

KNOWING ABOUT MASCULINITY, TEACHING THE BOYS

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Abstract

The education of boys has become a subject of public interest, but debate suffers from confused ideas and inadequate information. This paper draws on the new social-scientific research on masculinity, and re-examines existing research on schools, to re-think the issues and move beyond sex-role notions. Gender is actively constructed within institutional and cultural frameworks that generate multiple forms of masculinity, normally with a particular form being hegemonic over others. Histories and ethnographies of schools allow us to trace the construction of masculinities in both single-sex and co-educational schools. Schools' masculinizing practices are concentrated in certain areas: the division of curriculum pathways, school sports, and discipline systems. The school's gender regime interacts with pupil cultures that commonly emphasise heterosexual constructions of sexuality. Boys take up the offer of gender privilege in different ways, ranging from protest masculinity to anti-sexism. Tensions in the reproduction of masculinities offer opportunities for educational work, which are best designed within a social justice framework. Most boys have interests which can be addressed in such a way. Gender-specific programs for boys now exist in a number of countries, most with a focus on inter-personal relationships. A whole-school approach, and change at system level, are also possible. The student-centred methods essential for this work are vulnerable to disruption, but new ways of engaging boys are emerging. Whatever the changes in political climate, the underlying issues of these debates remain; teachers can gain support from parents to address them.

KNOWING ABOUT COMMUNITY, TEACHING THE BOYS

INTRODUCTION: "WHAT ABOUT THE BOYS?"

The education of boys and men has recently become a public issue in a number of the rich industrialized countries. In the United States, a proposal to set up boys-only public schools in Detroit, as a response to disastrous drop-out rates for African-american youth, was halted at the last minute by legal action that declared them discriminatory (Wall Street Journal, August 11, 1991). In Australia, after a media controversy about boys' failure in schools relative to girls, a parliamentary enquiry into boys' education was launched (O'Doherty, 1994). In Germany, educational programs on issues of masculinity have multiplied outside the schools, both for youth and for men (Kindler, 1993; Lenz, 1994). In Japan, debate is beginning about new directions for masculinity and the prospects for a new "men's studies" (Nakamura, 1994).

Four main themes run through these debates. First is the apparent alienation of boys (or particular groups of boys) from school, resulting in boredom, failure and drop-out. A scarcity of male "role models" among teachers is often supposed to make schools unsympathetic to boys. Second is academic failure by boys, especially in language and literature, resulting in later learning to read, poorer exam results, etc. Narrow models of masculinity, or a feminized curriculum, are suspects in this case. Third, the growing awareness of violence and intimidation in schools has focussed on boys' acting out of aggressive masculine scripts, from stabbings and shootings of other boys, to the harassment of girls. Fourth are the hopes and anxieties about changes in masculinity that have developed around the contemporary "men's movement" and the new wave of research on the gender of men.

This is not the first time masculinity-and-education has been discussed. In the 1980s there were attempts in several countries to develop anti-sexist education for boys (Inner City Education Centre, 1985; Thompson, 1988; Askew and Ross, 1988). In Britain there was a sharp debate among feminists about co-education, and whether it was worth investing women's energies in boy's schooling (Mahony, 1985). Even earlier, there had been a minor panic in the United States about how schools were destroying "boy culture" and denying boys their "reading rights", through the prevalence of women teachers and the "feminine, frilly content" of elementary education (Sexton, 1969; Austin, Clark and Fitchett, 1971).

The context however has changed. Second-wave feminism has now been active in education for more than two decades. Under the banner of affirmative action, gender-specific programs for girls have become common. Girls' retention rates have risen and women's rates of entry to university and to university-based professions have climbed.

In Western politics there is now a formidable backlash against affirmative action, as neo-conservative politicians find new ways to mobilize resentment against the welfare

state. In the United States a surprisingly popular therapeutic men's movement has made an issue of men's emotional troubles, and has offered therapy for them through rituals and gatherings which celebrate "deep masculinity" (Kimmel and Kaufman, 1994). Some masculinity therapists work up statistics of men's troubles, such as earlier death and higher rates of injury, into a claim that men, not women, are the truly disadvantaged sex. (For a rousing rendition of this idea see Farrell, 1993.) In such a context it is easy to claim that it is boys' turn now for special attention, that girls have had it their way for too long. An aroma of backlash hangs around many recent proposals for boys' education strategies or special programs for boys.

But the question "What About the Boys?" (The Gen, March 1994) can be asked for quite different reasons. Gender equity programs that started as gender-specific programs for girls, have constantly come up against issues about boys. Questions about playground harassment, classroom dynamics, curriculum, necessarily involve the boys. Questions about the position of women in the teaching profession, and about gender hierarchy in education systems, necessarily involve the men.

The emergence of a new generation of social-scientific research on masculinity provides a basis for re-thinking these issues. The first section of the paper draws on this work to provide a framework for thinking about masculinity and schools. The second examines the evidence, especially from school ethnographies, on the making of masculinities in schools. The third considers educational programs which address these issues. The final section raises questions about the politics of implementation.

I. FRAMEWORK

Schools and gender

It is a clear implication of current work on gender that masculinities are only formed within systems of gender relations. Accordingly, the first step is to consider how gender relations in schools are to be understood.

Media discussion has focussed on differences in the academic and social outcomes of boys and girls, taking the schools themselves for granted. This parallels a long tradition of "sex difference" research. There is a strong tendency to focus on differences (usually small) in average outcomes, and exaggerate these into block differences between boys and girls. Epstein (1988) has aptly called these "Deceptive Distinctions".

Questions about the school's influence were initially understood in terms of sex role theory, which emphasise social expectations or role norms. Sex role theory was the intellectual framework of the liberal feminist policy studies which launched affirmative action programs for girls (e.g. Blackburn et al., 1975). It drew attention to the insistent marking of gender in schools, and to the conventional and restricted character of the

gender messages conveyed in syllabuses and textbooks (Delamont, 1990). However, treating schools as agencies of sex role socialization gave little understanding of classroom complexities such as girls using femininity to resist control (Anyon, 1983). Role theory is notoriously unable to grasp issues of power and race or class diversity. So, though sex role language remains the most common way of talking about gender in schools, it is important to move beyond "role" as a conceptual framework (Davies, 1989; Holland and Eisenhart, 1990).

