



## Male Teachers in Feminised Teaching Areas: marching to the beat of the men's movement drums?

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**ABSTRACT** *Calls for more male teachers are prevalent in current gender debates in education. A dominant argument in this debate is that boys are often alienated from school because of a lack of male role models in feminised areas of the school curriculum and in primary schools. Little research has investigated male teachers' accounts of their work within feminised environments. Drawing on data collected in two research studies in music education, this paper focuses on accounts given by male teachers about (a) practices adopted specifically to work with boys and (b) the role of the male music teacher. Analysis of these data suggests that some male teachers working in feminised areas of the school curriculum adopt practices which, rather than challenging dominant constructions of masculinity, sometimes reinforce gender stereotypical behaviours in boys. We argue that calls for increasing the number of male teachers in feminised areas of schooling need also to be informed by open discussion of the underlying assumptions about masculinity which teachers themselves bring to their work.*

### INTRODUCTION

In recent times we have become concerned about the ways in which the 'What about the boys?' debate has constructed the feminist project relating to girls as a completed one. Dominant voices within this debate suggest that boys are now the most underprivileged group within the schooling process and that it is time that boys received the benefits of gender equity initiatives. We agree that any moves towards more gender equality in schools will require 'boys' being considered as an educational issue. However, we believe that this should not be in ways which construct boys as victims, but rather in ways which explore how dominant masculinising processes within school (and elsewhere) work to construct a gender order that works in the interests of already privileged boys and men. Thus, we regard suggestions that boys are now in crisis as representing crude overstatements of the gains made in girls' schooling over the last 20 years or so. For clearly whilst *some* middle-class girls have benefited from some changes resulting from the inclusion of gender equity programs and policies in education, this has not been the case for all girls, nor has it been reflected in the extent to which girls experience sexual harassment at school, the broadening of post-school options for girls, or equitable income levels in the world of work.

Much of the currently perceived crisis in boys' education is grounded in a notion that boys are currently underachieving at school (Epstein *et al.*, 1998; Mahony, 1996, 1997). The finger pointing which accompanies this notion of the underachieving boy often identifies single-parent families with a female head, and the feminisation of the

teaching profession, as causal factors of this underachievement. Central to the argument is that boys are currently out of control because they are lacking suitable male role models. Thus, there is an ever increasing demand for there to be concerted attempts made to attract men to the teaching profession, and especially in those areas which have been deemed as 'feminised'. This is clearly a simplistic analysis of the complex ways in which gender relations are constructed and reconstructed within the gender regimes of schools and the consequences of this in relation to student achievement. In this paper we take as our focus a feminised area of the school curriculum, music (Morton, 1996) [1], to explore the ways in which gender relations are played out in relation to two teachers' involvement in the teaching of this subject. We argue that in the instances discussed here, because music teaching has been constructed as a feminised activity, men working within such areas often have to 'prove' their masculinity and that rather than challenging dominant forms of masculinity actually reinforce hegemonic masculinity.

By the late 19th century, the vast majority of music teachers were women (Gould, 1992, p. 15; Green, 1997, p. 47). Whereas in the 19th century the private studio was the central focus of music education, a century later music is included within the school curriculum in countries across the globe (Leong, 1997). However, the continued predominance of women teachers in school music programmes is reflected in Leonhard's survey of arts education in the USA (1991). In schools surveyed ( $n = 843$ ), Leonhard found that women arts teachers (music, visual art, dance and drama) outnumbered men in all areas of specialisation with the exception of instrumental music (1991, p. 44). As a further example, in Queensland primary schools, only 11% of classroom music specialists are men (Roulston, 1998). That music education in schools is the province of women may be noted from the ease with which school music teachers are characterised in the opening sentences of a paper by Ross.

School music has a sad history. The music teacher is typically a martinet, short on temper and quick on the pre-emptive strike. With an infallible and exquisite ear she banishes the growler to eternal damnations, getting shot of the unwashed masses as quickly as possible in order to bask in the rarefied company of the gifted exceptions. At seasonal intervals she is given a high profile and unqualified support as the school marshals its artistic forces for a public relations assault upon the punters; but for the most part she is quietly ignored as an eccentric and somewhat expensive queen bee. (1995, p. 185)

While Ross is careful not to blame women for the poor state of music education—'what's really wrong with music is neither the curriculum nor the teachers' (1995, p. 192), he explicitly notes in his recommendations for 'arts education proper' that the music teacher will be female. For example, Ross notes that this teacher—always designated as female—is needed to provide constant feedback', 'must help the child', 'listens for her authentic voice', and 'will assist in the edification rather than the education of her pupils' (1995, p. 200). Since the field of music teaching is highly feminised [2]—what, if anything, may be noted from the literature concerning the work of male music teachers?

