informant spoke about using specialty soaps he sourced from fair trade shops through the Internet. What I encountered here seemed part of varying personal cultures. Individuals described their way of reconciling the common understanding that cosmetic products were deviant with their individual interpretation of what was acceptable. Behind the front of masculinity which encompassed the rejection of grooming products, every individual interpreted and embodied normative masculinity differently.

Individual deviation from generally expected behaviour also arose from a variation in taste, including one informant's dislike for alcohol. Alcohol consumption formed an essential part of group practices, offering symbolic benefits such as competition, solidarity, and permission to display weakness. Jeff, a core member of the football group, refused to drink alcohol. As alcohol consumption seemed to play an important part of masculine practices it appeared odd that he still held a respected position in the group. Jeff often spoke about experiencing difficulties with others because of his rejection of alcohol. As he mentioned, 'it marked him out' and being accepted as different was not always easily accomplished. As a result, he faced several tests and trials by his friends who challenged and provoked him to drink. While his position as a non-drinker seemed comfortable now, this was achieved only after a long struggle. Jeff showed fewer moments of weakness or loss of control than others, and his friends were eager to see him under the influence of alcohol. The tests he faced by friends were

challenging his strength of resisting the persuasive power of the group. This strength was also his justification for not drinking through which he commanded respect from others. He equally negotiated his individual choice of not drinking through organising get-togethers in pubs. This was his way of dealing with the norm of expected beer or alcohol consumption and kept him in line with accepted practices. Not only did he find ways to 'agree' with drinking alcohol without actually participating, he also accepted that drinking and being able to drink alcohol was part of legitimate masculinity. This emerged in one particular instance during his interview:

“J: Eh, well, I got together with some guys from school last week.(...) We went and played football, then went to the pub for a few drinks and then went to get a take-away and my friend fell asleep on the table. He was drunk on four pints.” (Jeff, interview excerpt, 18.7.07)

Mocking his friend for weak drinking abilities, Jeff presented himself as accepting the expectation that a young man should drink, but added that he who drinks should be able to 'hold his drink'. Being drunk was a sign of weakness for him. With statements such as this he reinforced his 'strength' as a non-drinker and challenged views of others who perceived it as acceptable to get drunk and behave outside of the boundaries. Jeff seemingly assumed that if a person drank alcohol, they also needed to be able to handle the consequences which his friend did not achieve. Not drinking alcohol may have actually contributed to his masculinity, although he deviated from what others did.

Certain contradictions equally emerged on the collective level. Despite informants' general dislike for England, supporting an English football team as well as their own Scottish team was generally acceptable. Ads featuring athletes from England were typically shunned however. Some informants were more active in supporting English teams than others, as highlighted in the following fieldnote:

“Jeff stated [to support] Liverpool FC, Andrew mentioned Tottenham. Eoin said that if you draw a line south of London, he hated and despised any football team south of that

line. Any team north of that would be acceptable.” (fieldnote, participant observation, watching football with Aberdeen supporters in the pub, 6.5.07)

It was interesting to see the varying individual standpoints and especially Eoin’s reaction. While Jeff’s team was from the North of England, Andrew’s team, Tottenham, had its home in London. Eoin felt uncomfortable with the possibility of supporting any team further south, reflecting again the dislike of Northern Scots for the South of England. The question was whether their dislike for England had to apply to everything or whether the context of football permitted more flexibility. Jeff explained his support for an English team further during his interview.

I: Explain this to me. You’re allowed to support a Scottish team and a team from the Premier League?

J: It depends who you talk to. I was, well I think it was the way I was raised because my granddad and my mum both liked Man United because of Alex Ferguson being in Aberdeen and Man United. And so, when I was little I started supporting them because they did. And then I sort of changed about before I fixed on Liverpool. But some people say ‘no, you can’t’. It’s just, you can, you can only support one team. It sounds like, well, if you support Liverpool, do you support England because of Gerrard, Crouch, Carragher? It’s like, no. Well, for me anyway. I’m quite happy to support Liverpool.

I: And how did you settle on Liverpool?

J: Not really sure, it’s just when I was younger probably helped because they played football I admired, they played football that was good to watch. Eh, the girls liked’em.” (Jeff, interview excerpt, 18.7.07)

The meanings of a football team thus depended largely on the background and upbringing of the individual. Each person had their own story of how they had come to support a specific English team or else had chosen not to. These teams often varied significantly and individuals were far from ‘the same’ in their choices. Michael for example supported Aston Villa as he had experienced the team in a dramatic penalty shoot-out when he was a child. Jason’s justification for following English teams was based on the coverage they received in the media. The English Premiership games were significantly more televised and this was valued since it allowed them to watch more football. Due to the size and funds that English teams attracted, it was also argued that they were able to afford better players and the football was therefore often of better

quality. As Jeff mentioned, family reasons led him to support Manchester United initially, although he eventually settled for Liverpool. He also emphasised later in his interview that he did not support Liverpool for their success. Jeff rationalised his support for the team, however, rather than for individual players. Therefore, when Gerrard and Crouch played for the English national team he would not support them, despite their association with Liverpool. Through this, he sustained his dislike for England represented by the English national football team for example. This was his individual negotiation for keeping the label of England as deviant but also supporting an English team. He went along with the norm of supporting an English team, but not without personal conflicts. Jeff also argued that Manchester United had a natural affinity amongst Aberdeen supporters as Sir Alex Ferguson had previously been the Aberdeen coach. However, Alex Ferguson was from Glasgow and many informants disliked Glasgow for its association with Celtic and Rangers FC.

These examples show us that informants had a sense of what was expected from them as young men in their social context. Certain consumption practices were acknowledged as collectively accepted. However, they were often negotiated and interpreted differently by each individual. Acknowledging the norm or the 'front' seemed to make it easier to bend the rules towards their own interpretations. They did not consider themselves 'frauds' however, but rationalised their consumption drawing on those collective understandings of masculinity. Through this, they remained accepted as 'normal' young men in the face of others, but privately or individually also managed to introduce their own meanings.

4.2.5. Individuals and flexible masculinities

We have seen examples where individuals felt restricted by the need to put on a 'front' when engaging in group practices which were associated with particular norms. Others

used this ‘front’ as a cover for negotiating their individual meanings. Some informants were also found to be very adaptable, shifting between several practices and versions of masculinity. They were aware of collectively accepted practices and understandings as they explained those during their interviews. At the same time, they managed to engage in practices that they themselves had described as deviant. Sean for example described being ‘flexible’ the following way:

“S: (...) I’m quite good at just hanging out with people I think, just fitting in with different groups. ‘cause like, there’s Derek’s mates as well, I’m hanging out with them from time to time, not as much as my own friends, but um... I think just going out on an evening and hanging out with different groups I think, I suppose. But it’s not like I have a skill. (laughs)...” (Sean, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

Although Sean played down his ability or ‘skill’ to be able to adapt to a variety of groups, he saw his broad network of friends as an achievement. In his words, he felt comfortable to ‘hang out’ with people from all backgrounds and was able to negotiate different group meanings and practices. ‘Fitting in’ was therefore not always an act of ‘faking’, but could have been a valued competence that often related to the possession of social capital. Reinforcing Sean’s description of himself, his friend Paul spoke about him during his interview:

“P: There’re some, some people just don’t, you know, you’d be, they feel uncomfortable around other people whereas Sean wouldn’t feel uncomfortable around any of them. So, um, yeah, those type of people that you could, you could go and mingle in the groups.” (Paul, interview excerpt, 8.6.07)

The expression of being comfortable or uncomfortable, mainly in the wider social settings, was also used by Matt. As Paul explained, Sean was a person who could fit into a variety of groups. He was able to present several sides to himself in changing group contexts without feeling compromised in the sense of having to ‘put on a front’. He did not feel conflicted by accepting meanings of masculinity and consumption practices in one setting and changing in another. Hamish was similar to Sean in this behaviour. He also saw himself as able to integrate, adapt and be flexible, mainly

through his communication skills. While those informants who disliked the ‘front’ of collective masculinity seemingly preferred the presence of close friends from the core group, Hamish often invited more people to join into group activities and enjoyed the wider social settings. His ability to adapt to various collective understandings of masculinity and acceptable consumption practices emerged in various instances. For example, Hamish often met with Tom to talk about football or other topics of interest. Tom and his group of friends, who were mainly English, did not mix often with the group of Aberdeen supporters. Hamish kept both groups mostly separate and changed contexts individually. The following examples provide an insight of how acceptable practices changed.

“Hamish decided to go for a pint of Tennents at first which was a usual drink for him. Tom had been drinking for quite some time at this point. He had ordered a pint of Grolsch, one of his favourites. We stood at the bar and looked at the various types of beer they had on offer. Tom started mentioning that when he had been away on holidays recently, he enjoyed trying some of the brands of beer he had not tasted before. (...) He [Tom] decided to buy a pint of Hoegaarden for both himself and Hamish, thinking that this would be the best treat for any man. He wanted to enjoy himself. I saw this as another attempt to show Hamish that choosing different types of beer was ‘the right’ thing to do, to convince him about his beer expertise and educate him about good brands of beer (as opposed to what he was normally drinking). He may have also wanted to change his regular behaviour of buying the cheapest lager in the house. Elton came over after Tom had ordered and pointed out how expensive Hoegaarden beer was. Even the barman mentioned the price of the beer before pulling the pint. He explained that a lot of people would order it but when he told them the price they often rejected it. Instead, he now informed people from the start that this beer came with a premium price. (...) We started looking at the beer ‘menu’ in the pub and one particular drink was very heavily advertised in the pub – a strawberry-flavoured beer called Fruli. Hamish’s subsequent response to all this beer talk was his decision to buy a round of Fruli beer for himself and Tom which further reinforced the idea that he had converted to trying new things and be more adventurous in choosing different beers, even if only for that night.” (fieldnote, participant observation, meeting with Hamish, Tom and his friends in the pub, 6.6.07)

This incident was one of many during which informants shifted their regular behaviour and adapted to the practices of others. Tom demonstrated his beer expertise by choosing a pint of ‘Hoegaarden’, whereas Hamish would have normally ordered a pint of Tennents, as he initially did. When interviewed, he also expressed his preference for

Tennents lager. However, following suit and trying 'exotic' beers, Hamish stepped out of his 'safety zone', signalling acceptance of Tom's appreciation for beer and accepting different beers as a legitimate area for himself, if only in this context. Hamish deviated from behaviour that would have been expected of him in the presence of his Aberdeen supporter friends. This incident was one of many occasions where individuals changed their setting and along with this changed their practice. For Tom, drinking the cheapest lager in the pub was not part of what he understood to be 'normal'. Instead, he found it more valuable to express knowledge and expertise in beer brands. Tom's different cultural background may have played a role again in his identification of what practices he deemed appropriate for him as a young man. He enjoyed more unusual types of beer, and further, even labelled the consumption of ordinary, cheap lager as less competent during his interview. Interestingly however, Hamish accepted Tom's expertise and changed his own norms of what he defined 'normal' for this particular shared experience with Tom.

Another incident between Tom and Hamish related to their individual fashion-consciousness. Individuals were already described as more literate in reading fashion symbols, styles and brands than they admitted to in front of others. They required this competence to be able to know what to avoid so that they would not be considered deviant. In general, informants claimed they did not care what they wore, and they frequented pubs where it was not important what they looked like. Their fashion competence would have never been made explicit in front of others. Hamish also spoke about this very clearly during his interview, which made the following incident more surprising:

“After dinner we decided to go to the pub. The lads chose the Tron after some deliberations about where to go. I suggested the Bank due to cheap student offers but Hamish mentioned that he would not be able to go to places like these due to his appearance. The Bank was 'too grown up' for him. Tom suggested Beluga but Hamish declined again. He could not go anywhere 'fancy' as he had been playing football all day in the Meadows and had not had a shower. He stated that he was still dressed in his

‘Sambas’, referring to his shoes. I had the impression that he wanted to display his fashion-consciousness to Tom considering he had worn Adidas Samba shoes for some time. However, Hamish had shown me the sports discount shop where he had bought his shoes. They were Umbro and appeared to be a more economic version of the ‘real’ Adidas Sambas. I was surprised to hear him dropping that name after he had expressed such unawareness and dislike for fashion and brands. Although his shoes were not ‘the real thing’, it seemed like a way for him to talk himself ‘fashionable.’” (fieldnote, participant observation, meeting Hamish and Tom for dinner and drinks, 26.5.07)

In the presence of his friend Tom, Hamish notably changed his performance and presentation management (Butler 1990, Goffman 1959). As opposed to not caring about fashion, he now consciously classified his trainers as ‘Sambas’. He portrayed more fashion competence than he may have in different circumstances. He also read this expected fashion-consciousness from the situation. Tom’s suggestion of the bar Beluga represented a more upmarket choice than the pubs Aberdeen supporters normally frequented. Instead of rejecting the pub because he disliked it, Hamish claimed not to be sufficiently well dressed in his ‘Sambas’. With this, he expressed his lack of presentation at this point, but also pointed out that he was aware of fashionable brands and styles. He seemed like a different person who focussed on other interests than in the presence of his Aberdeen friends. Without appearing conflicted, he was able to adapt to different norms perceived within the context and displayed competence by naming clothes brands.