A key step is to "think institutionally" about gender (Hansot and Tyack, 1988). Gender is embedded in school systems through large-scale divisions of labor, notably the different patterns of employment of women and men in the education sector, and through the history of segregated schooling for girls and boys, with its many remnants today. Gender is embedded in institutional arrangements at the level of the school: in divisions of labor among staff, among students (e.g. through the timetable) and between staff and parents; in power relations, manifest in school rules and administrative authority; and in patterns of emotional attachment, found in the "feeling rules" for teaching, and the school's handling of sexuality. The totality of these arrangements may be called a school's gender regime (Kessler et al. 1985). Gender regimes differ between schools; they need not be internally coherent, and are subject to change, sometimes dramatic (Draper, 1993).

Gender is not simply received by the pupils, but is actively worked on or constructed in interaction, in the sense of modern analyses of the social construction of gender (Lorber and Farrell, 1991). In the informal peer group life of elementary schools, as Thorne (1993) shows, the meanings of gender are constantly being debated and revised by the children, the gender boundaries both enforced and challenged. It hardly needs saying that gender relations are a preoccupation of high school peer groups. Studies of teachers show gender being constructed and debated in staffrooms as well as classrooms (Lawn and Grace, 1987).

Neither pupils nor teachers are free to make gender just as they please. They operate within cultural frameworks that provide gender symbols and meanings. This is not just a matter of marking difference, important as that is. Gender also affects common experience. The Western school curriculum as a whole has been constructed within a system of knowledge that reflects the perspectives of dominant groups of men (Minnich, 1990). The same can be said for the organizational structures through which Western education systems operate (Mills and Tancred, 1992). The cultural system of gender, nevertheless, is no monolith. School ethnographies show patriarchal ideologies "riddled with holes" (Grant and Sleeter, 1986).

To sum up, gender is a pattern of social relations that exists at multiple levels in and around schools: in institutional patterns, in interpersonal relations, and in culture. Gender relations divide, positioning people and actions as masculine and feminine, but also shape common frameworks of action. Gender relations are constantly under

construction, contain significant tensions, and therefore have many possibilities of change. These points are all relevant to the understanding of masculinity.

The New Research on Masculinity

In the last ten years, social-science research on masculinity has expanded dramatically, and a picture is emerging that differs significantly from older ideas of the "male sex role", and even more from conceptions of "natural" masculinity (Segal, 1990; Brod and Kaufman, 1994; Connell, 1995a).

Masculinity is not fixed by biology. Masculinity is a social pattern that refers to male bodies (sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology. We can speak quite meaningfully of masculinity in a woman and femininity in a man; on this point, psychoanalysis and common speech agree. Girls can be tomboys (Thorne, 1993); boys and men pick up feminine elements from their culture as well as masculine.

Masculinity does not exist prior to social behavior, either as a bodily state or as a fixed personality. Rather, masculinity exists in everyday behavior in social contexts, as a configuration of social practice.

Masculinity exists only within a structure of gender relations. This structure defines a particular pattern of conduct as "masculine" and another as "feminine". The patterns are marked out for individuals, but they also exist at the collective level. Masculinities are defined and sustained in institutions such as armies, and informal groupings such as teenage peer groups.

Masculinity also exists impersonally in culture. Media representations are familiar, from Sam Spade to Forrest Gump. Perhaps more powerfully, cultural processes create masculine subject positions. Street-fighter video games, for instance, represent stereotyped violent masculinities in the cartoon characters engaged in mayhem. But they also require the player to enact this violent masculinity (at a symbolic level) in order to play the game at all. Aggressive and competitive masculinities are similarly called out by the structures of sports (Messner, 1992), not to mention politics and business management.

Masculinity is never a fixed pattern; there is room for manoeuvre. The practice of an individual may depart from that of the group. There is often tension within a given pattern of masculinity. And there are usually multiple definitions of masculinity in any setting.

There is multiplicity, first, because gender is never produced in a social or cultural vacuum. The making of masculinity is always interwoven with the making of ethnicity, class inequality, region and nationality. The masculinities produced in an Anglo family

are likely to differ from those of a Jewish family (Brod, 1988). An immigrant settlement, an affluent suburb, the inner city, a multinational corporate office, are all likely to generate different masculinities.

Second, there is a division of masculinities that arises within gender relations. In a given gender order there is usually a culturally dominant form, a hegemonic masculinity. This is what tends to get called the "male role", or just "masculinity". But it occurs alongside a variety of other forms, which are less honoured, or are positively dishonoured. There are subordinated forms, such as gay masculinity; marginalized forms, such as the masculinities of marginalized ethnic groups; and masculinities which are complicit in the social subordination of women without being militant about gender hierarchy. The hegemonic form need not be the most common.

Different masculinities do not exist as simple life-style options. They are linked to each other, indeed, produced in relation to each other. This is the point of the term "hegemony". Hierarchies of masculinity are created by concrete actions, ranging from homophobic preaching through institutional racism to the commercial promotion of jock culture in sports. Impersonal cultural processes, as well as face-to-face transactions, are involved.

The main axis around which the varieties of masculinity are organized is the general social relation between women and men. A dichotomy between masculine and feminine is characteristic of patriarchal culture. Hegemonic masculinity is often defined negatively, as the opposite of femininity; and subordinated masculinities are symbolically assimilated to femininity (as seen in abuse of 'sissies', 'panty-waists', etc.).

Gender hierarchy is not just symbolic. In our society, men gain material benefits from patriarchy: markedly higher incomes, cultural authority, access to positions of authority. Hegemonic masculinities both express and defend this interest. (For thoughtful discussions of this privilege and its consequences for men, see Goode, 1982; Kann, 1986).

Yet men's interests are divided; partly because of the subordination of non-hegemonic masculinities, partly because of the interplay of gender with class, race and nationality. Men also have interests in their relationships with women and children, which may subvert their group interest as men. For such reasons gender hierarchy becomes contestable and historical change possible.