There has been a general slowness among researchers working in the field of music education to investigate gender issues in relation to school music. Hanley (1998, p. 51) notes, for example, that as late as 1994 an examination of Canadian journals in music education yielded but one article dealing with gender issues. Much recent work has sought to apply feminist theory to the pedagogy of music education (see, for example,

Lamb, 1993, 1996). However, researchers have yet to examine accounts of *men* working in the feminised field of school music.

Both Green (1997) and Hanley (1998) [3] have made significant contributions to an understanding of music teachers' perceptions about boys' and girls' achievement in secondary music. Green reports that boys characteristically rejected school music, certain activities of which were seen to be 'cissy' and 'un-macho' (1997, p. 168). Hanley (1998, pp. 57–59) likewise notes the lack of participation in singing by boys, and notes the appearance in teachers' comments of reasons for boys' absence in this area previously identified by Koza (1993a, p. 51) in her analysis of choral methods texts:

1. The perception that singing is not an appropriately masculine activity;
2. Choral programs have not catered to male interests and preferences;
3. The voice change sidetracks boys; and
4. Boys avoid singing because they perceive it to be unrelated to their future career plans.

The historical perception that music as an activity is within the feminine (and hence unmasculine) realm has been noted by musicologists (see Leppert, 1988 and McClary, 1991 for two examples). Green (1997, p. 25) argues that the characterisation of musical performance as a 'feminine pastime' is still extant amongst students in schools today. Further, with 'the tendency of music itself to feminise', the 'ideological conflation of effeminacy with homosexuality' has resulted in 'the form of homophobic denials and the writing-out of any hint of homosexuality in musical historiography or criticism' (Green, 1997, p. 25).

Given that there is a perception of certain forms of school-based music as unmasculine, and in particular singing (Green, 1997; Koza, 1993a; Koza, 1993b; Vaughan, 1999), what do teachers' accounts reveal of their work with boys? Both Green and Hanley report perceptions among teacher respondents that students are influenced by role models (Green, 1997, pp. 242–245; Hanley, 1998, pp. 65–66). For example in Green's study one teacher comments that girls are more successful at singing because 'Boys ... lack role models' (Green, 1997, p. 242). In the same study another teacher states that 'I've always asked for male students [i.e. student-teachers] since the pupils only see a woman teacher teaching the subject otherwise' (Green, 1997, p. 243) [4]. Likewise, a respondent to Hanley's questionnaire notes that:

It is imperative to start males singing early (elementary level) to avoid negative stigma attached. Our elementary programs have been cut so I will take our students into the elementary schools this year to expose all students to both males and females singing in our groups. (Hanley, 1998, p. 66)

These comments tend to support the notion that one way of approaching the problem of boys' rejection of musical activities deemed to be 'unmasculine' is to provide suitable male role models (Vaughan, 1999, p. 201). This approach, however, along with choosing music that boys will like, has been criticised by Koza (1993a).

In this paper, we present accounts from two male music teachers, each of whom has chosen one of these approaches in his work. Before presenting the data, we first review recent research in theories of masculinity and outline the theoretical framework within which our analyses lie. We argue that that the push towards more male teachers in schools is grounded in a men's mythopoetic or therapeutic politics and that this is a politics which reinforces dominant constructions of masculinity. We contend that calls

for more male teachers are often simplistic. They neither take account of the ways in which gender relations are constructed through the curriculum and other school practices, nor do they pay any attention to the current gender order operating within the wider social context. For instance, music education is constructed as a feminised subject within an androcentric curriculum. In this paper we explore, through interviews, accounts of work practices from two male music teachers and suggest that the existing social organisation of masculinity works to reinforce and valorise hegemonic masculine characteristics. We do not attempt to make any broad generalisations about men in music teaching. Instead, what we hope to offer is a portrait of the experiences and accounts of work practices of two teachers. However, we do expect that the stories represented here will resonate with some teachers and academics working within education and thus will point to the need to reject blanket claims for more male role models in feminised areas of schooling. Rather, it suggests that any such calls need to give consideration to the types of work practices adopted by male teachers.

### MALE TEACHERS AND MASCULINITY POLITICS

A call for more male teachers has been a core demand in much of the men's politics around the issue of boys' schooling and has had a clear impact upon politicians and the media. This has been apparent in the Australian State of Queensland where one of the male teachers considered in this paper was teaching at the time of the interviews. For instance, a concern that there is a lack of male teachers in Queensland schools has recently been identified as a serious educational issue by a spokesperson for the Labor Party Queensland Education Minister, Dean Wells (Aldred, 1998). This is consistent with the concerns of the previous National-Liberal Party Education Minister, Bob Quinn, who initiated an advertising campaign to attract more males to teaching. The seriousness with which this issue is treated is also demonstrated by media coverage of this topic. Some recent newspaper headlines include, for instance, 'Wanted: male teachers' (Merymant, 1996); 'Men and young shun teaching, principals told' (Aldred & Butler, 1996); 'It's goodbye Mr Chips: Guys give our schools a miss' (Griffith, 1997); 'No panic, guys, kindies [5] need you—lecturer' (O'Chee, 1997a); 'Even fewer men on the roll' (O'Chee, 1997b) and 'Fewer male teachers a primary worry' (Aldred, 1998). One of the dominant arguments raised within these articles is that boys need more male role models. This is often founded upon either the belief that schools have become a feminised domain, causing boys to miss out on acquiring the discipline necessary to control their disruptive behaviour, or the interrelated belief that the education of boys is a form of men's business.