These shifting meanings and practices seemed at times difficult to comprehend for informants in different groups. This mainly emerged when different practices and groups overlapped. One evening, Tom and some of his friends joined Hamish who was initially surrounded by fellow Aberdeen supporters. Most of the Aberdeen group left the pub after watching a game of football. The arrival of Tom and his friends may have also been the reason for their departure. Michael stayed longer and put on his jacket when he was about to leave. In this moment, Hamish commented that he liked his jacket and asked where he had bought it. Having endured visible embarrassment with this question, Michael laughed and silently answered ‘Next’. He was notably startled and uncomfortable with being commented on his clothing. It was apparent that he was

reluctant to engage in a conversation about this topic with a male friend in this social setting.

It seemed that Hamish wanted to present Michael as fashionable to Tom's friends. On the other hand, Hamish also wanted to appear confident to talk about clothing around Tom. This seemed to create a misunderstanding between Michael and Hamish. Michael seemed confused and embarrassed to talk about 'jackets' in this context. It appeared that he could not understand that Hamish started a conversation on the topic of clothes. He may have perceived this as an attack, as an effort to make him stand out. Informants generally did not want to stand out based on external markers. Michael seemed unable to accept the topic of clothes as appropriate with Tom's friends. His idea of which practices were acceptable for a young man in this context did not seem as flexible as Hamish's. Hamish on the other hand was often respected for his social confidence and his ability to approach people. At the same time, it was these and other incidents that gave him a more ambiguous image amongst Aberdeen supporter friends. In general, these incidents highlighted how some individuals seemed more willing to adapt to other versions of masculine capital and consumption practices.

All these examples highlighted how individuals behaved in wider group contexts as opposed to smaller core groups. In these settings there often seemed to be less room for ambiguity as informants tended to conform to what counted as normative masculinity in these contexts. Underneath this 'front' of masculinity however, their individual understanding or behaviour often varied. Meanings of masculinity rather emerged based on different personalities, backgrounds and individual narratives. Based on their personal interpretations of contextual masculinities they also portrayed their individual 'identity capital' (Côté 1996) through their adaptability. Every individual tackled contextualised meanings of masculinity differently, relating these to his own sense of self. The following examples describe further examples of individuals as active producers of practices and meanings of masculinity.

4.2.6. Contradictions to normative masculinity

Some instances emerged where individuals felt comfortable going against the behaviour that may have been generally expected of them. This may have also been why some informants preferred the more intimate and closer core group settings. Matt explained this during his interview:

“M: (...) If I’m having a good night out, you know, it would generally become a great night out, it would generally be with a certain set people. It’ll be with, um, friends from you know, the same sort of friends that I know from home, from school or coming from societies. I’ll probably be with them as opposed to the wider group of, you know, school friends or the wider group (...) of Aberdeen football. It’ll be with the, the, I’ll be with a couple of them from each one that I’m particularly good friends with, um, and then I’ll go and, eh, and then, and I’ll go and be me, um. I don’t know, I’ll go and be more – not, not necessarily more natural but it’ll feel more comfortable.” (Matt, interview excerpt, 20.9.07)

In these smaller group contexts, individuals knew each other more on a personal level and had come to accept their differences. It seemed that they had moved from being vetted or validated by ‘putting on a front’ to another layer of the individual who was able to ‘do’ masculinity his way. They had earned each others’ trust that they were ‘normal’ young men in any of the practices they personally engaged in. Hamish for example only spoke to his ‘Swing Dancing’ to friends who knew him more intimately. Relating this to my own path, I felt I had also become closer to some individuals who gradually got to know me more for who I was as an individual. Moreover, on this individual level, gender seemed to become more removed from sex. On a wider group level my ‘front’ may have appeared to others as a tomboy, as a female adapting masculine capital (Skeggs 2004). In closer group contexts, I felt more accepted as an individual without being judged for the practices I engaged in.

4.2.6.1. *“Home and Away”*

Through the beer society, I initially got to know younger informants who had just commenced at university, specifically Karl, Ewan and Lars. Although I did not progress towards further participation in their practices, I got to know Ewan better. He invited me to their student residences where I had the opportunity to talk to him about his personal interests. As our talk continued, we spoke about activities with his friends. The majority of practices he spoke about resembled the shared practices of other groups of informants. However, I was surprised to hear him mention that Karl had introduced him to watching the Australian TV series ‘Home and Away’. Ewan explained that Karl had followed the show when he had lived at home and that he and his friend now regularly joined him. As he was talking, he was visibly embarrassed to be mentioning their ‘vice’. I had not followed the TV show and therefore knew little about it. My impression was that it resembled the popular TV show ‘Neighbors’. Nevertheless, the way he spoke about this practice was different to when he mentioned football or his interest in music. I discussed ‘Home and Away’ with other informants, mostly in wider group settings. It emerged that it was perceived as a TV show for ‘more immature kids’ or for ‘girls’. Any normal young man would certainly not watch it or else not admit to it in public. I also connected with Ewan, Karl and Lars through Facebook and saw their extensive lists of interest in music, films and TV shows. Amongst those, none had included ‘Home and Away’ as part of their favourite TV shows. All this contributed to the notion that it did not form part of their public, social profile or identity although following the series was a regularly shared practice. As others suggested, this was not a practice they would have shared lightly in the wider group context.

Certain activities seemed practised with different people and in different settings. Additionally, admitting to activities that may have been ambiguous seemed to be reserved for closer friends only. The risk of being laughed at or misjudged by the wider group seemed daunting. It was also interesting that Ewan spoke about accepted

practices prior to admitting that he watched 'Home and Away' with his friends. These three friends accepted the same 'deviant' interest which also seemed to create a greater bond of intimacy amongst them. They got to know each other's personal activities and their individual meanings outside of the boundaries of accepted norms and not just what was allowed to be talked about in the wider group. This emphasised the idea that the social and collective boundaries, normative and hegemonic masculinity were rather a front that had to be accepted for the purpose of social charades. Their entries in Facebook reinforced their public image as a normal young man. Behind this front (for example in the form of Facebook), individuals focused on their own meanings, their own ideas of what was acceptable for themselves. It was a sign of trust to reveal to others some of the more 'deviant' sides of their personal interests. Consequently, understanding by others often led to greater solidarity amongst individuals. Karl's interest in 'Home and Away' became an accepted part of his identity amongst good friends.

Other examples closely related to this of 'Home and Away'. TV shows often appeared to be a difficult and contested topic. During other encounters in different groups, individuals admitted to being fervent followers of 'Hollyoaks', a UK show in a similar teen genre to 'Home and Away'. Incidents in interviews also highlighted the difference for individuals between speaking 'on' or 'off the record'. Certain things seemed easier to admit to than others.

"I: Ok. Um, right, tell me a little bit more about sort of TV. You already said you liked – what did you say you again – oh 'Neighbors'.

J: Ah, I don't, I don't put it, watch it specifically but in the last month or so I was usually lying around when it was on. I don't really, uff, I watch football if it's on TV. And really apart from that there's not really anything I watch regularly. There's just that. (pause) 'Simpsons', when it's on. But again, I don't, I don't really plan my life around TV. If I'm here I usually, if, I see what's on and if nothing's on, I listen to the radio more than I watch TV or listen to one of my CDs." (Jason, interview excerpt, 28.5.07)

Before the recorder was switched on, Jason had mentioned to me that he liked the TV show 'Neighbors'. However affirming this officially on the record during the interview seemed more difficult for him. There seemed to be a certain shame in admitting to specific practices that individuals enjoyed and engaged in as they may have felt out of line with their wider public presentation. Similar incidents emerged with other informants and their taste for films. Andrew spoke about his favourite horror films as the recorder was switched on and only after our interview mentioned the romantic comedies he liked. 'On' and 'off the record' may have also related to disclosing information in the smaller core group compared to wider social settings.

4.2.6.2. "S Club 7"

Specifically in connection with a taste for media various contradictory behaviours were observed. In the following example we can see how accepted practices and normative masculinity initially dominated collective activities. This instance also involved a notable break from the norm. The episode involved mainly informants from the football group. Most of them were associated with the Aberdeen network although Jeff and Michael were the only active supporters. Michael had sent me a text message to come along to the last disco night of term organised by the university on campus. He frequently went to these organised club nights and was looking forward to the last one this year. His flatmate also joined us. Jeff and Andrew had also mentioned it to me at our previous pub meeting. When we met in the queue outside the disco, we saw that they had brought Matt along. I had not known Matt very well at this point as he had been a less active Aberdeen supporter this year. The following excerpts summarise the special occasion of that night.

“As this was the last day of term, there had been some 'special guests' invited to the nightclub on campus. Particularly Matt joked about being excited to see the live act, Bradley, one of the members of the boy-girl group S Club 7. He sarcastically mentioned

that this was actually the only reason he had decided to come along.” (fieldnote, participant observation, club night with the football group, 23.3.07)

Matt evidently announced to the group that S Club 7 and the featured performer Bradley was not acceptable music for him. The others echoed in agreement to his ironic comments. Through this, he seemed to set the boundaries of accepted practices. As the evening continued and several measures of alcohol were consumed, particularly Andrew and Matt started to become more talkative about music they had listened to when they were younger. They admitted to purchasing CDs they now considered embarrassing. We remained at our table, drinking and talking for some time, when the music paused.

“They announced Bradley from S Club 7 on the stage. Crowds appeared screaming from the corners behind us and ran towards the dance floor. Most of them were girls. Once Bradley started his performance, the people rushing towards the front resembled a stampede. I could see Andrew and Matt getting enthusiastic too, leaving all their previous jokes and banter aside. Equally excited, they also left for the dance floor dragging Jeff along.” (fieldnote, participant observation, 23.3.07)

I was surprised to observe this contradictory behaviour. After laughing and pointing fingers at this singer all evening, Matt in particular seemed suddenly enthusiastic, just like others around him. Once they returned, they were inseparable on the dance floor for the remainder of the evening. One of the results of this shared experience was that breaking the ‘rules’ seemingly brought us closer together. They had revealed a ‘crack’ in their masculine front without losing respect from others. However, to break the ‘rules’ they also had to be established. Matt had initially reinforced collective meanings before the disco had started. This may have helped him remove any potential ambiguity or association with deviant practices. In return, Matt sharing his understanding for what was expected of a young man seemed to open the possibility of bending or even breaking these rules. While this episode emphasised again that norms were recognised by informants, it also highlighted that certain contexts permitted contradictory behaviour. These instances created the impression that individuals were also able to deconstruct the boundaries they had acknowledged themselves. As a result, Matt

changed the group practice. It emphasised the role of the individual as both product and producer of meanings of masculinity and consumption practices (Edley and Wetherell 1996). It was in their own hands to accept or reject what they perceived as expected behaviour.

Equally interesting was also that, again, this incident occurred in a smaller group of close friends as opposed to the wider group. It emphasised that these smaller settings recognised individual differences without attaching labels such as masculine or feminine to practices. Essentially in both situations the ideals of hegemonic masculinity were challenged through their collective engagement in seemingly deviant consumption practices. In this second example, the front layer of masculinity may have also dropped in the context of alcohol consumption. This possibly justified their contextualised behaviour which may have normally been perceived as over-stepping the boundaries. However, Jeff did not drink any alcohol. These contexts thus allowed the whole group to join into 'deviant' practices and display contradictory behaviour, if only temporarily. In that sense, closer groups and alcohol consumption may have also provided the space for 'identity vacations' (Thompson and Holt 2004). Individual difference was not only accepted in these instances, but affirmed collectively. This also emphasised however that strong stigmas were attached to certain practices under different circumstances.

4.2.7. Active construction of hegemonic masculinity by individuals

In previous examples, informants recognised that some of their individual practices may have been interpreted as deviant, and these were concealed or only expressed in the presence of close friends. Some group norms relating to masculinity were contested or challenged by individuals. However, there were occasions where individuals were observed to be active in pursuing difference and presenting their own ideas of what practices were masculine. They did not consider their different understanding of

practices as a potential weakness, but rather challenged the hegemonic norms that others appeared to have accepted.

