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MALE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHERS' NARRATIVES OF PRACTICE: THE
TEACHING OF BOYS

by

Beverley Hamilton

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how gendered lived experience informs ten male teachers' literacy pedagogy with boys. Consistently rooted in male experience, participants' unique histories and social positioning nuanced their roles, priorities and limits in working with boys. In enacting the literacy curriculum, participants mediated between what they understood boys to be like, and understandings of the mandated curriculum. Both were informed by their gendered experience. School and societal gender arrangements both enhanced and limited the resources that the teachers felt were available to them in enacting curriculum and in forming relationships with boys. Experiences of the impact of idealized notions of being male in boys' lives shaped, firstly, efforts to tailor school environments to suit boys, and secondly, efforts to encourage boys to engage with more 'balanced' ideals of masculinity.

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I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the Greater Essex County District School Board and the Windsor Essex Catholic District School Board in allowing me to work with their teachers on this project. I am indebted to my participants, whose willingness to take time out of their very busy lives to offer insights into the ways in which men work with boys in schools was unfailing. I am grateful for their willingness to reflect and for the truths they shared. Thanks also to the men with whom I have taught over the years, who were the initial inspiration for the project, and to my son, whose journey through school has been illuminating for me. Thanks most of all to S. Nombuso Dlamini, whose patience and high standards as this project went through its "process", as she continued to call it even at its most unprocess-like, were both comforting and inspiring. And finally, thank you to the members of my committee, for their wisdom, their insight, and their support.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a classroom teacher, it often appeared to me that students responded better either to female teachers, as women, or to male teachers, as men. Response patterns did not divide along rigid gender lines, though often boys did respond more positively to their male teachers. Male teachers seemed different from female teachers, in ways couldn't be easily or obviously borrowed. This difference was more than a question of increasing the number of books about cars on my bookshelf, or of following the hockey standings more assiduously. The men with whom I taught operated through a repertoire of what appeared to be gender-specific practices which were qualitatively different from my own. These practices had both benefits and drawbacks, but, like my own, they were not entirely consciously chosen: they emerged from the teachers' historically situated, gendered experiences and narratives.

Over the past decade, I have also become increasingly aware of the ways in which public discourses around teaching, as well as a range of policy initiatives internationally, are informed by notions that elementary schools need male teachers, particularly, to work with boys. Advocates for male teacher recruitment argue that male teachers are needed to respond to "feminized" school environments, to offer academically engaged role models for boys, to regulate boys' behaviours, and to act as advocates for boys' needs in schools (See, for example, Bradley, 2004; Byfield, 2005; Gurian, 2004; Higgins, 2002; Mitchell, 2004; Sommers, 2001). As a female teacher, I resist the notion that I am in some way harming boys simply by my presence. I also know that male teachers are no more homogenous than anyone else, and that their practices and presence in schools cannot be so simply and generically codified. Still, there are students, boys in particular,

who respond to something in their male teachers for good or ill, and I have come to think that we need a more subtle and nuanced understanding of how gender informs teachers' practices in school settings.

Personal Reflections: Initial Groundwork

I taught for a number of years across the hall from a male Language Arts teacher. His teaching practice appeared to me to involve a more product-based technical approach, in which he focused more on writing techniques and the use of models, rather than on personal expression or self-reflection. Year after year, I believed, the work in my room emerged for better or worse out of negotiation and self-exploration, while the work in his classroom appeared more public, and, I was sure at the time, less personally meaningful. Two facts were certain, though: firstly, the kids, and especially many of the boys, loved his class, and cranked out satires, parodies, adventure and science fiction stories, crime novels, and every possible kind of video project; and secondly, certain kids flourished in his classroom who hadn't in mine, and vice versa. What happens behind our own classroom doors is really a secret, a private negotiation between the individual teacher and his students. Therefore, I could only speculate based on the visible pedagogical activities he engaged in.