Many of the demands for increasing boys' contact with male teachers are rooted in a men's politics which has been described variously as 'mythopoetic' or therapeutic. These politics are closely identified with the work of Stephen Biddulph (1995, 1997) in Australia and Robert Bly (1991) in America (for critical assessments of such politics see Connell, 1995a; Kenway, 1995, 1996; Kenway *et al.*, 1997; Kimmel, 1995; Mills & Lingard, 1997). These works have reached such a degree of popularity that they can quite rightly be regarded as blockbuster texts, or more appropriately, as 'backlash blockbusters' (see Mills, 1997). These texts are all frequently cited in the popular feature articles on men, which are regularly published in Australian newspapers and magazines, and they have all been big sellers in different countries. For example, Bly's *Iron John* topped best sellers' lists in Canada and the USA for over 35 weeks in 1991 (Kimmel & Kaufman, 1995, p. 16). Each book has been held up as a work which has

changed, or will change, the way men (and sometimes women) see the world. For instance, the second edition of Biddulph's *Manhood* (1995) states on its back cover:

Since its release in 1994, *Manhood* has had a profound emotional impact on thousands of men and women. Copies have been passed from hand to hand—by friends, partners, workmates (and sons to their fathers)—with the simple message, 'you must read this'.

Biddulph's (1997) *Raising Boys* has experienced similar successes, encapsulating what is commonly referred to as a men's 'mythopoetic' politics (see Connell, 1995a; Kimmel, 1995; Messner, 1997). These are the men who seek to reject the civilising (read feminising) influences of modern society. Idealised within the pages of *Iron John*, *Manhood* and *Raising Boys* are ancient initiation rituals through which boys passed on their way to becoming men (many of these rituals bear no resemblance to those used in the cultures from which they are supposed to have originated, see for example Connell, 1995b, pp. 81–85). The lack of a men's spirituality within modern western society, these texts argue, has led to uncertainties and insecurities amongst male populations. It is claimed that in western modern societies absent and distant fathers have failed to provide boys with the much needed function of an adult male mentor. This absence, they argue, has led to men being overwhelmed by the feminising influences of their mothers and other significant women (such as teachers) in their lives, in turn leading them away from their 'deep masculinity'. Lack of a spiritual sense of what it means to be a man and lack of male leadership to provide this spiritual direction are thus identified as being the source of much angst amongst young men. This angst, they argue, has manifested itself in violent outbursts against women, suicide, depression, failure at school and a host of other evils experienced and committed by men. These books attempt to provide men and parents with programmes which will help men and boys to heal the pains they feel in their lives.

In these programmes, Biddulph and Bly rail against the 'soft male', the man whom they perceive to have a sycophantic relationship with women, feminists and feminism. They address issues of what it means to be male in contemporary society with the long-term aim of providing space for a deep, or essential, masculinity to be reasserted. They both claim that men who adopt their self-help projects will be of less danger to themselves and others. However, the psychological perspective which they bring to their work has dangerous consequences for gender equality. These consequences stem from their construction of a 'true' masculinity, their antagonism towards feminist influenced men and their emphasis on particular constructions of fathers (and father figures) and father relationships.

Bly's work has a distinctively North American flavour to it. It has clearly had an impact upon sections of the men's movement in Australia. For instance, Bly is quoted liberally throughout Biddulph's particularly Australian work and is often referred to by men who organise mythopoetic gatherings in Australia. Van de Ruit is one such man (see, for example, Van de Ruit, 1995, 1996). He remembers listening to a live recording of Bly as a defining moment in his life and comments about his reactions to his fellow male students in the engineering faculty of a university: 'Part of me shut down and I went the way of many men in the 1970s: soft, feminist in values, anti-macho and unaware of the possibility of being connected to other men' (1996, p. 20). This experience is one which, according to Bly and Biddulph, is common to men, and is the source of much of men's pain, anger and frustrations.

In many instances, the mythopoetic politics of men such as Bly and Biddulph can be

written off by caricaturing their devotees as drum-beating, tree-hugging, bare-chested, primal screamers undergoing tests of manhood in the bush (as recently happened in a series of episodes in the popular Australian soap opera, *Home and Away*). For within this politics there is a clear attempt to associate boys' and men's problems with a civilising, or feminising, of western modern societies. However, in Australian schools Biddulph's work has become almost essential, and respectable, reading for anyone caught up in the boys' debate. For many, Biddulph provides a lens through which to understand the apparent malaise in boys' education and provides some notions of how to address the issues (Biddulph, 1998). However, it is our contention that a Biddulphian approach to boys' education may well serve to reinforce the existing 'social organisation of masculinity' (Connell, 1995a).

