National reports from South Africa suggest that nearly half of adolescent boys will experience sexual violence by age 18. However, research on sexual violence has predominantly focused on violence towards girls and women. This dissertation consists of three studies that address existing gaps in the literature and expand our understanding of sexual violence towards South African boys using data from the HealthWise translational research study.

Study 1 uses data from 252 South African adolescent boys reporting sexual coercion in grade 8 to examine the context of boys’ most recent experience of sexual coercion. Study 2 uses propensity score modeling and mediation analyses to examine the consequences of sexual coercion on boy’s sexual behaviors, attitudes, and norms among victimized boys and their matched peers ($n = 1454$). Lastly, study 3 evaluated how school-wide activities, implemented in the 56 participating schools, impact the school’s sexual climate and overall prevalence of sexual coercion within schools.

Eight grade boys were most likely to report that their perpetrator was a similar-aged female and that perpetrator’s age played a particularly important role in what tactics were used. Adult perpetrators were more likely to use physical force, threatened them, harassed them electronically,
and that the perpetrator was drinking or using drugs at the time. Results from study 2 suggest that when boys are balanced on baseline characteristics, the experience of sexual coercion is associated with increases in perceived norms of risky sex and coercive behaviors. The results further support an indirect effect of sexual coercion on sexual risk behavior and perpetrating sexual violence a year later through the effect on perceived sexual norms.

Though results from study 3 did not support an effect of school-wide activities on the school's overall sexual coercion prevalence, sexual climate and coercion prevalence varies substantially across schools. Schools with more risky and aggressive sexual climates have a higher prevalence of sexual coercion. These findings, along with findings from studies 1 and 2, suggest that schools are an important venue for addressing sexual coercion. Future research should further explore how schools can work to prevent sexual violence amongst students.