Being a man appeared to play a role in my male colleague's teaching style. Twenty-five years ago, before he settled down and became a teacher, he raced cars professionally. He used this professional knowledge of cars in his classroom, and drew on it, as well, to write and publish young adult novels about car racing. He ran a soap box derby club every year. He coached the co-educational flag football team at every school he worked at, because of a personal history as a winning coach. He was a

masterful video editor and an enthusiastic technologist. The diverse experiences and enthusiasms he possessed played key roles in the way that he negotiated the school environment.

Sometimes I felt that his football program was unnecessarily disruptive and that it excluded certain students, but his position was that it drew kids in, especially boys, who often weren't easy to connect with in a Language Arts classroom. Often, some of these same kids, almost invariably boys, became his technology squad, acting as audio technicians, video recorders, computer fixers, and carriers of heavy things. I objected to this gender discrimination, and consciously worked to balance it in my own practice, but I simultaneously acknowledged the effectiveness of his choices in helping many at-risk boys to stay connected, and in reducing the overall level of aggression and cynicism in that middle school.

Despite the football and the car-racing, though, this teacher was not in any way hyper-masculine, and he didn't promote what British documents on boys' literacy issues describe evocatively as "macho values" in his classroom or in other school roles (Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), 2003). His vision of maleness seemed to have more to do with fatherhood, independence, and honor, rather than aggression, one-upmanship or dominance. Still, sometimes students in his classroom, often, but not always girls, felt patronized or disenfranchised.

A Preliminary Narrative

In an effort to verify and expand upon these initial reflections, I embarked on an electronic dialogue with this teacher about his sense of mission, his practice of teaching, and his understanding of gender differences among his students. His initial response was

a suggestion for a thesis title: *Full Contact Literacy in the Mid School: When Men were Men, and Women were Glad.* He meant it humorously, of course, but even this initial joke suggested intriguing possibilities about the way he perceives the role and experiences of male Language Arts teachers. For example, conflict, a "full-contact" interaction, appears to play a central role in the way he constructs male teaching practice as distinct from female teaching. Another point of view suggested by this teacher's suggested title is that something fundamentally male in teaching has been under attack. Given this description, I wondered if there were practices that had been more common in the past, when "men were men" that he felt had been lost. Finally, his suggested title seemed to imply that he believed that performance of this masculine "full contact" teaching is viewed by women as in some way complementary to their own practice. As I began to develop this study, a number of male teachers in my university classes, for example, mentioned that students who had been identified as behaviorally difficult were routinely placed in their classrooms because these students 'needed a man's presence.' If this is truly the case, in what ways might it appear to my former colleague that female teachers were "glad" to exploit traditional male roles to support their own practice, even while denigrating its deleterious effects on nurturing classroom environments?

My colleague's further description of teaching boys supported the notion that, for him, teaching literacy to boys does involve conflict. He described a struggle between different visions of what men should be. If you push boys, he argued, they will "discover that they do possess literary abilities and...discover an intellectual work ethic." In general, he finds that boys, "absent the push" as he puts it, feel they do not possess

literary ability, do not have an intellectual work ethic. They risk becoming "men without responsive – and responsible—ideas."

If asked to talk about my practice around boys, there are words and ideas in my colleague's reflection that I, as a female, might have been more hesitant to use. I might have been more tentative in asserting any role in bringing boys to manhood, less outspoken about "deliberate male stupidity." Moreover, in our history together, there were often words whose meaning we constructed differently, such as justice, helpfulness, and protection. In our dialogue, for example, my colleague took exception to my use of the term "paternalistic," arguing that his role was one of "surrogate brothering." The role of the female outsider in examining men's talk around teaching has both strengths and drawbacks: our socially and historically constructed gender positions fundamentally shape how we perceive and understand others' practice as well as our own.