Bob Connell (1995a) identifies four ways in which men engage with existing gender relations within this social organisation. He terms these four performances of masculinity as: hegemonic, subordinate, marginalised and complicit. Hegemonic masculine practices are those which serve to naturalise the dominance of men over women. Such practices can often be linked to performances such as sport, risk-taking activities, violent behaviour and demonstrating a loud social presence. Subordinate masculinities are performed by those men whose behaviour, demeanour and way of life pose a threat to the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity as exemplified by the masculinities of gay and effeminate men. Such men's performances open them up to being abused and ridiculed by other men (and women). Marginalised masculinities represent the nuancing of masculinities by factors such as class, ethnicity and race. This marginalisation has complex consequences and demonstrates the fluidity of hegemonic masculinity. An Aboriginal football player, for instance, may be highly revered by sections of the community because of his sporting prowess. At the same time he may be denied access to a night-club because of his Aboriginality. Complicit masculinities are performed by those men who do not enjoy hegemonic status, but who benefit from the ways in which hegemonic masculinities construct the gender order. This benefit accrues as a result of these men's silences about gender injustices. Social organisation of masculinity is at work within the gender regimes operating inside institutions such as schools (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Kenway *et al.*, 1997). Hierarchies of masculinity are not only clearly evident amongst groups of boys within schools, but also amongst staff. The maintenance of these hierarchies of masculinities and the privileging of men's and boys' interests over those of women and girls does not occur naturally. These arrangements are heavily policed.

Homophobia is a central feature of this gender policing. For as Epstein and Johnson (1994, p. 204) have argued,

In strongly homosocial situations, such as boys' schools and school-based cultures of masculinity, homophobia is often a vehicle for policing heterosexual masculinities. Men habitually use terms of homophobic abuse against peers who deviate from hegemonic masculinities.

Homophobia works on boys (and girls) to naturalise dominant gender performances and to create fears of being different. Boys who reject or challenge hegemonic forms of masculine behaviours are often seen as being inside traitors to masculinity. As such, they often live under a constant threat of violence (for some chilling accounts of the effects of homophobia on high school lesbians and male homosexuals see Ward, 1995; also Butler, 1996; Martino, 1997). The potential of being a recipient of violence due to

this labelling is emphatically demonstrated in a comment made by a student in Walker's study,

If I find out he's a poof: 'Fuck off poof! (slaps hands) There, y' fuckin' poof! I'll fuckin' 'it 'im. (Walker, 1988, p. 100)

In this instance, homophobia is deployed against a particular boy who is opposed to violence against women/girls, thereby serving to prevent alliances between boys and girls against some of the more horrible displays of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, the fear of homophobic violence leads many boys to become complicit in maintaining existing gendered relations of power. Consequently, as Epstein (1997, p. 113) has argued, 'misogyny and homophobia are not merely linked but are so closely intertwined as to be inseparable: misogyny is homophobic and homophobia is misogynist.'

Homophobia may not always be as overt as in the comment cited above. It often works in insidious ways to reinforce dominant constructions of masculinity. The school curriculum is hegemonised and gendered. In high schools the traditional academic curriculum occupies the upper rungs of this hierarchy, with the masculinised subjects of mathematics and science at the pinnacle. These latter subjects are the ones which are traditionally taught by men and which have the highest status within the school community. There are of course obvious exceptions to this, especially when the teacher is from a background which is other than English speaking. Male teachers who work in the non-traditional areas such as home economics, dance, drama, early childhood studies or music or who teach in the lower grades at primary school are more likely to be subordinated within a school's social organisation of masculinity. Implicit in much of this subordination is that men working in these areas are not 'real men'. Such men are often typified or caricatured as Biddulph's and Bly's soft, or feminised, males. Fears of this caricaturing may well lead to male teachers in these subject areas overplaying their masculinity in ways which reinforce those masculine practices which serve to oppress girls and women and those boys and men whose behaviour does not fit the 'norm'. It is such representations of masculinity which we want to discuss in relation to the descriptions by two male music teachers of their work practices.

The two data extracts which form the subject of this paper are derived from two studies in music education. The first data set was collected in two provinces in Canada as part of a multiple case-study investigating the strategies used by music teachers in their work with inaccurate singers (Roulston, 1992). The second set was collected in Australia as part of a multiple case study investigating the work of itinerant music teachers (Roulston, in press). In both research studies, six teachers (five female and one male) were included in the case-study sample, although many other data were collected—for example, from additional interviews, documents, and in the latter study, a state-wide survey. While neither study focused on 'gender' or 'masculinity' specifically, analysis of transcripts of audiotaped interviews and conversations reveals that for men working in music education, these are indeed complex issues central to their subjectivity.