Forms of masculinity, and relations between genders, change over time. The kind of masculinity that was hegemonic at one moment of history may be irrelevant a hundred years later: consider the frontier masculinity of the American west or the Australian outback. There is no fixed pattern of gender which provides a universal norm. Nostalgia for a "deep", "true" or "original" masculinity is based strictly on fantasy.

Changes in masculinities result from many historical causes, and are not easy to predict; but they are not random. They may result from social movements that mobilize a particular form of masculinity, or try to change existing masculinities, or try to gain a new hegemony for an existing form. Masculinity politics, in this sense, are a feature of the modern cultural scene; and differing educational agendas are generated by different movements in masculinity politics.

The position of boys in the gender order of a school is determinate; it can be established as a social fact by enquiry. It is also negotiable, and thus can be the object of educational policy. Indeed, this negotiation goes on all the time. For many boys the process has absorbing interest, a fact that opens opportunities for educational work.

II. THE MAKING OF MASCULINITIES IN SCHOOLS

This section brings together evidence from several kinds of research on the way masculinities are constructed in the everyday life of schools. It makes particular use of school ethnography, a research method that has its problems (Woods and Hammersley, 1993) but is valuable here for its capacity to show gender practice in its social contexts.

Vehement regimes

There is no mystery about why some schools make masculinities: they are intended to. Dr Arnold and other reformers saw the British elite private schools of the nineteenth century as moral machinery for moulding Christian gentlemen. The Nazi-controlled schools in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s were given the task of producing Aryan warriors.

Boys' schools with emphatic ideologies provide a useful starting-point for thinking about how schools make masculinities. The most detailed analysis is Heward's (1988) Making a Man of Him, a study of an English boys' private school some generations on from Dr Arnold. From letters to and from the headmaster, Heward reconstructs the interplay between the school and the class and gender strategies of the boys' families. The school defined and enforced a suitable masculinity among its boys through dress regulations, discipline (prefects having the authority to beat younger boys), academic hierarchy (with constant testing), team games, and gender segregation among the school staff. The package was backed up by a school rhetoric linking manliness to religion, class and patriotism. In the wake of the Great Depression, the school changed its formula, increasing its academic and vocational emphasis and decreasing its emphasis on sport.

Given the clear agenda, we can consider the bodily discipline, dress code, academic hierarchy, etc. of such a school as masculinizing practices. The school adjusts the mixture in response to changing demands. Other historical circumstances will

produce a different mixture. Morrell (1993/4), in another illuminating study, traces the production of "a rugged, rather than cerebral, masculinity" on the colonial frontier. The white boarding schools of Natal (South Africa), in the half-century to 1930, also used the prefect system and gender segregation. But these schools laid more emphasis on toughness and physical hierarchy among the boys, through practices such as initiation, "fagging", physical punishment and spartan living conditions. There is an obvious connection of this masculinizing agenda with the context of settlement and the goal of maintaining racial power over colonized peoples.

These schools form a limiting case, displaying the potential of the school as a masculinity-making device, and the range of practices that can be deployed for the purpose. But such schools are hardly the norm in contemporary public education. During the twentieth century co-education has become usual, and day schools are the basis of all mass education systems.

The co-educational school as a site of masculinity formation

Co-education has not eliminated the masculinizing agenda entirely. Community pressure, cultural definitions of gender, teachers' own gender beliefs and practices, all mean that schools continue to define and shape masculinities. But the agenda has been muted. Masculinizing practices have neither the vehemence of Boys' Schools ideology nor the coherence of an explicit plan. Rather, masculinities are constructed through a complex interplay between the school's gender regime, aspects of school organization that are not explicitly about gender, and the culture, peer group life and personal trajectories of the pupils.

Co-educational schools bring boys and girls together, but also mark differences between them in many ways, as noted above. Through gender symbolism, schools reinforce the lesson from popular culture that masculinity is defined by difference from femininity.

There is, now, considerable research on the gender content of school texts and lessons, and the results are familiar. Boys and men tend to be presented as active rather than passive, in positions of authority, making important decisions, and in conventionally masculine jobs. This is not just a matter of old-fashioned "Dick and Jane" stories in infants' schools. As Sleeter and Grant (1991) have shown in a broad study of textbooks used in American schools up to Grade 8, gender patterns have persisted despite a recent shift by writers and publishers to non-sexist language, and representations of men have remained more stereotyped than those of women.

The creation of a symbolic dichotomy between men and women meshes with the treatment of sexuality. While the physical expression of sexuality in school is broadly forbidden, pupils are taught a heterosexual understanding of their desires. They are commonly presented, from kindergarten on, with marriage as the image of their future.

At the age when sexual exploration becomes a major issue in peer group life, schools provide social training (e.g., school dances) and sex education classes that presuppose heterosexual desire.

As recent studies of gay youth in Canada (Frank, 1993) and Britain (Mac an Ghaill, 1991) show, homosexual experience is liable to be blanked out from the official curriculum. This reflects political pressure, which can be quite savage on this issue. (For the targeting of British schools by the political right see Cooper, 1994). Gay youth are liable to experience a none-too-subtle hostility to homosexuality from school officials, while teachers experience heavy constraint in dealing with sexual diversity.

Sex education classes are an obvious source of heterosexual stereotypes, as seen in Trudell's (1993) remarkably detailed ethnography. They are also one of the most conspicuous failures of the contemporary curriculum (Sears, 1992), so are unlikely to be a major influence on students' beliefs about masculine sexuality. However sexual meanings emerge in many other sites. A heterosexual construction of masculine and feminine as opposites (as in "the opposite sex", "opposites attract") runs through a great deal of the school's informal culture and curriculum content. It provides an emotional underpinning for other practices that directly construct masculinity, and which feel "natural" within a framework of gender opposition.

Co-educational schools, then, typically operate with an informal but powerful ideology of gender difference. This is in tension with the agenda of equal opportunity, and with other school practices that reduce, or complicate, gender difference.

