From Boys to Men
Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society
Edited by T Shefer, K Ratele, A Strebel, N Shabalala & R Buikema

The current emphasis in research and education on women and girls is fraught with problems. It has raised a concern that boys and men should be included in research and intervention work on gender equality and transformation. As a result, academics with a background of many years of work in women's and gender studies undertook a research project focusing on the construction of masculinities among young men. From Boys to Men was born out of this project.

This highly original work arises from the conference ‘From Boys to Men’, held in January 2005. It represents the work of some of the best-known theorists and researchers in masculinities and feminism in South Africa, on the continent and internationally. The subjects covered are based on rich ethnographic studies, mostly in South Africa, but also elsewhere in Africa.

Acknowledging that there are multiple versions of masculinity and that some are more valued than others, this book is concerned with documenting both hegemonic discourses on masculinity, as well as resistances and challenges to dominant forms of being a boy or man in different contexts of space and time. From Boys to Men provides valuable material for those working with issues of gender, identity and power, and will sharpen understanding of males, inform community-based interventions and facilitate theory-building.

'This impressive collection of research on men, boys and masculinities would have been impossible just a generation ago. It took the worldwide impact of the women’s liberation movement, and the many feminisms that have since developed, to bring gender into focus … and to bring men into focus as participants in a gender system.’

Raewyn Connell, Professor at the University of Sydney & author of Masculinities, 1995

‘Given the extant paucity of research and literature on masculinities, this book will undoubtedly prove to be an invaluable resource for scholars in the field of gender studies. The editors of the volume should be commended for this timely, well-constructed and significant contribution to the literature on masculinities studies, both in South Africa and internationally.’

Norman Duncan, Chair of Psychology, University of the Witwatersrand

‘Setting this collection apart from existing scholarship on masculinities in South Africa is its interrogation of the gendered rhetoric of boyhood and manhood in the context of HIV/AIDS. This is a multilayered and rich collection that suggests masculinities have the potential to be unmade and remade. The volume usefully opens up new avenues of analysis, telling us that masculinities are always in process, under negotiation, contradictory, for ever in crisis.’

Vasu Reddy, Gender and Development Unit, Human Sciences Research Council