## BEING IN TOUCH WITH YOUTH CULTURE: 'THIS YOUNG MALE WITH LONG HAIR'

First we turn to Tony Peters' accounts of his work teaching music in primary schools in Australia[6]. Our exploration of interview extracts provides some insight into one male teacher's experience of entering the feminised domain of music teaching. At the

time of the interviews Tony was a first-year teacher, and was a musician in a rock band in which he sang, played guitar and composed songs. Tony defined himself as different from other music teachers who are predominantly female. For instance, at one point, Tony mentioned that he had been instructed by a former male music teacher not to attend network meetings since they were ‘hens’ parties’. However, Tony did eventually venture into the feminised field of the music teachers’ network meeting.

*Kathy:* Have you met some of the other teachers around this area?

*Tony:* Yeah I haven’t met any other males. I’ve met a lot of female teachers.

*Kathy:* It’s predominantly female.

*Tony:* Yeah, so um, yeah I’ve *talked* [7] to them a little bit like I’ve been to a few like, what is it it’s oh

*Kathy:* Network meeting

*Tony:* Yeah network meetings that’s it and it’s just like you sort of walk in and then you’ve got all these *eyes* looking at you sort of thing so feel a bit funny.

It is clear from this account that Tony was aware that he was entering a feminised profession in which he is seen to be different. However, Tony’s accounts indicate that he consciously exploits his ‘difference’ in order to connect with his students. For not only is Tony different in being a male music teacher, he is also ‘different’ in that he is attuned to contemporary youth culture. For instance, his identity as a rock musician was not separate from his identity as a music teacher but integral to it. Tony consciously used his knowledge of and expertise in popular idioms to ‘reach’ his students—particularly those in the upper school (years six and seven). In the following extract, Tony describes his reception at the two schools in which he began teaching in 1997.

*Kathy:* And as far as the kids go what was their response when you came?

*Tony:* Uh I think I think they were very surprised because here was this young male with long hair sitting there talking to them and like probably didn’t look old enough to be a teacher and everything like that and the kids I think it really surprised them. Because I feel like I can relate them to a lot easier I mean I know what music they listen to because I probably listen to it myself whereas as older music teachers they probably they *don’t* so [I] mean the kids say something like ‘Can we put *The Prodigy* on?’ like what we had there [8]. They’d say ‘No I don’t want that’ they wouldn’t allow it see, where for me as long as it hasn’t got any swearing in it I’m cool with it sort of thing. And I think they like that and if you give them a bit a time and give them a bit of attention *like* that, they’ll come around you’ll get a very positive response back *and* a few of the teachers have said to me that you know their kids don’t complain about coming to music at all.

Thus, in addition to being a male teacher in a female culture, Tony regarded his use of contemporary music in the classroom as uncommon. Tony was aware that his views were open to challenge, and on numerous occasions, provided arguments for his use of contemporary popular music in his music programme—particularly where lyrics might be considered offensive by parents or other teachers.

*Tony:* And what I, the deal I do with them is, and I’ve spoken to parents on, at parent teacher nights about it, and they all seemed fine, is um, I can do



those songs and some of them might have a couple of unacceptable words in it ... But if I just change that and I've spoken to the kids about it and they understand that.

In the event that popular songs contained inappropriate language, Tony would change the offending words and explain why the change was necessary to his students. Tony provides two examples of how he had accomplished this. In the first, Tony has simply deleted an expletive, and replaced it with another noun.

*Tony:* And if I say if you let me change the words, um that's you know and they agree with me like 'Four Seasons in One Day's' got (spells) s-h-i-t in it excuse the French but if I change that to I mean it's 'laughing as the shit comes down' if I change that 'laughing as the *rain* comes down' it's a perfectly acceptable song it's melodically nice.

In the next example, Tony refers to the song 'Lightning Crashes' by the band *Live* [9], in which the offensive word here is not an expletive, but 'placenta'. Here the solution is simply to use the text from another verse in the song.

*Tony:* I mean 'Li-Lightning Crashes' by the band *Live* we did that one um the line in it I changed was um had 'her placenta falls to the *floor*' take that out that's that was the only unacceptable line and put 'her intentions fall to the floor' which is the same line that's used in the second verse put it in there copy it, the kids don't know the difference and e-even if they do they they're alright with it.

*Kathy:* Yeah able to accept that.

While acknowledging that other people might not approve of his use of popular music in the classroom, Tony claimed participation in the same youth culture as that of his students:

*Tony:* I think and I, and I, I mean, call me I mean I dunno people might think that's young and naive but I mean I like to do that ... Because I'm in touch I mean that's the sort of music I'm in touch with as well and that's the sort of music that they *hear* everyday on the radio.