Individuals often attempted to become experts in practices the group recognised as legitimately masculine. Their own interests, backgrounds and personalities led them to accumulate a variety of skills they introduced into the group. They all had their own motivation to become more competent or pursue a skill they perceived as legitimate for themselves. As each individual was recognised for their expertise and carved their niche, each practice and context produced different leaders. For example, Michael was considered by everyone to be an exceptional football player whereas when it came to social interactions such as watching football in the pub or going out to nightclubs, he was the shyest individual in the group. In these instances he often became complicit and went along with the perceived group norm of the context. Jeff did not drink alcohol but rather than letting this have an impact on his social interactions, he took matters into his own hands. He was generally the person to organise meetings and nights out which also gave him some authority to decide the activity for the group. In choosing the activity, he also established himself as a leader as he presented to others what they, as young men, were supposed to do. His friends in turn followed his choice and affirmed his taste. This way, each person brought a certain skill, knowledge or capital in general to the group that shaped their role and position. As groups grew together, everyone developed their acknowledged contextual leadership and practices. Everyone was also somewhat aware of the potential challenge of others. Michael was not the only skilled football player and although there was rarely any threatening rivalry amongst informants, other group members often highlighted their achievements or successes in football games too. We have already seen several examples of the competitiveness individuals displayed in group contexts. This competitiveness or challenging of one another also shaped meanings of masculine consumption.

There often seemed to be a struggle between individuals for contextual leadership as expressed through various contests. The Aberdeen group frequently seemed to have acknowledged individual boundaries in the various contexts and practices they shared. More incidents emerged in other groups where acceptance of practices as masculine was challenged. One specific encounter produced insights into the role of individuals in constructing and claiming hegemonic masculinity. In this incident a variety of groups overlapped, along with meanings of masculinity and individual leaders. It occurred at the joint Christmas party of the beer and pizza society which took place in a popular pub in the city centre. I spent most of the evening with two informants from the pizza society I had become acquainted with, Ricky and Robert. Through them, I also got to know their friend from university, Angus, who was also from Aberdeen. Angus occupied a special position in this network of friends. Although his practices included competitive sports and drinking large volumes of alcohol, he also believed that a man should be attractive and make the most of his looks. This also involved the use of cosmetic products such as moisturiser and dressing well. He was the only informant who claimed to be happy to shop in Gap and Topshop for example. Robert and Ricky accepted him for this mostly because he could 'pull it off'. Angus generally exuded confidence in social settings and this allowed him to engage in what appeared to be deviant behaviour without losing any claim of masculinity.

At some point during the Christmas party we were joined by Ricky's friend Roy and his group of friends. Roy emerged as very confident and successful in persuading the group to drink Tetley's beer for the remainder of the evening. This already seemed suspicious as Tetley's was an ale, not a lager. From that moment, he established himself as leading the group in their topics of conversation. He was also the person who produced most of the jokes that were responded to with laughter by others. Later that evening Angus arrived from another Christmas party in a kilt and white T-shirt. His appearance commanding some attention, it took little time before interaction commenced between Angus and the boisterous Roy.

“At one point, Angus asked Roy where he had bought his jeans as he mentioned he would like to get a similarly loose and ‘baggy’ pair. Roy replied that he normally only bought cheap jeans and refused to tell him where he had bought them. It seemed as though he wanted to play down the fact that somebody spoke to him about clothes. His answer was not satisfactory for Angus. He asked him again, this time managing to make him appear as if he was unable to know what clothes were good and which were not. He laughed at him for his incompetence in clothes, thus leaving him in a somewhat vulnerable position. Roy was neither willing to talk about this topic nor to be exposed in front of the group. Both seemed sufficiently confident that they were in the right. However Angus left Roy with a rather unconvincing image after all his previous banter.” (fieldnote, participant observation, beer and pizza society Christmas party 23.11.06)

Roy here represented the general expectations that clothing was not a topic suitable for discussion in wider social settings amongst his friends. He also played down any effort that may have been placed into his appearance. Any competence in clothing was rejected by him. Angus on the other hand presented his competence and taste for clothes with confidence. This transformed Roy’s response into a perceived lack of competence. In this instance, it did not matter whether Angus spoke about clothing or moisturiser. He was able to present his expertise with confidence, making the others look weak. Based on that, he also established a different ideal through practices they may not have expected.

Angus revealed in this instance that it required confidence to be masculine. Confidence was often the capital that characterised contextual leaders. Here, Angus presented the argument that the right clothing was part of being a young man. Confidence was also the reason for pursuing more football statistics, searching for more information online and watching more football games. Being confident in the meaning of consumption practices led them to claim masculinity. In the above scenario, Angus’ confidence may have just convinced others that a young man should look attractive and dress well. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of consuming towards ‘being’ masculine rather than ‘having’ objects to portray masculinity (Shankar and Fitchett 2002). Without confidence, the possession of capital, knowledge or products may have had little value.

Some informants were less confident in claiming masculinity for consumption practices outside the norm, requiring affirmation from the group. It required secure identities to display individual meanings of masculinity and practices to others and claim masculinity as Angus did. There was a perceived insecurity about which practices constituted masculinity and which did not. Confidence was therefore mostly built through collectively accepted consumption practices. Lack of confidence may have also been the reason for retreating into normative practices or remaining within smaller groups that accepted individual difference. Very few informants sought to challenge prevalent masculinity with their individual meanings and practices as Angus did.

Each individual therefore had his own strategy for dealing with normative collective expectations and reconciling or justifying them with their own identity and practices. Those informants who were flexible and adaptable tended to be contextual leaders in their own way. Their social capital allowed them to change their behaviour according to masculine meanings as they were constructed in each context. They were able to 'be' masculine in all its ambiguity and contradictions across practices. This may not have made them leaders in each context as we saw in the 'Hoegaarden' example involving Hamish and Tom. However, they were also admired for their social capital and the ability to communicate with a variety of people. This was not always without risking their credibility in some instances as we saw in the episode where Hamish asked Michael about his jacket. At the same time, they were respected for their confidence to 'be' masculine in all its contradictions in wider social settings. As Paul explained about his friend Sean, he had the ability to fit into any group, small or big. Wider social settings however often seemed more difficult for others.

4.2.8. Conclusions

We have seen how individuals actively produced and contributed to meanings of masculinity and consumption practices across contexts. The analysis highlights the complex interaction between the various masculine meanings in groups and multiple, fragmented constructions of individual selves. Informants were aware of collective meanings of masculinity. While they perceived pressures to conform, they also negotiated their own interpretations and could be flexible in identifying with various, often contradictory, masculinities. Each context and practice changed the group composition and involved individuals in different roles as they constructed and 'agreed' to masculine meanings. In the example of Angus entering the group, we saw how one individual had the ability to challenge the meanings of which practices were masculine and 'pulling off' possibly deviant behaviour, at least for himself. Matt also persuaded his close friends to dance to S Club 7 amongst other deviant 'cheesy pop' while Karl and his two friends watched 'Home and Away'. This was their way of balancing 'deviant' practices with socially acceptable masculinities. Despite an apparently clear-cut and monolithic masculine 'front' for each context, individuals found their own ways to introduce ambiguity and manoeuvre their selves around it. These examples described what Jenkins (2004) referred to as the internal-external dialectic of identification. Masculine identities were continuously negotiated between external, collective meanings of masculine consumption practices and internal, idiosyncratic interpretations and negotiations. The external and internal described the various layers of masculinity and how these were constantly constructed through interactions in practices.

4.3. The role of banter in the construction of collective and individual masculinities and consumption practices

Banter can generally be described as the use of humour, irony or sarcasm in conversations (Lyman 1987). Fine (1987) commented on the joking relationships between men in male-dominated work environments and found that women were often excluded from practices as they were unable to understand or reciprocate banter. Men's humour often appeared to be offensive and discriminatory in these contexts. Gill *et al.* (2005) similarly described the use of banter amongst men in their study as 'humorous, defensive or competitive' (p. 42). In this study, banter often formed part of social interactions. It emerged as the cultural discourse of these young men, communicating various meanings of masculinity and consumption on both collective and individual levels. Banter was sought and expected in any group interaction; the quality of encounters was graded according to whether 'banter was had' and being good at banter was considered a positive attribute. Banter represented fun or play to informants, and it seemed part of 'doing' and 'being' masculine through 'talking' masculine.

Some instances of labelling and name-calling were already mentioned as part of the collective identification of informants. Further analysis also showed that banter allowed individuals to introduce their own ideas of masculine consumption practices without having to step out of the 'safe zone'. Its ambiguity made space for a multitude of interpretations, and irony and sarcasm always provided 'a way out'. Banter was the discourse that reflected the negotiation of contextualised masculinities and meanings of consumption in both the collective and individual sense: in other words, it was a form of language that gave further insight into the internal-external dialectic of identification. Through banter, individuals constructed their situated masculinities and simultaneously shaped and were shaped by wider collective understandings of masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 1996). Banter also related these contextualised masculinities to the various consumption practices.

The importance of banter in group interactions emerged initially without necessarily any relation to consumption. Verbal duels were often observed amongst informants, frequently ending with one calling the other 'gay'. As mentioned earlier, with this they did not necessarily refer to them as homosexual. Rather, they sought to decrease their claim and status as masculine (Cameron 1998). Banter also depended on the presence of others. Smaller and more intimate groups seemed to produce different types of banter than wider groups. Competitions and contests that related to the construction of collective masculinity were filled with banter. As informants frequently talked about seeking out banter in interactions, I asked them about its meaning during interviews. Tom's description summarised and echoed the accounts of other informants.

"T: (laughs) Well, it's a flat of guys. We all have funny cereals. Today I just borrowed my flatmates cereal. A lot of guys would do the same, it's just banter.

I: Explain to me banter. Everybody uses the word banter.

T: I guess banter could be defined as play. I guess it's, eh, going back to the word cheekiness, I guess it's just where you, you're having a 'laugh', again, smiling – winding someone up, that's perhaps what you could call a bit of banter, horseplay, I'm not sure it might be-

I: What's 'winding someone up'?

T: Getting a reaction I guess.

I: Hmm, ok. (pause)

T: So if I said something, somebody might provoke them to say something, remember, they might say something funny back, whatever. And then you get this, you've got rapport. So it's just...

I: Hmm, ok. And can you get a wrong answer, can you get a wrong reaction?

T: I think to get to that stage to be able to do that you need to have, you need to know someone quite well to be honest. If you, if you just suddenly said something to someone on the street, you, you're not, do you know what I mean? You're not going to get the same closeness with someone on the street. They're going to think you're a weirdo, they're not going to understand. But if you know someone...

I: So you'd have more banter with somebody that you know than with somebody that you don't know?

T: (pause) Eh, in theory, yes. But then if you're at a football match or you're somewhere and you can just talk to the guy next to you or whatever, you still have banter." (Tom, interview excerpt, 29.5.07)

This description of banter gives an initial insight into the various types of banter and how it may relate to consumption. As Tom stated in the beginning, 'we all have funny

cereals'. Even the use of cereals became the basis for banter amongst the young men sharing a house. As we will see, the purchase of certain products often rendered a person vulnerable to 'slagging' or being picked on. Tom defined this as play or as 'winding someone up'. This involved 'playing with meanings' as it always contained a certain ambiguity or half-truth. 'Winding someone up' was explained as provoking someone with the aim of getting a response. In several instances, individuals were 'wound up' for deviant consumption practices as a way of testing their response. Similar to Lyman's (1987) account of joking relationship amongst men in a fraternity, it often seemed that banter tested their commitment to legitimacy and masculine norms. Banter questioned the masculinity of others, not least by examining their ability to reciprocate. Acceptance and understanding of someone's banter triggered a response, which then produced insights into individual interpretations and confidence levels. The give-and-take of banter helped individuals get to know one another better, or as Tom mentioned created 'rapport'. Banter therefore had the ability to construct and communicate 'closeness' amongst people. Tom referred to a second example of banter in the football stands. Whereas two strangers on the street could hardly share banter, a group of football supporters, even if strangers, could 'have a laugh'. The shared activity of watching a football game created the context where banter was possible although individuals may have hardly known one another. However, this banter did not lead to personal rapport but rather picked up expected norms and played with stereotypes. This kind of 'play' equally contained a shared sentiment, based on collective acceptance of football culture, norms and expectations.