There is no doubt that many educational practices iron out gender differences. Common curriculum and common time-table, living daily in the same architecture and the same classroom routines, are not trivial parts of school experience. Teachers' emphasis on individual growth can mitigate the effects of gender marking, as King (1978) notes about infants schools.

Other school practices sub-divide and complicate gender blocs. Of these, none is more important than the competitive academic curriculum. The organization of learning in terms of individual competition in mastery of abstract, hierarchically-organized bodies of knowledge, inevitably defines some groups as successful and others as failures. Combined with organizational practices of tracking, streaming, or selective entry, this curriculum creates different social situations that call out responses in gender terms. Streaming itself becomes, as Garvey (1994) puts it, a masculinizing practice.

The competitive academic curriculum is, therefore, a means for constructing different masculinities. Those field studies which have recognized multiple masculinities have repeatedly shown the academic curriculum as an axis of difference between them. The most clear-cut examples are from studies of segregated boys' schools: the relations between the "lads" and the "ear'oles" in the British working-class school studied by Willis

(1977), between the "Bloods" and the "Cyrils" in the Australian ruling-class school studied by Kessler et al. (1985), and between the "three friends" and the "footballers" in the Australian working-class school studied by Walker (1988). The pattern, however, can be traced in co-educational settings also (cf. Wexler, 1992; Foley, 1990).

In these ways, the broad gender regime, ideology and instructional practices of co-educational schools construct masculinities. There are also specific sites within these schools where masculinizing practices are relatively concentrated, and where dramatic effects sometimes emerge. Three appear most important - curriculum pathways, sports, and discipline - and they require more detailed examination.

Curriculum pathways

Most of the school's academic curriculum is common to girls and boys. In some areas, however, pathways diverge. Data on secondary subject enrolments in New South Wales (Australia), for instance, show rather more girls than boys in advanced English and legal studies, rather more boys than girls in economics than computing. In a minority of subjects there are marked gender differences: boys predominating in physics and chemistry, engineering and industrial technology, girls in home science, textiles and design (Connell 1995b).

This is a familiar pattern internationally. For instance Grant and Sleeter's (1986) study of "Five Bridges" junior high school in the United States found that the school made an equal formal offer of learning to boys and girls, but allowed virtual segregation in some subject areas, especially practical ones such as shop and child development. Indeed the school cued this segregation by its own gender division of labor among teachers.

Many teachers would not think of curriculum divergence as a school agenda, since it apparently operates through a mechanism of student choice. Yet closer examination shows that curriculum areas themselves are culturally and institutionally gendered. Industrial arts teaching, for instance, is historically connected with trades that excluded women and fostered a strong sense of male solidarity (Cockburn, 1983). It can be difficult for men from such backgrounds to handle the new agendas of equal opportunity (see the case study of new teachers by Mealyea, 1993). More academic knowledge also has gender meanings. It has long been recognized that physical sciences are culturally defined as masculine and have a concentration of men teachers (Kelly and Weinreich-Haste, 1979). The sophisticated analysis of subject English in West Australian schools by Martino (1994) shows how English is feminized by its location in a humanities/sciences dichotomy. In the eyes of many of the boys, the subject is distanced by its focus on the expression of emotions, its apparent irrelevance to men's work, its lack of set rules and unique answers, and its contrast with sport.

Sport

The non-academic curriculum is also the bearer of gender meanings, and no part of school life is more freighted with masculinity symbolism than sport. This reflects the importance sport has assumed in consumer society as a means for defining hegemonic masculinity, connecting manliness with violence and competitiveness, and marginalizing women (Messner and Sabo, 1994).

Girls too participate in school sport, though not with the same frequency as boys. (In New South Wales in 1993, for instance, elementary school boys were 61% of the participants in representative competitions, girls 39% - Connell, 1995b). Typically the high-profile boys' sports, such as football, are enormously more important in the cultural life of schools. The coaches of boys' representative teams can be important figures in a high school. Physical education teachers have an occupational culture that, on Skelton's (1993) account, centres on a highly conventional masculinity that is "not only dominant, but neutralized as natural and good, part of the expected and unquestioned nature of things".

Foley's (1990) ethnography of a high school in a south Texas town gives a vivid description of "the great American football ritual". He shows that not only the football team, but the school population as a whole, use the game for the celebration and reproduction of the dominant codes of gender. The only thing wrong with Foley's picture is the implication that this is peculiarly American. Ice hockey in Canada (Gruneau and Whitson 1993), rugby in New South Wales (Walker 1988), and soccer in Britain (Robins and Cohen 1978), are heavily masculinized contact sports that play a similar cultural role.

Discipline

Adult control in schools is enforced by a disciplinary system, which often becomes a focus of masculinity formation. Teachers from infants to secondary level may use gender as a means of control, for instance shaming boys by saying they are "acting like a girl".

Punishment too is liable to be gendered. When corporal punishment was legal, boys were much more often beaten than girls were (W.F. Connell et al., 1975). Non-violent punishments still bear down more heavily on boys. For instance a recent study of suspensions in a working-class area of Sydney found that 84% of the pupils suspended were boys, and 87% of the pupils with repeat suspensions (White, 1993).

Where the hegemony of the school is secure, boys may learn to wield disciplinary power as part of their learning of masculine hierarchy. This was the basis of the old prefect system. Where hegemony is lacking, as in many working-class secondary schools, masculinity may be constructed through defiance of authority. With corporal

punishment, defiance requires bravery in the face of pain, a test of masculinity of the crudest kind. But even with non-violent punishment, the contest with authority can become a focus of excitement and bravado.

However tough they act, the boys cannot win this particular conflict: behind the authority of the school stands the power of the state. But the state itself sustains an unequal society. Boys' resistance to disciplinary authority in the school may thus be interwoven with responses to race or class hierarchy (Bowser, 1991; Willis, 1977). In a further twist, the state may use the dynamic of masculinity for its own purposes. For instance, in the New York high school studied by Fine (1991), African-american and Latino students were often recruited into the military as other options closed down around them.