Whether Tony was 'in touch' with his students cannot be calculated from either Tony's accounts or the researcher's limited observations of his classroom teaching. However, what did become visible as the year progressed was that Tony's utilisation of popular music as part of his teaching presented a challenge to the existing school culture. However, it is not the gendered aspects of the school culture which Tony is challenging. Tony's construction of himself here as a rebellious young teacher fits neatly with many popular images of the young male rebel who likes heavy metal bands. However, this form of rebelliousness does not necessarily problematise the existing gender order and indeed does much to hegemonise existing dominant masculine aggressive behaviours (see Aggleton, 1987; Harris, 1998). Anti-authoritarianism does not necessarily equate with subversions of dominant gender paradigms.

Whilst Tony is not explicit about gender issues, there is a clear relationship between Tony's masculinity and his attempts to work with the more troublesome students in class who tend to be boys. For example, Tony utilised his knowledge of popular music in a private arrangement he had made with one of his year-seven students. Under this arrangement, if this student—described as 'the worst kid'—undertook to participate in music lessons and behave appropriately, Tony would allow the boy to listen to a track

from a CD of his own choice during break time. When the boy, Brent, brought a CD to school with an 'explicit lyrics' sticker on it, two of the year-seven teachers complained to both Tony and the principal concerning Tony's arrangement. In his recounting of a meeting he had with the principal concerning this incident, Tony embarks on a lengthy rationale of his moral beliefs concerning youth culture and contemporary music, an argument which he had presented in defence of his teaching practice to the principal.

In this defence, Tony portrays a generational divide within the teaching profession itself. He positions himself as a young teacher in tune with youth culture in opposition to 'some really old teachers' who 'don't understand' the music to which children listen. The following extract demonstrates how Tony uses his construction of himself as a young male rebel as a teaching strategy.

*Tony:* You know and that's what I was saying to the principal I mean ... when you get some really old teachers that complain about it I mean they don't understand that a lotta kids are listening to that, all the kids *know* they know *Pantara* and they know *Pearl Jam* they *know* these bands, because that's what they listen to *all the time* that's what *I listen* to, they were round when I was was growing up I mean. And they're around *now* and the kids are *listening* to that sort of music and it mightn't seem appropriate to other people but there's *more* styles of music around these days and I said to him 'You want me to teach about the periods of music and styles of music and stuff like that I can do that.' I could you know but I also have to acknowledge, if I'm going to acknowledge jazz and classical and stuff I've also got to acknowledge like um rock and there's that goth there's gothic music there's *alternative* music there's heavy *metal* music, I mean that's all around. There's *rap* music, there's uh trance there's dance *all* that sort of stuff you've gotta acknowledge that as well. If you *don't* well then it's it's well I mean I'm being a very selective person and I don't think that's what you're supposed to do you know I mean I mean OK you don't dwell on something like heavy metal but you gotta acknowledge that that style exists because it does.

Tony, in describing his teaching strategies with a very difficult boy called Brent, also notes that through the diversity of musical opportunities presented, boys such as Brent will blossom from narrow musical tastes ('he only thinks *Metallica*') to a later appreciation of other styles of music.

*Tony:* And and that's what I just believe that I mean if that's what Brent surrounds himself in I mean and if he, if I let him listen to one song like that he'll listen to my Aboriginal music.

*Kathy:* Yeah it's a deal yeah.

*Tony:* If he listens to one of his songs he'll listen to my classical music, you know and at the moment he only thinks *Metallica* is you know that's everything but I mean, maybe who knows maybe he might get turned on to jazz if not now, maybe later on.

*Kathy:* Yeah you don't know do you.

*Tony:* And sort of say oh Mr Peters played that and such and such ten years ago or whatever? I mean and I just think that you know I should I'm doing something good for him.

However, Tony only really emphasises how his strategies work with troublesome boys. Ironically his actions serve to valorise the behaviour of these boys by the implication that he is 'one of the boys'. Furthermore, Tony's cosmetic changes to the lyrics in order to remove offensive words and expressions from some of the songs does not change what the music represents, nor does it critically examine the music. All of the bands mentioned by Tony are male dominated and often express a version of masculinity (in both their behaviours and in songs such as *Metallica's*, 'Aint my bitch') which is consistent with constructions of hegemonic masculinity.

#### THE MALE ROLE MODEL: 'ARE YOU CALLING ME A FAIRY?'

In the extracts which follow, Canadian teacher Andy Howard describes how he worked with a group of boys who sang inaccurately. A description of Andy's teaching practices occurs in talk which occurred in response to the researcher's strong assertion that boys who are not motivated to learn to sing cannot be taught to sing accurately. This assertion arose from prior discussion of the difficulties inherent in working with boys in the upper school who have not already learned to sing accurately.

*Kathy:* Well if they don't have motivation to sing and they don't think it's what boys should do they're not going to sing no matter what you do really.

While Andy initially agrees, he then proceeds to provide a detailed account which serves to disprove this, and confirm the notion that, with an adequate masculine role model, boys will learn to sing. In the next section of talk, Andy describes 'an experiment' he conducted at a previous school.