In the course of the analysis, four inter-related types of banter emerged which are further explained below. In the first instance, banter took place in wider group settings (such as in the football stands) relating to socially accepted norms of masculinity. Group banter often located and labelled deviant consumption practices and thus carved out the shared collective understanding of 'us'. This banter directly or indirectly policed meanings of masculinity. Banter towards or with relational others was equally observed to refer to

categories of other men. This has been classified as banter that further marked 'us' as the same. Stories of confrontations and contests with other groups of men often formed part of this discourse.

The first set of descriptions considers how banter was directed against groups of relational other and pointed at practices of deviant 'other'. This often also took place in the wider group settings. The second descriptions of banter explain how it created rapport in more intimate core groups. The first account highlights the importance of 'one-up-man-ship' in competing and differentiating oneself in accepted consumption practices. The second example offers insights into where banter indeed created rapport through communicating acceptance of individual differences, identities and consumption meanings.

4.3.1. Banter in the wider group context: creating collective identities

The following paragraphs explain how banter within groups constructed and played with collective meanings of masculinity and consumption practices. In these instances, banter often reinforced normative or culturally hegemonic ideals of masculinity and group members became complicit in (re)affirming these.

4.3.1.1. *'Policing' banter*

The topics and subjects that were regularly used to create banter in groups related closely to collectively accepted, apparently objective, meanings of masculinity. It appeared that banter influenced collective boundaries in terms of which consumption practices were accepted as masculine, most importantly through defining those that were deviant. This type of banter then aimed at presenting to others their understanding of

masculine practices and commitment to collective norms of masculinity. In these instances, individual informants continuously (re)created and (re)produced hegemonic ideals, performing socially expected consumption practices while expressing their rejection for others. Although these jokes shifted as individuals joined groups or practices changed, socially accepted meanings of deviance often remained firm. Through the use of irony and sarcasm, they were continuously constructed in laughing at consumption associated with the 'other'. Deviant consumption practices were associated most notably with subordinated gender categories (Connell 2005) as opposed to the default, hegemonic ideal. These were mainly feminine and less masculine categories, often expressed in the label 'gay'. Banter then was also used as a way of putting somebody in their place through questioning their masculine status. The first role of banter therefore, policing banter, highlighted how boundaries of masculinity were regularly reaffirmed and constructed collectively through sanctioning and threatening gendered visibility. Nobody wanted to appear 'deviant' and be made 'visible' in the wider group context, and this made normative masculinity and practices into safe havens.

The type of banter exchanged in these contexts often related to pointing the finger at deviant practices associated with women as outlined previously. For example, the idea of wearing pink became a primary subject of banter. In the following passage, Jeff describes an incident where banter was used to point out deviant behaviour and subsequently presents his own stance to the topic of 'pink'.

I: Ok. What do you like...

J: I wouldn't wear pink for one thing anyway. And when we were on holiday my uncle and, I think it's like my mum and auntie's third or second cousin or something, were on holiday with us. So my uncle and this second cousin's husband were wearing pink T-shirts and me and my Dad were taking the p*** out of them.

I: And what did they say?

J: Just laughed. But I would, well, I wouldn't wear pink. I have purple ties but that's just, and a purple shirt, but that's as far as I would go." (Jeff, interview excerpt, 18.7.07)

Talking about this incident, Jeff affirmed his commitment to legitimacy in outlawing and excluding himself from wearing pink. However, not only did he quietly reject wearing pink for himself, he also pointed at other men with the use of banter in this social context. He used the occasion to disassociate himself overtly from this behaviour. This resembled explicit statements such as 'I'm a rational shopper'. Through his own behaviour, he also learned about the negative consequences of engaging in deviant consumption. In the end, he presented his own boundary in relation to the colour of clothing that would be acceptable. A tie being purple was 'as far as I would go'. Interestingly, he is referring to an item of clothing representing traditional masculine power (Roper 1990). A purple tie may therefore be less conspicuous or visibly deviant as a regular T-shirt.

Similar pointing and laughing activities took place regularly at shopping go-alongs. Informants often picked out pink items, only to laugh at them, making ironic statements for example that these were exactly the type of shoes they were looking for and subsequently placing them back on the shelf. Clothing or any visible codes were highly prone to receiving banter which offered another explanation for informants' desire to dress inconspicuously in a safe, invisible uniform of T-shirt, jeans and trainers. Clothing and caring for appearances were previously explained as deviant for their association with vanity. Any behaviour with a potentially 'vain' connotation highly opposed their collective ideals of masculinity. Clothing and often visible brands were not the only external markers for this. Recent notions of the metrosexual male also became targets of banter. As informants were asked about their grooming rituals and products they used, I regularly prompted and probed for products that remained unmentioned. A number of informants felt a need to reaffirm their rejection of possibly deviant products.

“I: Any moisturiser? Gel?”

H: Moisturiser? Yeah. [sarcastic] In fact, my Dad and I always slag my brother off for having moisturiser because he’s such a girl, completely. Moisturiser? Mad! Oh, please.”
(Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

Hamish’s response here to my question of whether he used any moisturiser was not just answered with a simple ‘no’. It triggered a much more exaggerated reaction that further affirmed his view of moisturiser as deviant, thus demonstrating how much he rejected this practice for himself. He further legitimised his view by recounting the regular teasing of his brother for using moisturiser. In this instance, policing banter included calling him a ‘girl’ for using moisturiser which clearly opposed any concept of manliness. Interestingly, in both examples of policing banter, both Jeff and Hamish spoke about their father participating in the exchange. Fathers emerged once more as the bearers and educators of masculine practices for their sons and they also modelled bantering behaviour.

In general, policing banter was mostly directed at practices that left visible marks (i.e. clothing, cosmetic products, branded products, etc.). Most importantly, policing occurred in wider group or social contexts as legitimacy had to be affirmed in social settings. This also included social presentations on networking websites on the internet such as Facebook or Bebo. Any interest that was publicly presented fell under scrutiny. Sean produced insights into how Facebook pages could have acted in monitoring practices:

“I: (...) if you look at other people’s Facebook pages, how accurately do you think – well, not accurately – what do you think about them?”

S: I would say some of them are more accurate than others. But in general I think there’s certain etiquette almost to make your Facebook fairly accurate. I mean it says a certain amount about you, what you choose to put on it cause everyone can see it. So, yeah, there’s a desire to keep it relatively true to you. But you do edit it, you know, you don’t – if you happen to be a big Celine Dion fan, that’s not going to go on there, you’ll keep that one pretty stumm. That sort of thing, if your favourite film is something really sad then you’re probably not going to put that on either, you know.

I: What’s ‘sad’?

S: I don't know, maybe your favourite film is a Celine Dion film or something like that, I don't know. Like, if somebody saw it they'd think 'oh my god, what a loser'." (Sean, interview excerpt, 23.5.07)

Sean gave a perfectly valid explanation here for why so many Facebook or public networking profiles in general resembled one another. The safe option was to stick to collectively accepted and vetted interests and 'editing' one's individual profile according to socially expected standards. Similar to a uniform or outfit rendering a young man invisible, other legitimate interests and practices had the same effect. Music bands, favourite books and films were regularly repeated on social networking sites to avoid any 'policing' from friends. Interestingly, Celine Dion became more often the topic of policing banter.

"Hamish started talking about some of his favourite bands then mentioning that he liked 'random' Canadian bands. (...) I was even more surprised to hear the bands he mentioned: Brian Adams, Crash Test Dummies, etc. Under normal circumstances I would have imagined these as 'punishable' choices. (...) In the end, Tom sarcastically added that if he liked Canadian music, he certainly also liked Celine Dion." (fieldnote, participant observation, meeting Tom and Hamish in the pub, 26.5.07)

Celine Dion appeared as undoubtedly placed into the 'deviant' category by a lot of informants. Listening to music by Celine Dion, also labelled as 'sad' by Sean above, may not necessarily have been a feminine practice but it was certainly understood here as reducing one's masculinity. Policing banter in general questioned one's masculinity and indicated potential vulnerability through perceived 'deviant' practices. As Sean stated, someone listening to Celine Dion was surely a 'loser'. The above incident between Tom and Hamish also touched on this fine line between disclosing information outside the boundaries of legitimacy and risking being teased by others. Hamish was however relatively confident in his choices - although he had not named any of these bands in any interaction previously nor did he list these on his Facebook profile. Although Tom was a good friend of Hamish's he could not resist the temptation to test his confidence. What we saw here was precisely the 'winding up' or 'rising' in the

sense that he provoked him, consequently expecting a response that would reveal further information about Hamish's own practices or bring him back to more accepted practices. This already suggests how banter led towards getting to know another person based on hinting at their strengths and weaknesses. As well as policing behaviour, there were several instances of this type of put-down humour that was intended to provoke a reaction. Other attempts to reduce the status of individuals or expose them as less masculine often involved alcohol consumption.

“Jason had brought a full bottle of Smirnoff Vodka and a large bottle of Tango Cherry as a mixer. He, as well as everybody else, never offered any of their drink to the others including myself. Upon seeing Jason's choice of drink he received numerous comments from the group, particularly regarding his choice of mixer. Scott drank cans of Carlsberg, Andrew cans of Tennents and Michael had three bottles of Budweiser. He also had to accept a few comments as he was described as the one who gets 'drunk very quickly' and three bottles appeared a large amount for him to the rest of the gang. (fielnote, participant observation, playing poker with Aberdeen supporters, 7.2.07)

In this incident alcohol consumption was contested. Jason had to defend his choice and received numerous comments for drinking a potentially deviant alcoholic drink. His individual commitment to normative practices was tested and questioned. The smaller group settings generally provided more space for deviating from the beer norm, but everyone still commented on the deviant connotations of vodka and cherry lemonade. Banter also featured in contests about the amount of drink they were capable of consuming, and seemed to involve testing individuals' commitment to collective masculine identities in their practices. Although there could be an edge to such banter, its ambiguous meanings and irony always ensured that accusations never appeared direct and no insult was taken. Whether a certain practice was deviant and reduced one's masculinity naturally also depended on the individual's confidence and their own meanings. Not every interest or type of music was universally condemned as deviant like Celine Dion. Meanings of deviance and legitimacy were continuously contested and contextually (re-)constructed depending on their individual meanings. The following incident gives some insight into this:

“Scott who sat beside me mentioned a song that was on his mind all day. He could not recall if it was from either the film ‘Kill Bill’ or ‘Pulp Fiction’. For the first time this evening, I knew the song Scott was singing but had to correct him by saying that it was from ‘Charlie’s Angels’. Matt commented in amusement that Scott had solely mentioned ‘cool’ films to cover up his knowledge of ‘girly’ films at which he defended himself saying that he thought ‘Charlie’s Angels’ was ‘cool’.” (fieldnote, participant observation, playing poker with Aberdeen supporters, 7.2.07)

This incident described again how someone’s knowledge of certain areas of expertise often rendered them as either ‘cool’ or ‘sad’ (Nancarrow *et al.* 2001). However, we can also see how these meanings were contested and negotiated contextually. The balance between legitimacy and deviance was far from static but varied depending on individuals, their confidence and (masculine) competence in social settings. ‘Charlie’s Angels’ was classified by Matt as a ‘girly’ film whereas Scott defended it as being ‘cool’. Matt laughed at Scott rather for using respected films to cover up his consumption and knowledge of deviant films, therefore also pointing at him in front of others for engaging in deviant practices. He accused Scott of ‘putting on a front’ and threatened to reveal his individual difference. At the same time, this seemed to backfire when Scott responded with confidence that he did not view ‘Charlie’s Angels’ as deviant. We can see how policing banter often took on elements of a power play through contesting the meanings of individuals in terms of what they considered masculine or deviant. This however also showed how individuals came together to actively (re)construct meanings of masculine practices in each context and thus collectively shaped meanings of consumption.

4.3.1.2. Banter marking ‘us’ against other masculinities

Banter in wider social or collective settings was not only directed at ‘women’s practices’ but also other gender categories. As explained previously, although other men and their practices were recognised as masculine, banter against these groups often aimed at downgrading their status or claim to legitimate masculinity. ‘Yahs’ and ‘Neds’ for

example often became the subject of banter. Instead of policing the boundaries between acceptable and deviant practices or identities, this form of banter seemed to shape collective meanings of 'our' masculinity in relation to 'other' masculinities. Banter here carved out the group culture that marked these shared perspectives in relation to others. It ranked informants' experiences above those of other groups of men. Once more, this occurred mainly through put-down humour.