The interplay with pupil culture

Schools are powerful institutions, but they do not operate on their own. Children bring conceptions of masculinity into the school with them, as seen in Cowan and Jordan's (1993) account of "Warrior Narratives in the Kindergarten Classroom", where a consciously non-sexist classroom was disrupted by games involving guns, fighting, and fast cars.

The peer milieu has its own gender order, though this is not a fixed institutional pattern. There is turbulence and uncertainty as young people try to define their own sexualities and identities, as they draw on the shifting fashions of commercial mass culture, and as networks change and generations turn over. It is, nevertheless, very common that peer group life is the site of an informal segregation between boys and girls, and maintains exaggerated ideas of gender difference.

With the approach of adolescence, interactions between boys and girls are liable to be sexualized, by flirting, innuendo and teasing if not through actual sexual contact. The heterosexual "romance" pattern of gender relations persists through high school into college, where it can still dominate student life (Holland and Eisenhart, 1990).

The romance pattern, in turn, connects with an informal hierarchy of masculinities, since heterosexual success is a formidable source of peer group prestige in adolescence. Foley (1990) shows the prestige attached to dating desirable girls such as cheerleaders, and gives a vivid account of the parties and other events at which masculinity is displayed and hierarchies reinforced. In this milieu the interplay of gender and ethnicity constructs several versions of masculinity: Anglo jocks, Mexican-american anti-authoritarian "vatos", and the "silent majority".

Foley's study makes very clear the importance of teenage peer groups as the bearers of definitions of masculinity. Peer group discussion often uses sexuality to establish hierarchies: "fag", "slag", etc. Verbal harassment of girls is endemic (Everhart,

1983; Lees, 1986; Milligan and Thomson, 1992). Thus hegemonic masculinity is constructed through the subordination of femininity; difference is defined through dominance.

Yet in childhood and adolescence, sex is still being learned. Wood's (1984) study of boys' sex talk in a London secondary school annexe emphasises the element of fantasy, uncertainty and boasting. The boys' pretensions can be punctured when a tough girl, or group of girls, pushes back. Wood notes the different registers of boys' sex talk, for instance the greater hesitancy in a mixed group. Massey's (1991) picture of teenage fathers in a Black community in California likewise shows diverse responses, ranging from pride and engagement, through confusion, to rejection and blaming of the woman.

Popular culture generates images and interpretations of masculinity which flow chaotically into school life through peer group conversation, ethnic tensions in the playground, sexual adventures, and so on. Some are racially based, such as the image of uncontrollable, violent Black masculinity that is familiar White racism in the United States - and has now been seized and deployed by young Black men as a source of power (Ferguson, 1994). Some are at odds with the official agendas of the school, and "discipline" problems are a common result of the clash. Others mesh with school agendas; we should not assume a constant tension between peer culture and school. Examples are interest in sports, and (especially in ruling-class schools) definitions of masculinity in terms of authority and professional success.

Taking up the offer

The school and popular culture may define places in gender relations for boys to occupy, but these only become effective if boys take up the offer. Masculinities and femininities are actively constructed, not simply received.

The discipline system is a case in point. The majority of boys in schools learn to negotiate the system of adult control with only a little friction. It certainly does not become a major issue in their school experience. But for some, especially in peer networks which make a heavy investment in ideas of toughness and confrontation, the discipline system becomes a focus of masculinity formation. One such was Jack Harley, a young man from a poor Anglo family in Australia (Connell 1989). Jack clashed early and often with teachers: "they bring me down, I'll bring them down". He was expelled from one school, disrupting his learning - "I never did any good at school". Eventually he assaulted a teacher and landed up in a juvenile detention centre, from which he graduated to burglary, car theft, and adult prison. This pattern of protest masculinity, constructed reactively against school authority, is familiar in other settings: the American ghetto school studied by Ferguson (1994), the British working-class schools studied by Corrigan (1979), the Australian church school studied by Angus (1993).

Recognizing the process of "taking up the offer" is also essential in understanding peer violence and sexual harassment. Messerschmidt (1993), examining masculinities and crime, makes the important point that men's higher rate of criminality is not just an expression of masculinity. Men and boys use crimes as resources for constructing masculinity. The same is true of fighting and sexual harassment in schools. Groups of boys engage in these practices, not because they are driven to it by raging hormones, but in order to acquire prestige, to mark differences, and to gain pleasure. These practices become central to the making of masculinity when boys lack other resources for gaining respect.

Understanding the active character of gender formation is also essential in understanding the diversity of masculinities produced. Mass culture produces stereotypes, and gender symbolism often produces simple dichotomies. But life-history research (such as Blauner's [1989] remarkable three-decade American study) shows subtly differentiated masculinities of tremendous internal complexity. Teachers' accounts of daily life in classrooms (such as McLaren's [1994] diary of an inner-city Canadian experience) shows a flux in expressions of gender that almost defies classification.

Nevertheless children do pick up the cultural patterns and subject positions offered to them. No-one could fail to recognize, in McLaren's classroom stories, the intimidating masculinity deployed by "Buddy" and by "Duke", experts in minor terrorism and occasional beatings. The point is that boys and girls take up the offerings as materials for their own practice. They do a range of things with these offerings: reproduce them, resist them, transform them.

So, while sexual harassment and verbal put-downs of girls (and women teachers) are widespread in peer culture, many boys decline to be involved. Some contest the practice, and side with the girls in classroom disputes over sexism. Nor are curriculum divisions absolute. As Martino (1994: 45) observes, though subject English tends to be defined as feminine, some boys like the subject and engage with it. Both boys and girls cross over curriculum pathways in significant numbers. In these respects, co-education has certainly made for greater complexity in constructions of masculinity.

Just as definitions of masculinity are often collective, so responses to them may be. Thorne's (1993) documentation of the gender "boundary work" done in elementary schools points in this direction. So does the rejection by some boys of a key part of hegemonic masculinity, the heterosexual definition of desire. For those boys who come to think of themselves as gay, a vital step is finding a social network in which homosexual desire seems something other than a ghastly mistake (Mac an Ghaill, 1991; Connell, 1992).