*Andy:* There was a grade five class or was it a grade five six split? And all the girls were *beautiful* singers and all the boys sounded crappy. It was terrible, all droners. I said, 'This is ridiculous' so I said, I really said to them, 'Guys you know the girls sound so good' and I and being a male this helped I said you know like, 'Do you think girls are all all better than you guys?' '*Oh forget it no way!*' 'What are you talking about? No!' So I sort of made that little comparison—'Well you know when I'm in class and I actually sing, the boys always do a lousy job and the girls do a good job' you know like, I said 'How would it be if we get together for some recess practice and we'll just surprise the girls.' [Speaking in mock macho voice] '*Yeah yeah right on man*' you know. [laughter]

*Kathy:* What grade was this?

*Andy:* Five six split. Um very this is street kids too, remember they are very, a lot of these kids have grown up on the streets so they were like wearing half sleeve jackets and *AC DC* jackets and their greasy hair up to here. *That* kind of look you know and here I am trying to teach them to *sing*. [laughter] So we got together at recess and we did, I taught them how to sing we did technical work with them so I said I started down low I said 'OK [sings low pitch to "mm"] match this pitch' and then I got kids to sing by themselves only boys only boys and of course and as soon as somebody would get it I'd say '*That's it.*' Really encourage them and clap [claps hands] for each other and and ah pretty soon they were all singing um up there about the C level C D level.

In Andy's account, these inaccurate singers are portrayed as the worst kind—'droners'. These boys are also portrayed as the most difficult kind to teach singing: 'street kids'

who are keen on heavy metal music. Andy provides a self-portrayal of a teacher who is able to reason with his students, finally convincing them of the worth of his teaching endeavour (that is, to help them to sing). The boys concerned align themselves with their teacher who is acting as a role model who is caring, concerned and encouraging. This alignment, however, is not just about a teacher joining with his students to further their education. It is also an alignment of him and the boys against the girls. Here he is role modelling more than singing, he is modelling the hegemonic belief that boys can always do things better than girls (even feminised activities such as singing) when they put their minds to it.

In later talk, the researcher moves to ascertain the boys' reaction to the type of remedial action taken by their teacher. The three restatements of her question concerning the boys' reaction serves to indicate some degree of scepticism on her part to Andy's unproblematic report of his work with the boys, and results in the production of further elaboration of his initial account.

*Kathy:* How did *they* feel, the kids?

*Andy:* Oh they had tremendous pride.

*Kathy:* Did they?

*Andy:* Yeah.

*Kathy:* The boys were a lot happier with themselves?

*Andy:* Yeah cos I I'd sort of really hammed that up I said you know like uh I, I did it from a, very, *jock* perspective it's *OK guys* and we'd *give each other high fives* you know I'd say '*Alright! You were* [claps hands] *singing in-tune!*' you know like nothing *prissy*. These are just not prissy kids. You know and I would whenever we'd do that I'd dress up really in a tracksuit and ah we'd, you know we'd we'd just build this camaraderie of of *men* you know. [laughter]

In this elaboration Andy includes a self-portrayal which asserts a certain type of masculinity. The type of masculinity portrayed here is one which is 'very jock', 'nothing prissy', and one in which Andy himself presents a sporting persona by wearing a tracksuit to facilitate the building up of a 'camaraderie of men'. In this account Andy attempts to distance both himself and singing from the stigma of homosexuality by avoiding prissy behaviour and by wearing signifiers of hegemonic masculinity. The camaraderie which Andy is creating with the boys in his class is one which is clearly founded upon the existing social organisation of masculinity within which 'prissy' behaviour is punished and where men join together in a stereotypic 'battle of the sexes' world view.

The linking between homophobia and male constructions of singing becomes obvious in the following two extracts from this interview with Andy. The first resulted from the researcher's questions about the willingness of the boys to attend recess sessions.

*Andy:* ... Um, they really respected me because I I coached the basketball I coached the floor hockey and I you know I did all these sports things with them.

*Kathy:* Oh I see yeah.

*Andy:* So they really respected me. So I said '*Look, as far as I'm concerned, only prissies don't sing.*'

*Kathy:* Oh I see.

*Andy:* Any guy who's worth anything *sings*. You know and at first it was like 'What?' [laughter] But it confused them because their mentality of singers was, you know like, fairies sing [inaudible] fairies sing and I said 'Are you calling me a fairy?' 'NO Mr. Howard sorry no no no' [laughter] because I *sing*. So oh OK, so it confused them to begin but then I started building on that and, the thing that they were *able* to and it was nice to see these these *street* kids really (inaudible) looking kids you know they were not, by any means your (2 second pause) oh you know like the ... middle class growing up yuppie group no these kids you know, were arrested for stealing bike parts and stuff like this. [laughter]

The second extract draws on Andy's reflections on his personal motivation for pursuing this type of work with boys.