Examples of banter against other men included the regular chants at football games which were often highly offensive and aggressive against other teams. Furthermore, different chants were created and sung to target each individual team and group of supporters. These were then mixed with songs for supporting the team, the 'Dons' in this instance. Which songs to sing against each team reflected once more the knowledge and competence that Aberdeen supporters and informants had acquired over the years. This capital further authenticated their status as supporters and reinforced their group identity. Songs often reflected stories of confrontations with other supporters which further shaped the different character of this banter. In Glasgow for example, supporters sang 'In your Glasgow Slums', downgrading the importance and hegemonic status of the city in relation to football. Against Rangers fans, there had been a long tradition of songs. The following excerpt describes this briefly.

"The singing started, particularly directed against Rangers fans: 'if you hate the blues stand up'. They also sang the Scottish national anthem with a slightly changed text in order to emphasise Rangers' association with Britain and the crown. 'Wrong f***** country' was screamed at all times. A number of Rangers fans wore union jack clothes and flags. Again, the focus seemed to be only half on the game, the other half on other supporters. Once the Rangers fans started singing their songs, the crowds started singing against it." (fieldnote, participant observation, 20.5.07)

We can see here how this type of collective banter against Rangers fans and players was filled with disdain and aggression. The excerpt also emphasises again how practices of a

football supporter consisted only in part of following the game whereas another part focussed on the interactions with supporters of other teams. Chants here were very forceful and used the symbols that represented Rangers clubs and supporters. Songs that were typically sung against other teams equally required a vast amount of knowledge of historic football games. One example was the chant 'Who's that lying on Pittodrie?'. This referred to a historic game during which one very young and rising Rangers player received heavy injuries during a game in the Pittodrie stadium by an Aberdeen player. This young footballer had been unable to fully recover from his injuries and develop into the successful football player he had been expected to become. There were some disputes amongst Aberdeen supporters about singing this particular song. Nevertheless, it was still circulated and sung at some point during this last important game of the season. As well as singing traditional songs, supporters often collaborated in creating new songs, incorporating current themes. In a separate game, one coloured player of Hearts had accused the referee of racist behaviour towards him when he received a yellow card. The referee subsequently changed the yellow card into a red card. It later emerged that his wife was also coloured and that he saw it as an offence to be accused of being racist. The press consequently reported that this particular player was racist against white players and referees. The following week, Aberdeen played against this particular team in Edinburgh. The supporters regularly chanted targets at this specific player, singing 'Kingston is a Racist' mixed with boos for any passing from and to him.

Banter could certainly have very offensive and racist elements. Carrington (1998) indicated that this discourse also became adopted by 'lads mags' and comedians as an excuse for being discriminative and racist, based on the argument that it should never be taken seriously. In fact, taking banter seriously was interpreted as not being able to understand and participate in it. Those who were offended by banter or could not participate - often women (Fine 1987) - were thus excluded from shared practices and group identification. This further emphasised this discourse as masculine and for men. These chants then also explained how supporters in the stands could rightfully share

banter against the other team for their collective opposition against them. As Tom explained, football supporters were immediately able to share 'a laugh' through their relation to other teams. Having a 'laff' (Willis' 1977) expressed a form of resistance, not only between football supporters but for example also in relation to 'Yah' culture. This further increased their shared experience and collective identification of 'us' in relation to 'them'. These chants and stories further added to the repertoire of the group. They seemed to form part of a group's collective history and resources, reflecting the experiences they had shared together, also in relation to other groups. This type of banter thus contributed to their culture and practices that directly targeted other groups of supporters, men and masculinities.

Stories of direct confrontation and competition generally formed part of this banter aimed at creating the shared meanings of the group in relation to others. Stories of our specific group of Aberdeen supporters similarly enhanced our shared experiences. At the game against Celtic in Glasgow for example, our seats were close to the 'boundary' towards other supporters. We could not avoid the regular pointing, laughing and offensive gesturing from the other side. One specific supporter was particularly revolting in his gestures. Due to his larger body size, he was subsequently named 'sumo guy' by everyone in the group and this experience followed and further connected us after the game. Any Aberdeen supporter would have been defended for his appearance but in the case of this Celtic supporter, his weight became the basis for 'othering' (Renold 2004). The story of 'sumo guy' remained with us as it was continuously retold. These stories in general reinforced the notion of 'us' against the 'other'. They became tokens of social exchange (Willis 1990) as they objectified our experience. Stories of banter were thus also an expression of capital that was sought in these consumption practices. They became labels of relational collective masculinity that were traded in social, wider group contexts. Another example of a story traded as banter amongst informants in the group involved the rejected practice of rugby and the 'Yah' population at the university.

“Eoin mentioned to me that there was such a dominant English population at the university that there had been a fight in [the university pub] after the England-Scotland rugby match. Scotland had lost that day after winning the match against England the previous year in Edinburgh in Murrayfield. Eoin explained that the fight erupted after the ‘English rubbed it in’. He continued rather sarcastically: ‘We don’t mind them winning but if they rub it in, we have every right to become angry and fight.’ It clearly sounded as though he did not want to be marginalised or feel inferior in relation to the English even though he did not follow rugby.” (fieldnote, participant observation, meeting Aberdeen supporters in the pub, 21.3.07)

Rugby was not a sport informants showed an interest in, mainly because of its upper-class connotations (Nauright and Chandler 1996). For its association with ‘Yah’ culture and English students, informants’ relation to England also emerged in this context. Competing and contesting relational masculinities did not co-exist without tensions. Every group fought for dominant status and most importantly defended any threat of marginalisation when placed in opposition. As mentioned, the English population often overwhelmed the culture at this Scottish University, almost giving the sense of marginalising Scottish students in their own capital city. These incidents showed the rivalry and tension between the two sides and how positions were often defended violently. In this instance, Eoin exchanged with others his identity as a young Scottish male and communicated his stance towards English culture. Trading these stories with others expressed their relational identity and often implied an understanding of consumption practices that defined other categories of men.

This type of banter also related to physical confrontation and aggressiveness, reflecting the competition between ideals of masculinity. The only way to ‘fight’ the other here was through physical strength. Banter may have also contained certain aggressive elements. Informants generally did not get involved in fights but instead spoke and laughed about fights taking place. Indirectly, they also communicated their shared rejection of other groups. This type of banter therefore also related to a form of ‘gossip’

that created in-groups and out-groups (Finlay and Johnson 1997, Coates 2003). The above excerpt represents only one example of many incidents where informants spoke about fights and aggression that also shaped the meanings of spaces. The Cavendish was a popular bar and nightclub in the Tollcross area. As described previously, in this area the student population often encountered working class 'Neds'. One informant regularly told a story that when he was in 'Cav' and the popular song 'I Predict a Riot' by the Kaiser Chiefs was played, fights literally broke out. As much as informants spoke of themselves as 'working class', these experiences and stories refined their collective identity and affected the consumption practices and spatial differentiation between them and other groups of men living in Edinburgh.

Both types of banter in these wider social group contexts highlighted how other gendered groups and identities shaped the meanings of masculinity and practices of informants. Their consumption practices also bound the group together in their relational construction of these different groups. Banter further reinforced the impression of 'invisible masculinity' of informants. Whereas others were collectively labelled and categorised as feminine, 'gay', 'Neds' or 'Yahs', informants within the group remained safe, unlabelled and undefined. Through their consumption practices they presented themselves as middle-class, young Scottish men. This default position and associated consumption practices allowed them to remain invisible or normal within the group and label others who were not normal. As one informant pointed out 'You can't put a label on me'. While he may have expressed here his fear of being labelled and judged, he also implied his awareness of labelling others. From the outside, groups of informants may have been described as 'wannabe working class' or 'rebellious Scots'. Groups of informants however did not identify themselves as any of these. These labels or external 'fronts' often related to stigmatised consumption practices that were negotiated and re-constructed by informants both collectively and individually.

4.3.2. Roles of banter as differentiating the individual

Whereas the banter described above created shared experiences of 'us' as the 'same', other banter was actively directed towards differentiating oneself from individuals in the group. One informant labelled this type of banter as 'one-up-man-ship'. Seeking distinction in this way also shaped consumption practices that defined masculinity. Informants regularly competed for leadership positions through displays of competence and knowledge in accepted masculine practices. They also played for the right to claim masculine meanings for practices, and sometimes used this discourse to point out each other's differences, creating a form of verbal ping-pong. Although there was some 'pointing the finger' at another person, banter equally communicated acceptance of these differences.

I: You seem to be having an awful lot of, sort of verbal (J: laughs) fights.

J: Yeah.

I: Is it, is it, what is it about, is it like-

J: Well, we're all different but we get on. But we like to point out each other being different probably." (Jeff, interview excerpt, 18.7.07)

As Jeff mentioned during his interview, banter amongst individuals in the group almost became a 'differentiation' game. On the one hand it contained competitive elements, while on the other hand this often also led to individual acceptance and the creation of rapport and intimacy. Similar to Cameron's (1998) analysis of men's discourse, competition and co-operation both characterised banter simultaneously. The aim of pointing out each other's differences seemed to be to remove the 'front' or 'mask' of invisible masculinity. Individuals sought to expose one another, often also to get to know their weaknesses (Lyman 1987). As Lyman argued, these dynamics often aimed at 'hardening' the other person. Jeff also described this process of 'hardening' a man through banter.

J: Taking the p***. I mean, well, take the p*** out of [all my friends] and they take the p*** out of me. It's just what we do. ... I mean, we don't, well, I hope they're not being

serious about it. We just like to have a joke around. Well, quite often we're going for lunch, like, once every, once a week and it seems to sort of rotate around one week's, each person is getting the p*** taken out of by the rest. But, no we all get one." (Jeff, interview excerpt, 18.7.07)

Joking relationships amongst informants could therefore be hurtful in that they pointed out individual weaknesses. That way, an individual learned to live and accept themselves and their 'shortcomings'. Jeff also pointed out during his interview that he preferred his friends to insult him rather than other people. Being insulted seemed unavoidable. He portrayed once more that masculinity involved hardship and endurance (Horrocks 1999). Knowing each others' weaknesses also created a bond that allowed them to open up and reveal themselves under the external layer of masculinity. Everybody was 'weak' in one way or another. Jeff added that if any of his friends were sad or upset, he would 'throw banter' at them so they would think about something else. Banter seemed to provoke a response that generally veered back to normative masculinity. This may have taught them how to use the 'front' of masculinity to cover up any of their weaknesses and also recover from episodes where these may have been exposed. It may have possibly involved being sad, upset or emotional. Weaknesses then further represented a lack of confidence in oneself, also in their masculinity. Instead of putting the other person down therefore, exchanging banter seemed related to strengthening them, but rather in their use of the 'front' of masculinity. Banter then equally referred to a lack of competence or knowledge of consumption practices that constructed their masculinity. However, these 'weaknesses' only existed on the basis of social and collective expectations towards these young men. They were socially constructed weaknesses. Informants seemed more able to recognise this in smaller settings. In this sense, banter also exposed apparently objective structures of masculinity and individuals were able to 'not care' about their differences around their close friends, away from the pressures of the wider collective. These small groups of intimate friends seemingly allowed them to be more of their individual selves.

We will now look at some examples of ‘one-up-man-ship’ and how banter often led to intimate male bonds.

4.3.2.1. ‘One-up-man-ship’

Competition has already been described as a dominant indicator of and dynamic for establishing masculine consumption practices. Depending on the context and individual’s competence, competition also determined when to be complicit and when to participate in the contest for hegemony. One-up-man-ship therefore was the cultural discourse, the talking game, that decided whether an individual came out on top or had to follow group behaviour. The term ‘one-up-man-ship’ was used by Matt who subsequently defined it further and explained its role. He mentioned during his interview that he disliked the Aberdeen group for its overt display of masculinity. Aberdeen group members were described as needing to constantly compete and prove themselves in front of one another. I asked him in what way he recognised this.

“M: I think it just comes through the way people talk and just always try and get one up on each other or, um, to do with football statistics. I’m sort of relating football hugely with masculinity, (laughs) which is not necessarily a good thing but, eh, or correct thing but, um. It certainly seems to me there’s a, there’s a thing there. (...)

I: One-up-man-ship? Yeah, what is one-up-man-ship?

M: Well, you know, trying to have the final word on to this, I know something better than you do. You know, it’s a, sitting there having a discussion about, say, say in the context of the Aberdeen society, two people are having a discussion over a footballer. (...) Um, you know, the proving of the point by knowing the most about him so like saying ‘yeah, no, in the last ten years he’s scored this many goals each season’. You know, sort of like that. And I’ll be like ‘oh no, that’s kind and well but you know eh, what’s now’s that matters’. And then the other person would come back with an equally, you know, good statistic to illustrate their point. That’ll be you saying probably ‘yes, he may have scored all those goals but you know he started every game so, well, so yeah. He didn’t score that many goals per game’ or something highly fun like that. Um, and that’s what it’s like, that’s one-up-man-ship. Proving you’re the best.” (Matt, interview excerpt, 20.9.07)

As Matt described here, one-up-man-ship was proving to be the best on a topic or practice and gain respect from others through the display of knowledge and competence.