It would be useful to have a systematic map of the ways young people deal with cultural definitions of masculinity in constructing their own gender trajectories; but the

research does not yet allow this. What is evident is the fact of an active process of appropriation, which produces a diversity of life-courses.

Effects

It will be clear from this discussion that gender effects are not produced mechanically, as might have been thought from the old model of sex role socialization. In appraising effects, one is not trying to validate a model so much as grasp a state of play, and understand the possibilities for practice that exist within it.

Neither the institutional reforms that produced co-education, nor the newer agenda of equal opportunity, have disrupted the reproduction of masculinities between generations. They have changed some of the conditions in which it is done, and have certainly introduced complexities. Gender processes in schools produce multiple masculinities, and the schools must negotiate relations between them: the hierarchy of jock and nerd, the interplay between ethnic cultures, the extent of bullying and harassment, and so on. In this negotiation, a school's staff may be far from united. The mathematics staff may not care for the physical education teachers' enactment of masculinity, men teachers may divide over feminist initiatives about harassment, and so on.

The production of masculinities in the new generation, then, involves tensions which open up possibilities of further historical change. The contradictory effects of the discipline system, the tensions between teachers in different curriculum areas, and the diverging responses of boys to the changing economic and cultural position of women, are among the most visible.

Perhaps most important is the underlying contradiction between the infinite possibilities of learning, and the use of education to select for privilege and to legitimate exclusion. This was the contradiction on which feminism worked, in contesting the educational disenfranchisement of women. We are gradually realizing its significance for the construction of masculinities and the education of boys.

III. EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

It will be clear that questions about masculinity arise across a very broad spectrum of educational issues, from the epistemological bases of the academic curriculum (Minnich, 1990) to the cause and cure of playground bullying (Besag, 1989). In the following discussion I focus on one part of this spectrum, where the most active discussion of masculinities is currently going on: attempts to construct strategies and programs for boys which explicitly deal with gender issues.

Goals and starting-points

Gender issues have come onto the public agenda mainly as equity issues. In the usual logic of equity issues, educational change is sought to redress an injustice: denial of access to education, or the use of schools to reproduce disadvantage, or the exclusion from the curriculum of a disadvantaged group's language or culture. In the usual policy response, programs for disadvantaged groups are set up: compensatory education in response to poverty, Afrocentric curriculum and bilingual education in response to racism, affirmative action programs in response to sexism.

Some arguments cast boys' education strategies in that mould, defining boys as a disadvantaged group who need special programs. This will not wash. As noted above, the evidence is overwhelming that boys and men are socially, economically and culturally advantaged in contemporary societies.

The resulting interest in the status quo is easily mobilized. Kenworthy (1994) tells of teaching a lesson, in an Australian secondary school, based on a poem about a woman stockman (equivalent, in American terms, to a woman cowboy). The lesson worked well for a class of girls, and for a mixed class. But in an all-male class it was disrupted, under the leadership of some dominant boys who introduced a misogynist discourse and resisted opening up the gender issues. The boys in the class who could or would adopt a feminine reader position were scorned by the dominant group - a classic display of the micro-politics of hegemony.

Nor can a strategy be based on the idea, which has run through conservative commentary from Sexton (1969) to the present, that boys have inherently different needs from girls. Who can define what they are? The massive evidence of historical and cross-cultural variations in masculinity (Roper and Tosh, 1991; Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994), makes it extraordinarily unlikely that a set of educational needs, common to all boys and distinct from all girls, could ever be discovered.

Kindler (1993), reviewing recent German programs for boys, identifies three main goals: self-knowledge, developing the boys' capacity for relationships, and learning anti-sexist behavior. The first two are very general educational goals which should be served by much of the regular school curriculum, as well as specific-purpose programs. The third is more specific, but points to another general educational goal, social justice.

The existence of gender inequalities in society places a demand on education to pursue justice in dealing with gender. This is not just a requirement to "do something for the girls"; it is an issue about the quality of education for all children. A good education is founded on social justice. If we are not pursuing gender justice in the schools, then we are not offering boys a good education - though we may be offering them certain privileges. Boys' programs are appropriately located in gender equity programs when those are based on a general social justice framework (Martinez, 1994).

What might lead boys to contest hegemony, to decline the offer of power and pleasure made to them by the gender order? Programs for men and boys have found a range of motives to participate: curiosity, personal crisis, a sense of lack, a sense of justice and desire to reform gender relations, a desire for sharing and personal growth, a desire for space for non-traditional conduct (Kindler, 1993: 114-117). There are three underlying interests which might support these emotions, and which cut across the general interest in the status quo. The first is the need to end the emotional and physical costs of patriarchy for boys and men, which as Kaufman (1993) emphasises are far from trivial. These costs are borne disproportionately by different groups - as seen in the statistics of violence against gays, homicide among American African-american youth, and deaths in custody among Australian Aboriginal men.

The second is the interest boys and men have in their relationships with women and girls. Boys have connections with mothers, sisters, classmates, lovers, neighbours. The welfare of the other parties in these relationships has a direct impact on their welfare. This can be a powerful reason for work on harassment, rape and domestic violence.

The third is the interests boys share with the women and girls in their lives because they are collective human interests. The shared interest in a healthy environment, for instance, can support study of the role of masculinities in environmental destruction.

Educational work with boys "must start with the boys' own interests, experiences and opinions", as Askew and Ross (1988) argue. We cannot read off a strategy for boys by trigonometry from the needs of girls. The work should be driven by the claims of justice, not by the pressure of guilt. Practitioners are unanimous about the importance of addressing boys' own experience, and developing, as Denborough (1994) puts it, "respectful ways of working with young men" even on an issue like male violence.

Yet if current experience must be the starting point, it cannot be the end point. One of the major problems is the constructive absence of many boys from important parts of the curriculum, whether through gender-specific pathways, through drop-out, or through classroom resistance. Sexism implies a lack of empathy and understanding between people in different gender positions, a refusal of shared experience and knowledge.