*Andy:* I felt great. Mainly because, you know *personally* I've, um oh I grew up with that in you know like [inaudible] when I was in university we went and toured a lot of the high schools in the university choir and the most commonly asked question in high schools from us was 'Are you gay?'

*Kathy:* [laughter] What's this got to do with it? [laughter]

*Andy:* NO WE'RE NOT GAY you know *do we look gay* what do you think?

*Kathy:* [laughter]

*Andy:* But their idea was you know like you're male singers so then you're you're a bit *funny* you know so, that's a bit of sore point with me so I, I had an extra motivation to sort of get these kids *singing* and they were, and they, they could sing by the end of it.

In these extracts, Andy pays tribute to the powerful dynamics at play in his work. The dominant construction of male singers as homosexual which Andy has encountered in both his musical performance and teaching serves as a potent pressure forcing him to emphasise hegemonic masculine characteristics in his work with boys. For these boys, singing was a homosexual activity to be avoided, and Andy recognised the crucial importance of overcoming this gender stereotype. However, he did not see any necessity to challenge the boys' demonstrations of homophobia. This is perhaps not surprising given that Andy has had to refute homophobic allegations because of his profession and that he is quite clearly tired of this, for example, '... you're male singers so then you're ... a bit funny ... that's a bit of [a] sore point with me'. Homophobia as a discourse does not only serve to police the behaviour of boys in schools, but also of male teachers. Indeed many of Andy's comments served to reinforce homophobic expression as legitimate, for instance, such as his rhetoric encouraging boys to sing: 'only prissies don't sing.'

During the course of this interview, Andy constructs himself as an ideal role model for these street-smart, trouble-making boys. According to Andy these boys have been able to achieve because of the ways in which they have been able to identify with him. He has been able to exert his masculine authority over these boys to make them attend extra sessions during their recess time, not simply because he was a teacher but because he was a man's man. Andy is emphatic about the importance his sporting involvement in hegemonic sports (floor hockey and basketball) has had in earning these boys'

respect. One can only wonder how the boys in this class who like singing but do not like violent sports are going to feel, and also about the effects his bonding with some of the boys will have on the girls in the class.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper we have sought to begin a preliminary investigation of accounts from male teachers working in one feminised domain of teaching. The data we have chosen to analyse here are derived from two separate studies in music education. In both data sets examined here, male teachers provide accounts locating themselves in a feminised environment. Their gendered interpretations of their work in these environments both serve to reinscribe and reinforce dominant constructions of masculinity, and existing gendered relations of power. Central to these interpretations by these men are attempts to distance themselves from femininity and ‘unmanliness’. It is perhaps not surprising that in both cases, accounts of ‘successful’ teaching practice involving work with the ‘worst kids’—troublesome boys—appear. It is the control of these types of boys and their behaviour which often serves as the basis of calls for more male teachers. This concerns us. For in the examples used here, the practices of appealing to such boys through the use of music which they will like (contemporary heavy metal music), or through the adoption of ‘macho’ images derived from competitive sport, are likely to legitimise homophobic and misogynist behaviours. In addition, these practices may well serve to alienate those students who both fail to live up to, or reject, such prevalent images of hegemonic masculinity purveyed in both contemporary popular music and in the sporting arena. Ironically, these men’s attempts to legitimise their involvement in music teaching by emphasising their engagement with ‘normal’ masculine practices as well as music teaching will also serve to create what they seek to avoid—the signification of music as an unmasculine activity. We do not seek to suggest here that men should not engage in the teaching of what have become constructed as feminised activities. Our concerns are grounded in the ways in which those teaching areas constructed as feminine have been devalued to the extent to which those men who teach in these areas have to assert their masculinity in ways which devalue behaviour and characteristics which have become associated with femininity.

## NOTES

- [1] Morton (1996, p. 5) defines ‘feminised’ as something that is ‘secondary, trivialised, subordinate, and usually exploited’. Since it ‘does not describe something as female but ascribes status and characteristics of the feminine ... both men and women can be participants in a feminised discourse’.
- [2] We note that, whilst the music teaching profession has been feminised, the fields of performance, composition and criticism have been dominated by men. Close parallels can be drawn here with the subject English. There have been many claims that boys are underperforming in English because they lack male role models. At the same time it is startlingly obvious that it is men who dominate the literary based professions such as journalism and law.
- [3] Hanley’s study replicates, in a Canadian setting, Green’s British study.
- [4] Green does not indicate the sex of these teachers.
- [5] Kindergartens.
- [6] Pseudonyms are used throughout.

- [7] In these transcriptions, stressed words are in italics, louder utterances are designated in block capitals, and transcriber's descriptions are noted in brackets. These conventions are drawn from conversation analytic literature (see Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).
- [8] Reference to an observation of a music lesson earlier in the day.
- [9] American band.

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