It was depicted here as the discourse that reflected the contest of leadership. One-up-man-ship banter therefore indicated which areas of interest were accepted by the group and established collective meanings of masculinity. A number of different topics were related to one-up-man-ship in the Aberdeen group such as cars and football, etc. Interestingly, Matt viewed football contests as measuring each others' masculinity (cf. Free and Hughson 2003). Thus, one-up-man-ship banter reinforced collective masculinity and consumption practices through the presentation of knowledge, often in a spiralling competition. To Matt, the practices used in the Aberdeen banter seemed too overtly masculine, but later in the interview he acknowledged that he also competed with friends in areas of interest to him. One-up-man-ship banter was widely accepted and exchanged amongst the young men, and established meanings of masculinity as manifested in specific consumption practices. It created and (re-)constructed masculine consumption practices and group norms. Individuals had to claim knowledge and competence in these areas to be acknowledged in the group. Banter here also went further as individuals measured and tested one another in these practices. They proved in front of each other that they were better or more masculine than the other.

Contests related to music knowledge, sports or poker were instances where certain 'winning styles' (Connell 1987) were created. Everything was measured in the group. As discussed previously however, leaders changed. Depending on competence in particular contexts, individuals knew when to compete for leading positions and when to accept the contextual group norm. Hamish for example was always overtly ambitious and competitive when it came to playing football. He had been playing for several years and had developed the skill and stamina necessary to play well. Other friends in the Aberdeen group did not have the same attitude or the same level of fitness as him. Although he motivated them to achieve results against other teams, others often cared less than him about winning in football. When it came to other practices, however, others displayed greater ambition than him. This was also due to their success. I asked Hamish about his experiences of playing poker with his friends.

“I: What’s it like for you to play poker with the lads?

H: I, I mean, as I said, I’ve only just started playing and of course. (...) And then Jeff went into the game and said ‘right guys, Hamish is going to bluff every single time, just to let you know.’ You know, so he kinda gives my game away completely. But um, I don’t really read into it that much, I mean, I don’t really... you know I’m still trying to learn the rules before I can, I can... I am getting better I have to say. I played with a different group, um, and a guy who plays properly and I took him all the way. It was just me and him. And it was just like a, basically I just learned how to play the game. I very quickly learn how to play the game, secretly been learning online, well, not playing online but looking up the rules online, tips, um. (...) But um, that’s my experience. I don’t know why I don’t like poker. It’s probably cause... you don’t have to be – it’s a different type of, again, it’s a different type of game.” (Hamish, interview excerpt, 26.5.07)

It was felt that this critique was highly directed against Jeff who regularly won in poker games. The reason for this was also because Jeff did not drink any alcohol parallel to playing poker games as the rest of the group. Andrew commented on this during his interview. Jeff was also very competent in producing competitive banter that led to exposing Hamish’s chosen strategy in the game. We previously saw that in poker winning games was not all that mattered. Putting the other person down and doubting their competence and confidence was also part of the game. Banter became especially contentious during poker. We can see from Hamish’s description how he may have adapted more in certain poker settings. His lack of skill was disappointing to him and he made efforts to acquire further competence though consulting online sources for example. His own consumption also aimed at furthering his capital. Further competence in poker allowed him to become more confident and engage in the banter game that accompanied the poker game. Another compensation for his lack of success in poker he mentioned here was his skill in football. He was more respected than Jeff for example who lacked in football skills although Jeff had the upper hand in poker. Different games, different practices therefore required different skills and involved a different pecking order. Banter accompanied all these practices as it seemed to express confidence in one's competence or skills.

This excerpt therefore also described how one-up-man-ship defined the areas where individuals wanted to become knowledgeable, skilled and generally competent, and suggested why this was important to them. Hamish, for example, was interested in improving his poker skills in order to join the competition and gain more respect and recognition from others. Being able to engage in competitive banter expressed their confidence, pointing to relatively secure identities and allowing them to shape what counted as masculine consumption.

Although competitive banter generally involved testing the others' skills in accepted group practices, in some instances individuals also introduced some of their own meanings of masculinity and consumption practices, even if they may have appeared deviant to some. This mainly depended on the confidence of each individual. It also reflected how individuals negotiated masculine consumption meanings differently. Again, those who possessed confidence were able to shape the practices that were accepted by the group. Individuals could therefore also change group practices. The drive towards competition often gained in momentum so that any topic became contested and turned into a game. It was rather how the individual presented their case and argued confidently that challenged others. This also produced insights into how competent informants were in practices generally labelled as 'deviant'.

“After this programme, Jeff switched through the channels in the search for other shows. They finally settled on ‘Desperate Housewives’ which seemed an odd selection to me. I knew relatively little about this programme too; the lads however could give me exact details of the actor’s names, their characters and previous roles they had played. Scott was particularly good at this exercise.” (fieldnote, participant observation, playing poker with Aberdeen supporters, 7.2.07)

This was a much more subtle competition led by Scott. He felt it perfectly legitimate to compete over who knew more about the programme 'Desperate Housewives' which in

other contexts had been labelled as a show for women. Scott presented himself as confident and received no doubt in his masculinity as a 'normal', heterosexual young man. He seemed therefore perfectly able to present his knowledge of this possibly 'deviant' programme. Whereas informants were therefore generally found to compete in practices collectively accepted as legitimate, in some instances individuals also emerged as dominant in shaping masculinity through competitions. Challenging others on their knowledge of *Desperate Housewives* also led to others revealing their knowledge of this show. Through competition therefore, individuals got to know one another more intimately, further underlining the idea of competition as being co-operative (Cameron 1998). Banter may therefore have related to expressing an acceptance of another person and their difference. Other examples of this banter have been described in nightclubs for instance where individuals competed over who had bought the worst music in the past. The revelation of Hamish's taste for certain Canadian bands triggered a similar competition between him and Tom. Competitions therefore also seemed to pave the way towards expressing individual meanings and being accepted by others. Banter was further recognised as the discourse that expressed this acceptance of individual differences and communicated intimate bonds of friendship.

4.3.2.2. 'Having a laugh': intimacy and acceptance of different masculine identities and consumption meanings

Banter was thus equally produced in the sense that friends 'had a laugh' together. Having a 'laff' was considered by Willis (1977) as a form of resistance and there was a sense of this here too. Laughing with friends at each other also seemed to involve laughing at their own construction of normative masculinity and accepting each other's difference. The boundaries of masculinity and social expectations were deconstructed and played with in this banter. Irony, sarcasm and often dark humour allowed informants to directly or indirectly reveal themselves. This however took place mostly

after some trust among individuals had been developed and commitment to 'normal' masculinity had been declared.

All encounters were filled with various banter games that involved provoking comments and looking for individual meanings and practices that left a person vulnerable, often as a way of reducing their masculine status in the group. In their search for practices that may have been labelled as female or 'gay', any crack in confidence was noted. As much as this was often exploited, this was informants' way of getting to know and appreciate one another. Banter was an attempt to get others to drop their mask or 'front' of masculinity and peel away the external layer that most of them seemingly used to hide their personal ambiguities. As far as masculine invisibility went, everyone had a poker face. All of them had the same cards and everyone tried to be the same. Nobody wanted to stand out unless it was for their distinction as more competent in accepted practices. However, everyone also knew that this was 'fake'. Everyone was most certainly not the same. As Jeff mentioned in the opening of this section, once informants knew each other more intimately, they enjoyed pointing out each other's differences and did not necessarily see this as malicious. Everyone had strengths and weaknesses in the structures of deviance and hegemonic masculinity but, as Matt pointed out previously, individuals often did not consider these as weaknesses at all. These structures were not simply objective and external, but constructed and accepted by themselves. Everyone engaged in deviant practices but found a way of reconciling this with their masculinity. Matt for example highly enjoyed deviant music as we saw in the example of S Club 7. He did not consider this type of music as deviant, but he was very aware that under collective and social norms his taste in music may have been perceived as wrong. Initially, he also labelled a taste for S Club 7 as wrong, proving his agreement with widely accepted meanings of deviant music. Matt explained during his interview what it means for him to 'have a laugh' with his friends.

“M: Having a laugh with my mates with cheesy pop, um –
I: Like what is ‘having a laugh with cheesy pop’, what is it like?
M: (laughs) Good fun, the, the, it’s sort of like, bad dancing is always a good feature (laughs). If you’re laughing at yourself and each other, eh, you’re sort of there as a group, you know, as a good comradeship between the group because (...) it’s almost mocking of yourself and the others around you and of the fact that you’re there. (...)”
(Matt, interview excerpt, 20.9.07)

Matt described here how ‘having a laugh’ had the potential of mocking the context he and his friends found themselves in. They laughed at each other for adhering to social norms and for adopting collectively and socially accepted meanings of practices. I also observed this in my joking interactions with individual informants. Growing trust led to more personal mocking but also to having a laugh at stereotypical practices. Our conversations often shifted towards topics that would not have been spoken about previously. Banter and humour was perceived to present a form of acceptance here. ‘Having a laugh’ allowed informants to step outside of these limits and engage in practices that were meaningful to them as individuals, rather than as bearing social expectations of masculinity. They were able to mock each other, but also laugh at themselves. This created further camaraderie and closer friendships. In these contexts, there was no deviance or legitimacy as the individual and their interests and practices became central to interactions. Individuals got to know and appreciate each other’s idiosyncratic identities. In these instances, Matt enjoyed ‘cheesy pop’ and received support from his friends who enjoyed listening to this type of music with him. Other instances of support were found for Hamish’s Swing Dancing, the consumption of deviant TV programmes or magazines. All these were again backed up by the banter discourse amongst friends who knew one another.

This emphasised again how boundaries of legitimacy and deviance were far from static or objective. Although individuals actively (re-)constructed them in social settings, they also deconstructed them and ‘had a laugh’. Their construction and meanings were recognised as situated and contextual as individuals actively contributed towards

shaping meanings of masculinity. In these intimate group settings, zones, boundaries and limits often blurred. With this, the settings and meanings of consumption practices also blurred. It became unclear which practices defined masculinity as informants were able to look beyond social expectations towards their own expression of individuality through practices and meanings. Parallel to these layered and intertwined types of banter, meanings of masculinity and consumption practices also shifted. As individuals knew one another more closely, anything was possible, including the wearing of pink and the use of moisturiser.

Banter in general became understood as the discourse that facilitated the negotiation of these multiple layers of meanings of masculinity and consumption. It emerged as reflecting the contextual negotiation of informants' individual and collective gendered identities and how these were linked to meanings of consumption practices.

4.3.3. Conclusions

This section highlighted how banter facilitated the layered meanings of what it meant to consume as young men in this cultural context and its role in reconciling social and wider group expectations while negotiating individual meanings and identities. Banter emerged as complex and multi-layered, and the ambiguity created by irony and sarcasm often complicated its interpretation. However, this also highlighted how concealed and cautious exchanges of meanings were as well as their construction through interaction. Informants seemed very careful in revealing themselves behind the 'front' of external and collective masculinity. As much as objective, safe meanings of how men should consume were helpful in constructing confident and socially accepted masculinities, these practices often seemed to conceal the individual. Practices had to communicate unambiguous, 'normal' and heterosexual masculinity, and collectively accepted practices supported this. Irony and sarcasm however emphasised again how contextual,

compromised and negotiated these meanings were and how quickly they could change. Banter communicated the often ambiguous meanings of 'unambiguous' masculinity.

Banter discourse therefore emerged as a way of 'being' masculine (Shankar and Fitchett 2002) through 'doing' and 'talking' masculinities. It defined the social interactions amongst informants who regularly sought out banter with their friends. Indeed, the British TV channel 'Dave' uses the label of being 'the Home of Banter'. Interestingly, the majority of programmes on 'Dave' relate to social expectations of what a young man should consume and be interested in. To some extent, it relates well to the concept of legitimate masculine practices that emerged here. Being able to produce and share banter was therefore a way of performing masculinity and communicating meanings of consumption. As much as other skills, knowledge and competence supported the construction of confident masculinities, banter appeared to be the cultural discourse for expressing these and conveying the shifting relations between masculinity and consumption.