There are, then, cognitive goals of gender work with boys, which have been under-played in the literature. Learning the facts of the situation, participating in the experiences of other groups, and making a critical examination of existing culture and knowledge, are very familiar educational goals which should be part of the agenda in work with boys.

Curriculum

There are two levels of curriculum discussions about boys and masculinity. The first addresses units or programs focussed on masculinity, almost all of them gender-specific programs for boys. The second addresses the school curriculum in general, and implies whole-school programs.

There is now considerable practical experience with gender-specific programs for boys, in the United States (Thompson, 1988), Britain (Reay, 1990), Germany (Kindler, 1993), and Australia (Dunn et al., 1992). The last-mentioned is reasonably typical. A "personal development" program (a local rubric under which health, sex education, relationships and emotions are combined) was developed by a group of classroom teachers. It promotes both gender equity and emotional support for boys, with an emphasis on being positive. The program consists of a set of structured sessions on these topics: developing communication skills; domestic violence; conflict resolution; gender awareness; valuing girls and "feminine" qualities; health, fitness and sexuality; life relationship goals.

Gender-specific programs commonly have a strong emphasis on inter-personal relationships (including their pathology, e.g. in domestic violence). While no-one can doubt the urgency of inter-personal issues, the construction of masculinity also involves preparation for the labor market, institutional arrangements, gender symbolism, etc. Other curriculum foci, then, are possible, even within a gender-specific approach.

Whole-school programs are much less common. What is involved can be gathered from a report by Chiarolli (1992). Principal and staff at a Catholic boys' secondary school launched a range of actions concerned with stereotypes and sexism: library displays, a parent evening, guest speakers, student projects in the community, home economics classes, scrutiny of the division of labour among adults in the school, and a broad examination of the school's curriculum.

The idea of a program operating across the curriculum, rather than in specialized units, makes sense when the implicitly gendered framework of curricular knowledge is acknowledged. At this level, the criterion of social justice would lead to a gender-inclusive curriculum (cf. Yates, 1993). An inclusive curriculum requires pupils to learn to see the world from standpoints they regard as Other, including those they despise or reject. This is the process that Sapon-Shevin and Goodman (1992) suggest is critical in sex education, "learning to be the opposite sex".

Given the multiplicity of masculinities, a gender-inclusive curriculum means taking the standpoint of other masculinities, as well as femininities. (This is a principle well established in "men's studies" courses in universities, which normally make an attempt to include Black experience as well as White, gay as well as straight.) An inclusive curriculum would try to introduce students to the whole truth about an

important area of their lives, rather than a sanitized fraction of it: to gay sexuality as well as straight, to the range of gender patterns across the world, to issues about harassment and domestic violence as well as happy families, abstinence and romance.

Plainly, this can only be done if gender becomes a major theme in the school curriculum as a whole. This logic was clearly accepted by the O'Doherty committee (the parliamentary enquiry mentioned at the start of this paper) which proposed that gender relations be included in the "core" subject matter of the public schools. While this logic may be a little too rigorous for some school authorities, a movement in this direction is already happening in the universities. Curricula in fields from Literature (Jardine and Smith, 1987) to Law (Collier, 1991) now grapple with issues about gender.

One can teach about gender, however, in different ways. Mac an Ghaill (1991) specifies that the intention of his work with young men in three English institutions was to move towards an "emancipatory curriculum". By this he explicitly does not mean teaching from a victim position. The distinction is important in unraveling the problems of equity and masculinity. An emancipatory curriculum, or a "counter-hegemonic curriculum" (Connell 1993), pursues social justice in relation to the objective pattern of social privilege and disadvantage. It requires linking personal and group experience to factual knowledge about the gender order.

Pedagogy

Angus (1993) summarizes the "sex talk" given by a devout mother to the boys at "Christian Brothers College" on occasions such as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception:

Now boys, there's no reason to be uncomfortable about the subject. I have raised three boys so I have a good idea of what you know about girls. You know, girls are special creatures with special needs and special times. You may notice that women - even your mums - act differently at different times. During these times you must be especially careful not to upset them, because they're feeling a bit under the weather. It's natural and part of God's plan. Just as you've changed, so have your mother and older sisters at different times in their life...and so, boys, remember to be open and honest with your parents, and show special care for your sisters and your mother. They are all special people who deserve your special care. Are there any questions?

Quite apart from the embarrassment, the top-down pedagogy is the worst imaginable for dealing with these issues. Practical reports emphasise the importance of a student-centred approach, whether at elementary level (Reay, 1990), secondary (Mac an Ghaill, 1991), or tertiary (Gould, 1985).

Would student-centered methods come to grief because males are "inexpressive"? As Corrigan (1979) points out, boys hanging about in peer groups in the street do almost nothing but talk. The problem is not to find the capacity for expression but the right circumstances for it.

The "tactics of engagement" recommended by Gould do, however, presuppose willing students. And that cannot be assumed in mass education, where classes for boys are vulnerable to the tactics of disruption - as Kenworthy found. Reay's perceptive account of a teaching experience at upper elementary level shows constant compromises between teacher and taught, for instance accommodating rather than challenging peer group hierarchies. Reay wryly concludes that at the end of the program the boys had certainly learned how to please the teacher.

It is important, then, to find ways of fostering the engagement that cannot be presupposed. A number of programs (e.g. Hocking, 1983; Novogrodsky et al., 1992) report success with drama. Student-produced drama especially could be expected to draw on experience while requiring reflection on it.

Some recent work in Australia has got mileage from work with narratives. Denborough (1994), dealing with the very difficult issue of masculinity and violence, emphasises getting the boys to look for the counter-narrative to the conventional one. His approach draws on the research analysis of subordinated and marginalized masculinities.

Rhodes (1994) set boys the task of constructing stories, both individually and in groups. Given boys' pleasure in texts which reproduce only hegemonic masculinities (action movies, comic books), Rhodes argues for using texts from which they are easily distanced, and can more easily see the process of gender construction. Oral narratives are good for this. Davies (1993), a poststructuralist in the classroom, has children performing astonishing feats of textual deconstruction and discursive analysis about gender. Even Davies, however, cannot prevent the boys in her groups resisting their removal from textual authority. More than discourse is involved.