The words excerpted above are just one man's voice. They suggest one man's unique construction of the ethics and practice of being a man in a school, of teaching literacy to boys, and of the way that boys' literacy development unfolds. People's unique constructions of gender, the gendered narrative they tell themselves and others about their life, experiences, and values, play a role in how they conduct themselves. This gendered narrative informs how they understand, and sometimes, do not understand, what they are doing, how they choose what to do and what to notice, in each moment of their teaching practice. The specific values and practices described by this male teacher may not emerge in the narratives of other male teachers, but the narratives they tell about their teaching reflect their own distinct gendered experiences.

This thesis is an attempt to capture the voices and narratives of male teachers as a component of coming to understand how, both individually and generally, being male might inform the teaching of boys. Specifically, I examine how ten male elementary school teachers perceive being male to inform the way they teach and work with boys. Further, I examine how these teachers experienced literacy as boys, and explore the influence of these experiences on their literacy teaching. In the first section of my analysis, I examine male teachers' own perceptions of how being male offers advantages in working with boys. I then explore ways in which these teachers' stories of the challenge of belonging within a valued world of boys inform how they work with boys in schools. In the second section, I consider participants' experiences that prompted shifts in their visions of valued ways of being men in society, and consider how these experiences inform the teachers' attempts to engage in transformative practice with boys in schools. In the third section, I examine patterns in participants' own literacy histories. In the final section of the analysis, I demonstrate how the participants' literacy strategies with boys mediate between their understanding of boys, as informed by their lived experience, and their understanding of the mandated curriculum, also informed by their lived experience.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

<u>Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework</u>

The Context: Debates about the Need for More Male Teachers in Schools

In the past 15 years, considerable statistical evidence of a widening gap in boys'

and girls' scores on literacy assessments has emerged. Internationally and at home, media

reports and mainstream authors have drawn attention to 'boys' underachievement,'

suggesting neurological, socio-cultural, pedagogical and institutional sources for this

apparent crisis (Gorard, Rees, & Salisbury, 1999; Gurian, 1996; Gurian & Ballew, 2003;

Hunsader, 2002; Kindlon & Thompson, 2000; Pollock,1998; Sokoloff, 2004).

Mainstream writers have argued that the culture of elementary schools is

feminized, resulting in othering and distancing for boys in the school system (Biddulph,

1997; Faludi, 1999; Sommers, 2001). They advocate for more sympathy for boys' needs

and practices within schools and other child-related environments. This view is clearly

articulated in the argument offered by one proponent of the British mythopoetic "Lads'

Movement": "School is a terrible place for boys. In school they are trapped by 'The

Matriarchy' and are dominated by women who cannot accept boys as they are. The

women mainly wish to control and to suppress boys" (quoted in Epstein, Elwood, Hey, &

Maw, 1998, p. 7). Advocates of recuperative masculinity connect issues of aggression,

violence, and loss of mission in men and boys with the idea that the innate needs of males

are no longer being met in modern society (Biddulph, 1995, 1997; Bly, 1991; Farrell,

1993).

The idea of recruiting more men to work in schools is one with considerable appeal in the teaching profession. This idea is exemplified internationally by a number of policy documents and programs (Teacher Training Agency, 2003; Ontario College of Teachers, 2004; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2005; Queensland Government, 2002). Arguments advocating increased male presence also inform demands for more designated masculine curriculum, increased use of literature focusing on masculine topics, and increased focus on competition and aggressive play and sport in school. Little empirical evidence supports this premise, and a number of critics have questioned the underlying philosophy and validity of these policies (Allan, 1993; Lawson, Penfield, & Nagy, 1999; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Mills, Martino & Lingard, 2004; Sokal & Katz, 2004; Yates, 2000). They argue that such essentializing approaches homogenize boys' masculinities and perpetuate inequitable gender practices. Critics also note the implication that women are to blame for the problems of boys, which assumes a level of female control over public discourse not fully borne out by facts (Skelton, 2002b).