5. Conclusions

This study contributes to our understanding of how young men construct masculine identities through socially and culturally situated consumption practices. It also produces insights into the relationships between groups and individuals in the negotiation of gender identities through consumption. The chapter begins by outlining the research gaps identified from reviewing the literature in this area, and the aims and objectives of this study in light of these. The study's limitations are also considered before drawing the key findings together and outlining their contribution to knowledge. Finally, suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1. Research gaps, aims and objectives

Existing theories of gender present varying definitions and approaches for studying gender and masculinity. It has been increasingly recognised that multiple and contradictory masculinities are constructed through everyday practices (Edley and Wetherell 1995, Hearn and Morgan 1990, Mac an Ghail 1996). These practices create the 'place' or configuration of masculinity within a nexus of gender relations (Connell 2005). To date, research on male consumers has often neglected the issue of how these practices construct gender identities. The literature review highlighted a focus in consumer research on men and masculinity in the context of advertising (Elliott and Patterson 2004, Schroeder and Zwick 2004), brand communities and subcultures (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Kates 2002, 2004) and tribes (Rinallo 2007). Despite these efforts, few studies have explored in detail how men construct gender identities through and, also importantly, across practices. An increasing interest in practices across groups also emerged in recent research on practices in brand communities (Schau *et al.* 2009). Studying consumption across practices is required to

understand the multiple ‘places’ of men and hence the contradictory and shifting performances of masculinity (Wetherell and Edley 1999).

A second and related theme emerged in relation to gender as part of group and individual identities. Although literature often described masculinity as a collective construct (Connell 2005, Hearn 1996, Kimmel 1994), gender as a “central organizing feature of identity” (Schroeder 2003) has also been recognised as part of ‘practices of the self’ (Foucault 1979, McNay 1992). Questions have also emerged in consumer research concerning whether collectives or individuals are the key producers and carriers of meaning. In response to a longstanding focus on individuals in consumer research, there has been increasing focus on community, in terms of brand communities (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), subcultures (Kates 2002), tribes (Cova *et al.* 2007) and communities of practice (Warde 2005, Schau *et al.* 2009). Further research into theories of practices emphasised the importance of both individuals and collectives for the construction of identities (Wenger 1998, Bourdieu 1984), suggesting the need to explore the relationship and role of groups *and* individuals in the construction of masculine identities through consumption practices.

The aim of this study was to contribute to consumer research by describing how consumption practices constructed masculinities, by groups, individuals, and individuals in groups. This aim was translated into the research objectives that guided the study:

- To explore and describe how the consumption of young men, aged 18-24, across practices, contributes to the negotiation of masculine identities

- To explore the relationship between the individual and the group in young men’s construction of masculinity through consumption practices

5.2. Limitations

Although ethnography was considered the most suitable methodology for this study, it is not without limitations. Its focus on culturally situated practices means that findings may not apply in other cultural contexts. Informants' discourse, for example, has situated this study in the specific cultural context of Scotland and the U.K. The detail ethnography demanded also limited the number of informants in this research; other young Scottish men, for example from Edinburgh, may have different experiences and perspectives.

Arguably, the fact that a female researcher studied and participated in groups of young men may also be considered a limitation. Gender differences were recognised as an important aspect in this study which was also the reason for addressing it particularly as part of the methodology. It can be assumed that informants behaved differently in the presence of a woman than a man. However, in either case they would be performing to an audience, and a male ethnographer may have faced a greater challenge in questioning what may be for him taken for granted aspects of masculinity. Being female presented obstacles for gaining access and generating data, particularly in the early stages of the fieldwork. My embodiment of gender (Butler 1990) and different physical abilities created challenges for finding young male groups to join, and also limited the contexts where a participatory role was possible. Female researchers may struggle to become involved in competitive male sports settings for example. This also affected some of the practices during fieldwork. While I was asked to join the group in playing football, I also lacked the competence and know-how to become a respected player. Visiting the football hall and being the only female further emphasised my gender as different to informants. It was hoped that prolonged fieldwork would create a rapport that was close to their natural behaviour. At the same time, it has to be recognised that a woman inevitably changed informants' interactions. Spending more time in the field and participating in further practices may have improved findings. However, further time in

the field would have also added to the overwhelming volume of data that had already been generated.

5.3. Key findings

“Shrek: Ogres are like onions.

Donkey: They stink?

Shrek: Yes. No.

Donkey: Oh, they make you cry.

Shrek: No.

Donkey: Oh, you leave em out in the sun, they get all brown, start sproutin' little white hairs.

Shrek: NO. Layers. Onions have layers. Ogres have layers. Onions have layers. You get it? We both have layers.

[sighs]

Donkey: Oh, you both have layers. Oh. You know, not everybody like onions.”

As the opening quote already outlines, layers emerged as a central theme along with ‘playing’ in this study. The following sections summarise some of the key findings which lead to the outlining of main contributions of this study. The findings of the study were structured according to collective masculinities and consumption practices followed by the negotiation of individual gender identities and practices. On the group level, practices were highlighted where informants wanted to be the same as everybody else, and also those where they wanted to be different (Jenkins 2004). Certain consumption practices seemed accepted for constructing ‘safe’ (Rinallo 2007), unmarked masculinities. Others related to consumption that would allow informants to claim distinction within the group. Together, these formed the constellation of practices informants collectively identified with as constructing ‘normal’ masculinities.

5.3.1. The emergence of masculine capital

Certain consumption practices were observed where informants sought distinction in the group. Rather than focussing on objects such as brands or products, difference was mainly marked through displays of often embodied skills and detailed knowledge of practices. Distinction was also portrayed through experience in stories. The concept of capital was introduced here to summarise the varying competencies that seemed required to participate in changing contexts and group practices. Findings produced insights into how this capital was competed for and contested. Those who were deemed to possess more capital in these contexts also shaped the consumption that was considered appropriate by these young men. These contests and competitions presented how masculinity was ‘played for’ and how the outcome affected consumption meanings.

Contests defined those consumption practices where capital was acquired. Striving for masculine capital also related to the struggle for claiming hegemonic masculinity. It also showed how it required the approval from others. However, the required capital for practices and consumption shifted as practices and contexts changed. Playing football, for example, required skills that were different than those needed when playing poker, ‘talking football’ or going to nightclubs. With these changing practices and contexts, the consumption that defined masculinity also changed.

5.3.2. Boundaries created by relational gender groups

Gendered meanings of consumption also emerged as contextualised within a specific cultural context and negotiated through gender relations (Connell 2005). In relation to other groups informants wanted to be ‘the same’ as everyone else, mainly because they

did not want to be perceived as 'different'. This disassociation also related to themes of 'negative symbolic consumption' translated into gender practices (Banister and Hogg 2004). Other gender groups and their practices further shaped the consumption that informants identified with. They created the perceived boundaries to the norms or rules that informants established. They could also be perceived as reducing the choices that may lead towards a 'normal' masculinity and hence provide ontological security through the illusion of a shared masculinity (Giddens 1991). Findings highlighted relational groups of other men and their versions of masculinity in this cultural context. They were often collectively recognised through stigmas or stereotypes, also for their association with different ages, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (Tajfel 1981). The importance or relevance of 'other' groups for establishing boundaries depended on the practices that informants engaged in. Although other men and masculinities were perceived as relational or as different masculinities, they were also downgraded as less masculine.

Practices that defined what was 'normal' for young men also related to other practices that were not normal. Women's practices were placed in opposition to informants' masculine practices (cf. Plummer 2001). In relation to women, informants' identities were sought to be 'invisible'. This invisibility also related to the notion of masculinity as the default, as natural, unconscious (Coleman 1990) or 'malestream' (Hearn and Morgan 1990). Others and their practices were perceived as gendered. Normative consumption practices sustained this invisibility. Uniform clothing was one example where masculinity was negotiated through consumption in relation to other women, and men too. The competence required for distancing themselves from practices of other groups also implied elements of capital. Homosocial spaces also presented refuges that were free from association with women's practices. Although normative consumption was reinforced in these spaces, they also seemed to provide room for more ambiguous behaviour.

5.3.3. Internal negotiations of the external layer

Changing gender configurations (Connell 2005) shaped those practices and consumption perceived as ‘normal’ for young men. Consumption practices became acknowledged as sites of identification and shared identities. These identities established an external layer of masculinity, which was understood by at least some individuals as a normative ‘front’ (cf. Flowers and Buston 2001, Goffman 1959). This related to Messner’s (1997) notion of masculinity as beneficial on the collective level, but restricting the individual for its narrow definitions. Hence, this external layer simultaneously supported shared identification and restricted informants’ individual identification.

The focus on individual identities in this study revealed a number of contextual negotiation strategies. Every informant was found to deal with normative expectations differently, also based on their different personalities, their multiple practices, their interpretation and appropriation of gender. Rather than being unambiguous and objective, individual masculinity was fragmented and its boundaries were blurred. Every individual navigated his changing and shifting identities through varying settings and groups. Individuals emerged as conforming to consumption practices and masculinities although they were conscious of ‘putting on a front’ (Goffman 1959). They also used the external layer of masculinity to cover or rationalise their own meanings and practices. Some individuals were also found to be flexible in adapting to different normative consumption practices and masculinities across contexts. These strategies involved certain interpretive skills (McNay 1992, Côté 1996) that allowed individuals to negotiate a perceived external layer of masculinity. This negotiation reflected Jenkins’ (2004) concept of the internal-external dialectic of identification. Gender identities emerged here as simultaneously collective and individual. Their contextual changes and fluid movements across groups and practices also highlighted

them as contradictory and ambiguous. Although ambiguity seemed to be avoided in groups for a fear of differing from the group norm, it also opened possibilities for individual difference. Furthermore, findings suggested that individuals could 'choose' (Giddens 1991) their own version of masculinity, although they also perceived collective norms and meanings. In some instances, individuals introduced their own meanings of what they considered as masculine practices, even if they seemed ambiguous to others. Being confident allowed them to claim hegemonic masculinity. This presented the essential understanding of consumption directed towards 'being' masculine through portraying confidence (Shankar and Fitchett 2002). Presenting confident masculinity reduced ambiguous connotations of consumption practices which were often approved by others through this 'winning style' (Connell 1987).

The play with boundaries and layered negotiation of masculine consumption practices was reflected in the discourse of informants. On a collective level, it described practices that were understood as deviant and reinforced gendered invisibility and normative consumption. More aggressive banter also referred to practices of other men and masculinities. Between individuals, banter in the form of one-up-man-ship negotiated masculine consumption practices through competitive games. It did so through pointing out each others' differences, labelling deviance, but also accepting idiosyncrasies. Although this re-affirmed certain practices as masculine and established hierarchies, it also communicated co-operation through expressing solidarity and understanding (Cameron 1998). Masculinity emerged here as achieved through endurance and hardship (Horrocks 1995). Banter therefore presented how masculine consumption practices were contextually negotiated through both external and internal layers of masculinity. The anxiety and tension between each layer were relieved through the ambiguity that informants' humour, irony and sarcasm introduced. While banter thus reinforced and affirmed collective notions of accepted masculine consumption practices, it also deconstructed their meanings through this ambiguity. Banter allowed informants to balance apparently rigid boundaries and meanings of masculinity with their individual

practices and identities. They revealed their multiple selves to others, while also keeping in line with collective expectations. Banter was also recognised as capital, as expressing confidence. It therefore represented a play with ambiguity, a game with masculinity.

On the basis of these games we can summarise the dialectic relationship between groups and individuals. Their contests seemed to construct agreements on certain norms or rules of what was expected. These rules also related to their consumption. In each context, rules were 'played for' and the winner was established based on the approval of others. Rules were also constructed using relational groups as boundaries. If an individual was perceived to break them, he was often sanctioned with labelling and ridicule. At the same time, in certain spaces or contexts it was also observed that breaking the rules was accepted and other members participated in it. This often led to a closer group bond. In these instances, the rules were changed, if only in this specific context. Here, the rules of masculinity that had been established were played *with* as well as played *for*. Boundaries were constructed and de-constructed. As practices and contexts changed, rules were re-negotiated and re-set. Especially in bigger groups, this often involved putting on a 'front' or assuming the rules of an expected norm. This dynamic of setting rules, breaking or adopting them, changing them in certain contexts and then re-setting them as contexts changed followed a similar notion of men being producers and products of masculinity (Edley and Wetherell 1996). Masculine meanings and consumption were in constant play through interactions in practices. Playing for and with masculinity represented how layers of collective and individual identities constantly intertwined through interaction.