It is important that gender equity work with boys should open possibilities, should find ways forward for them. The masculinity-therapists have a point in rejecting a certain kind of feminist criticism, which lumps all males together and relentlessly blames them. In teaching university courses about gender, I have repeatedly seen men discouraged by the endless facts of sexism, experiencing feminist ideas mainly through guilt, and turning away because the alternative was to be overwhelmed. A sense of agency, of goals being achievable, is important.

Institutional Change

Angus (1993) has rightly observed that changes in the cultural handling of masculinity require changes in school organization. There are two main kinds: organizational changes that are needed to support chalk-face programs, and changes in the institutional arrangements that themselves embody or generate masculinities.

Some of the first kind are mechanical, though they may be intricate - such as the timetable changes required for a planned combination of single-gender and mixed classes in a co-educational school. Some require more spadework, such as changes in teacher training. Work on gender with boys calls on capacities among teachers that need to be fostered. Material about men and masculinities is still scarce in pre-service training. In-service programs are gradually being introduced. For instance, in the last couple of years the New South Wales public school system has run sessions on "Boys' Education Strategies", "Boys' Self-esteem", and "Sex-based Harassment".

In the second category are changes in the gender regime of a school. The discussion earlier in this paper indicates several areas for action. One is replacing confrontational discipline systems, to break cycles of aggression. Another is restructuring sports and physical education, to emphasise participation rather than competitive selection.

Some institutional changes require action beyond the individual school. For instance, many people have argued for having more men in elementary and infants' teaching. This would require substantial changes in school systems' staffing policies; no system I have heard of has yet been convinced this issue is important enough to make them.

To change gender-divided curriculum pathways also requires action beyond the individual school. Curricula are partly controlled by system curriculum units, examination and testing boards, textbook publishers, employers' certification demands, and entry requirements of colleges. It is possible to move this aggregate, as feminist work in natural sciences and technologies has shown, but it is not easy.

System-level change is most likely to happen if cued by change within schools. Here an important lesson about pathways is already available. Simply opening up curricular options does not by itself produce gender integration. There are social pressures keeping boys out of high school classes in child care and textiles, for instance, quite as tangible as the pressures keeping girls out of industrial arts or physics. Where the field of study is already divided along gender lines, there is a strong case for building integrated units, i.e. for re-categorizing knowledge, rather than trying a carrots-and-sticks approach within the old divide.

Finally, institutional change is most likely when the people who hold organizational power have clear criteria to meet. It would be useful, and relatively cheap, to monitor school system performance on such issues as: gender segregation in the curriculum (including participation in sports); levels of violence and sexual harassment; presence of men in early childhood education (as well as women in school administration, the kind of data now often collected by Equal Opportunity units); presence of curriculum units focussed on gender relations.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

In 1991 the Toronto School Board sponsored an innovative "retreat" in which 40 high school boys and 40 high school girls, together with their teachers, worked on issues of sexism and change in masculinity, then took the results back to their schools (Novogrodsky et al., 1992). After the Year of the Angry White Male, as the 1994 Republican election victory has been called, one may doubt that many school systems in the United States would care to follow this example. Is the debate about masculinity and schooling a waste of time? Is there any real chance of major policy change?

As I noted at the start of the paper, current discussions of masculinity and education have focussed on violence and harassment, academic outcomes, alienation, and changes in masculinity. These are real issues, though some need reformulating in the light of research. We can add two other issues of comparable importance: gender-divided curriculum pathways, and the organizational patterns that construct masculinities in schools.

Whatever the political climate, these underlying problems will not go away. School systems will need to deal with them. We can expect the process to be complicated. Cross-cutting social and economic interests are involved; the familiar model of an excluded group mobilizing for equity reform does not apply.

The political complexities are evident when we think about one of the key groups involved, men teachers. Teachers are the workforce of educational reform; if anything large is to happen in schools, teachers must be engaged in making it happen. Like the boys, men teachers share a broad interest in the gender status quo. As Angus (1993) observes, to the extent conventional masculinity "works" in the current educational environment, a lot of teachers have little motive to change.

Yet some men do become involved in counter-sexist work with boys, and many more could. The teaching profession too contains a diversity of masculinities. Many teachers therefore have a personal interest in reducing gender hierarchies. Teachers directly experience the occupational stress caused by violence and resistance among boys. Teachers have a professional interest in reducing the disruptions to learning

(including girls' learning) arising from the social dynamics of masculinity. There is a professional challenge in succeeding with a social justice agenda in the face of difficulties.

The chances of teachers' work on these issues succeeding depends in part on their relations with parents and communities. This issue has yet to come into focus in discussions of boys and masculinity. As studies of school/community relations show (Lareau 1990), teachers seek parent involvement in schools but also seek to limit it. In fields like gender and sexuality, these limits may be overwhelmed. Religious right mobilizations and conservative politicians have severely limited the capacity of American schools to deliver realistic sex education, a major reason for problems in AIDS prevention (Sabella 1988). Work on gender may equally be targeted.

At the same time, many parents are aware of changes in gender relations in the wider world, and worry about issues like AIDS and sexual violence. Many parents want the schools to address these issues in a realistic and timely way (New South Wales Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations), 1994. To build on this kind of support is certainly possible, and is done by some schools mentioned in the literature. It needs, however, a certain confidence and public credibility on the part of the school, and a conviction of the importance of these issues. Gender education for boys, this implies, cannot be treated as a technical issue. It involves the public purposes of education; it rightfully concerns teacher unions and school administrators; and it could be a key question for parent and community involvement in schools.

In tackling these issues, schools are not pursuing an esoteric agenda. They are keeping current with the world around them, where changes in masculinities are going on regardless. Ito (1993) describes cultural changes in Japan that include changes in images of men in popular culture, the emergence of companionate marriages and shared child care, re-negotiations of sexuality, and explicit critiques by men as well as women of old models of masculinity. That is happening in a country that the English-speaking world imagines as a bastion of patriarchy. No contemporary education system is going to escape these issues; the choice is not whether to deal with them, but how.

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