5.4. Contributions to consumer research: masculinity and consumption practices

There are a number of contributions that can be drawn from these findings. Specifically in relation to consumer research, this study gives a practice-based account of how gender is constructed through consumption practices. It emphasises that everyday practices shape meanings of consumption and masculinity. Findings also highlight how consumption and masculinities are negotiated within these practices. This study highlights the importance of recognising the role of masculinity in interpreting male consumption practices. This appears to have been neglected in several previous studies in consumer research. Warde (2005) argued that practices were the driver for consumption. Findings in this study suggested that the struggle for claiming masculinity shaped practices and consumption. Affirmation of masculine identity may be considered here as a key benefit for engaging in practices. Meanings of masculinity and consumption emerged as 'played for' across practices through competitions and contests. They established capital or ideals as masculine, which also led to contextual hierarchies. It may also be important to recognise how certain competences and know-how in practices create group hierarchies. It is suggested here that this know-how, or in this case capital, also relates to practices as gendered.

Recognising consumption practices as gendered also acknowledges that their meanings are not constructed in isolation from other groups. Findings in this study highlighted that different relational groups shaped meanings of practices and consumption. These groups changed across practices which also shifted the meanings of masculinity and consumption. Viewing these groups as boundaries or limits to masculinity (Schroeder and Zwick 2004, Rinallo 2007, Visconti 2008, Borgerson 2005), their role for influencing consumption meanings may also need to be considered as contextualised within specific practices.

5.5. Contributions to sociology and consumer research: the relationship between individual and group masculinities

The second objective of this study was related to exploring the relationship between individual and group masculinities. Insights gained here also contribute to the field of sociology as well as consumer research. Findings showed how individual meanings of masculinity were continuously negotiated through perceived collective meanings. It also highlighted how individuals became active in creating masculinities and consumption practices, along with breaking and changing normative meanings. 'Playing for' and 'with' masculinity referred to the notion that boundaries were constructed by individuals for and within groups, but also deconstructed. There was a continuous cycle between perceived collective meanings and behaviour towards what seemed expected and an adaptation or changing of these meanings by individuals. Behaviour in new and unfamiliar groups often also re-set their behaviour towards collectively perceived ideals. Individuals and groups therefore interacted in each context to (re)construct and negotiate changing meanings of masculinity and consumption practices. Consumption practices created the relationships between individual and collective meanings. While this provides important insights into how masculinity was constructed and performed contextually, it also relates to groups and individual identities beyond a gendered perspective. We are all individuals who form part of groups in which we may identify a certain group identity we behave towards. At the same time, we may also find instances where we change these group meanings through our own ideas. The emphasis is placed here on how consumption practices are implicated in the relationships between groups and individuals. A similarly layered approach may be useful in further studies of consumption practices or communities.

5.6. Contributions to Marketing

Although this study did not specifically focus on managerial implications of young men's consumption, the layered negotiation of masculine consumption practices may be equally relevant for marketing and communicating products as part of practices. Gillette for example appears to use collective expectations or an external layer of masculinity to rationalise its validity. Informants often seemed unaware of its existence as a brand in their bathroom. Products as part of practices that related to developing masculine capital were also 'normal' purchases. This justified the shopping for football shirts for example. Other products were associated with playful ambiguity or banter such as Lynx. Although Lynx presented stereotyped images that also revealed informants' insecurities, Lynx products did so in an ambiguous and ironic way. These products and their messages may therefore have allowed informants to present confident yet ambiguous and 'flexible' selves. From these examples we can see how certain products can form part of the individual negotiation of practices that also relate to collective expectations of masculinity. Marketing messages and products may therefore support young men in 'doing', 'being' and 'talking' collectively accepted masculinities and simultaneously construct their individual selves.

5.7. Methodological contributions

Choosing the path of ethnography presented several challenges, including the gender differences between the researcher and researched. It raised the question of whether a woman could become an actively participating and co-creating member in groups of men and build a reflexive understanding of the gendered meanings associated with their behaviour. This relates to the debate surrounding the conflicting role of the

ethnographer between the 'Martian' and 'Convert' (Davis 1973). Arguably, a woman may have the advantage of distance, reducing the danger of becoming too immersed in the field. A male researcher may not have been able to create the distance to become reflexively aware of gendered meanings. If gender is performed (Butler 1990), masculinity will be performed for a male as well as a female researcher (cf. Martin *et al.* 2006). The notion of masculinities as 'layered' that emerged in this study suggests that the construction of an external 'front' could have maintained in the presence of other men (cf. Fisher and Dubé 2005). Therefore, gender differences between the researcher and researched may have been useful, and made it easier for informants to drop the 'front' they may have continued to show to a male researcher (although of course the presence of a female researcher may have led them to present a different front).

A number of studies in consumer research that also mixed different sexes and gender (Pettigrew 2006, Tuncay 2006, Thompson 1996) did not address any potential implications gender differences may have had. This study highlights the need to become aware of and articulate gender issues that may form part of the researcher/researched relationship. Instead of discarding any 'mismatching' between characteristics of the researcher and the researched (Lewis 2003), this study suggests that negotiations of gendered research relationships need to be made more explicit. This may also be important for studies that involve researchers and participants from the same sex and gender.

To reconcile the different roles of the ethnographer and focus on being present in the field (Wax 1971), extensive use was made of a mobile phone as a recording device during fieldwork. It soon became a valuable research tool, and other researchers may benefit from building it in to their fieldwork practices. Mobile phones offer a discreet, non-intrusive means of recording fieldnotes, either in text or voice recording mode, or

by taking photographs. Since their use is so widespread and so frequent, the researcher can blend into the field through becoming less conscious of taking notes and focus on the role as participant and co-creator in the setting. The various applications of the mobile phone such as the voice recorder, film and photo camera also supported the epistemological stance of social constructionism in the study. The researcher was not the only one generating data during fieldwork, since informants also took pictures and films with their mobile phones. Although they performed in front of their own cameras, their 'data' was not consciously generated for the purpose of research. They recorded what was important and meaningful to them. Therefore, sharing and exchanging pictures and films added insights into experiences and practices from informants' point of view. The importance of mobile phones also emerged in relation to social networking websites where films and photographs became recognised as part of their objectified masculine capital. The use of a mobile phone therefore contributed to understanding informants' socially constructed identities. These fieldwork practices may also be of benefit to future ethnographers. It is now possible to create full videographies with mobile phones and, more importantly, include data that is generated by informants and not only based on the lens of the researcher.

5.8. Recommendations for further research

Recognising that this research relates to a specific cultural context means that exploring similar issues in other cultures would contribute to knowledge in this area. For example, drawing parallels between discourses across cultures and languages for negotiating masculine consumption meanings would allow further insight into differences and similarities. A parallel study could also follow from findings here to explore the construction of feminine identities through consumption practices. This may possibly highlight some of the games and 'play' practices of women and their layered gender identities. Additionally, future studies could explore the relationship between group and

individuals in the construction of identities and consumption practices in other contexts, beyond masculinity or gender. In particular, different identities based on age, sex, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality may be approached this way. Finally, this work also presents opportunities for exploring consumption meanings in groups such as subcultures, communities and tribes. A layered approach may provide further insights into the differentiated consumption meanings that can be found through linking a perspective on groups and individuals.

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Appendix

Interview guide example

Opening Questions for Interviews

Today's Date:

Place:

Time:

Age:

Birth Place:

Where have you lived for how long?

Brothers and sisters: age, now lives in?

Parents: age, died when? What age were you?

Place of birth of mother: stepmother/father: stepfather

Occupation of mother/father

Group activities with friends (predominantly male?)? of various groups (football, socialising (how?), societies (outside of Aberdeen?), various activities, various contexts:

- actors – tell me about the different people in the group of friends
- central action – tell me about what it is you do together
- structure of activity – tell me about a normal time when you'd do xx?
- important props
- who else is there? What's the location like?
- Doing well or badly in activity?

Area of expertise – your role in those activities? Other people's roles?

Special group? family - activities? Relationships?

Own identity perception? Description of self? Practices? On your own? Most enjoyment for yourself?

WHAT DO YOU YOURSELF PUT A LOT OF TIME IN/INVEST TIME IN?


Prompted practices:

Shopping, grooming, clothes, TV, girlfriend, facebook?

Banter Was Had: Dynamics of Group Consumption and Masculine Gender Strategies

**Banter Was Had:
Dynamics of Group Consumption and Masculine Gender Strategies**

Wendy Hein, The University of Edinburgh, e-mail: W.Hein@sms.ed.ac.uk



1. Context:

- Recent increase in interest in masculinities and consumption
- Less focus on lived experience and exploring of 'social self in action' (Elliott 2004)
- Focus on younger adult men
- Relation between shared collective and individual identity

2. Method:

- Ethnography – approx. 13 months duration
- Data generated through participant and nonparticipant observation, interviews and 'Go-Alongs' (Kusenbach 2003)
- Data written in 'strips' (Agar 1986)
- Participation across different activities in varying groups



The roles of banter in negotiating collective and individual masculine identities and consumption practices

<p>'Surveillance banter'</p> <p>"J: (...) So my uncle and his second cousin's husband were wearing pink T-shirts and me and my dad were taking the p*** out of them. I: And what did they say? J: Just laughed. But I would, well, I wouldn't wear pink. I have purple ties but that's just – and a purple shirt – but that's as far I would go." (Jeff, 21)</p>	<p>Intimacy & acceptance</p> <p>"Um, the dancing, the cheesy pop music, you dance to, your mates are there which is why you're having a laugh with them. Because you're dancing in a way with them. Eh, though I'm sure some of them would strongly deny that um, (laughs) (...) Eh, you can have a good chat with them about whatever, (...) purely making stupid jokes and making, making fools of themselves (...)" (interview excerpt, 20.9.07)</p>	<p>'One-up-man-ship'</p> <p>"I know more about football than probably ninety-nine and a half per cent of the rest of Scotland. I'm so sad. (laughs) You've probably gathered that already, I'm really passionate as well. (laughs) You don't want to talk to me the day after Aberdeen had lost." (interview excerpt, 28.5.07)</p>	<p>Banter as boundary markers</p> <p>"Eoin mentioned that there had been a fight in Potterrow after the England-Scotland rugby match. (...) He explained that the fight erupted after the English rubbed it in. He continued rather sarcastically we don't mind them winning but if they rub it in, we have every right to become angry and fight." (fieldnote, participant observation, 21.3.07)</p>
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3. Findings (see figure above):

- External uniformity as a response to ambiguous meanings
- Establishing legitimacy: collectively understood boundaries and 'safe' consumption (Finaldo 2007), creating a norm of 'us' in relation to the 'other' (Renolds 2004)
- Within the group, differentiation through varying competencies (Wenger 1998)
- Boundaries of legitimacy were contextual and shifted across activities and groups
- Banter observed as negotiating individual and collective identities through shifting meanings of gendered consumption

4. Conclusions:

- Consumption towards identification through 'being' (Shankar and Fitchett 2002)
- Importance of contextual and shifting meanings of gendered consumption practices – banter suggested as a strategy here
- Varying meanings of masculinity come together to shape understanding and experience of consumption



Acknowledgements:
The author would like to thank Stephanie O'Donohoe for her supervision and guidance. Thanks are also due to Susan Hamilton. Finally, thanks to the Dr. Jost Henkel Foundation and the University of Edinburgh for co-funding this project.

9th Gender, Marketing and Consumer Behavior Conference
Simmons College, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
June 16 – June 19, 2008

POV: Point of View... Consumers and Ethnographers in Perspective...

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This film is based on a female ethnographer's research exploring young Scottish men's consumption practices. It shows how applications of mobile phones helped overcome some of the challenges the ethnographer faced in the field to generate data in a less invasive way. It also describes consumers' own use of mobile phones to record their experiences, legitimising and authenticating their masculinity. This emphasised the importance of consumer experiences for constructing gender identities through culturally situated consumption. We suggest that the role of mobile phones advances the researcher's capability for reflexivity and creates a richer understanding of consumers' points of view.

The applications of a mobile phone may also be of help for other ethnographers, especially videographers. It opens further possibilities for exchanging film and photographic data with informants, linking data to social networking sites and also has the potential for filming full videographies.

Wendy Hein, Annmarie Ryan, Robert Corrigan (2010), "POV: POINT OF VIEW... CONSUMERS AND ETHNOGRAPHERS IN PERSPECTIVE...", in *Advances in Consumer Research* Volume 37, eds. Margaret C. Campbell and Jeff Inman and Rik Pieters, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research

Hein, Wendy, Ryan, Annmarie and Corrigan, Robert (2009): "Point of View...Consumers and Ethnographers in Perspective...". [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWPeDq2QdGc>], date accessed: 19th December 2009.