Critics also question the premise of statistical differences between boys' and girls' achievement in schools all together. Some argue that boys, as a collective group, are not threatened within the educational system. While specific subgroups of the boy population, who are culturally, politically and economically marginalized already, experience real disadvantage within schools, middle-class boys, most focused on by mainstream literature, do not represent a threatened group (Yates, 2000). Furthermore, Rowe (2000) notes that gender differences are insignificant in comparison to other variables in Australian student achievement data. Supporting Rowe, Weaver-Hightower (2003) points out that issues such as socio-economic status, race, and the ultimate

employment achievement of female and male graduates of school systems tell a much more complex and difficult story. A study of Australian high school leaving results conducted by Teese, Davies, Charlton & Polesel (cited Yates, 2000), for example, demonstrated that gender differences in course selection related to broader levels of failure among boys and lower levels of rewards and outcomes among high-ability girls, a premise also put forward by Kimmel (1999). On its own, statistical evidence cannot provide a complete, or even necessarily illuminating, picture of boys' experiences in schools.

The complex issues surrounding how gender affects student learning need examination through more detailed qualitative studies. Similarly, the presence of male teachers in schools, and their practices and interactions with students and curricula, cannot be fully elucidated through quantitative examination of test scores. If teacher gender is a significant issue in students' experience of the curriculum, it is the individual performance of gender within the gender arrangements of society and the school that may have implications for practice (Ashley, 2003; Martino & Frank, 2006; Skelton, 2002b, 2003).

Understanding the Importance of Personal Histories: Habitus and Regimes of Truth

A framework that explains the importance of personal history is offered by Bourdieu's notion of the habitus. Bourdieu (1990) describes habitus as:

> A producer of history, [which] produces individual and collective practices – more history—in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought, and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. (p. 54)

The habitus tends to generate all the 'reasonable' and 'common sense' behaviours which are possible within the boundaries it shapes, and only those, providing us with a sense of freedom of action within limits of which we are largely unaware. According to Bourdieu, 'embodied history' – so internalized as to be forgotten as history – structures all of our new experiences. New experiences may modify previously developed structures, but generally only within the limits defined by the habitus' powers of selection.

Habitus is generally self-perpetuating, and deeply powerful, in part because of its submerged nature. Excavation of the narratives of individuals' past history may provide insights not only through the content of the stories, but also through careful attention to the contradictions, evasions, and lapses implied in the narrative. These also delineate the shape that habitus inhabits.

According to Bourdieu (2001) habitus represents a framework of gendered resources through which individuals make sense of their world. He argues:

> Although the world always presents itself strewn with indices and signs designating things to do or not to do, intimating the actions and movements that are possible, probable, or impossible, the 'things to do' and 'the things forthcoming' that are offered by a henceforward socially and economically differentiated universe are not addressed to an indifferent agent, a kind of interchangeable x, but are specified according to the positions and dispositions of each agent. They present themselves as things to be done or things that are not feasible, things that are natural or unthinkable, normal or extraordinary for a given category, i.e. in particular for a man or a woman (and of a given social position)....They are inscribed in the physiognomy of the familiar environment, in the form of the public, masculine, universe and private, female worlds, between the public space ...and the house. (p. 57)

Through this framework, I was able to analyze how gender is normalized, and how the individual's male historical experiences inform his practices in a classroom. As well, by considering Foucault's examination of how the "natural" is constructed, I was able to

analyze how participants in the study have "naturalized" certain male-based practices as teachers of boys.

Foucault (1985) argues that the construction of categories of what is natural, unthinkable, normal or extraordinary in a given environment or for a given event is socially constructed through "regimes of truth." His study of the history of truth examines the interplay of power, knowledge, and subject in order to ask not what is true, but how a given truth, at a given time, place and context, comes to be constructed. Foucault (1985) defined truth as "something that can and must be thought" (p. 7). He examined practices and techniques for the production of truth (techniques of discourse), for the shaping of individuals willing to be subject to a given truth and to participate in that truth (subjectivation or techniques of self) , and for the identification and separation of "truth" from "falsehood" (techniques of government). These techniques enable and delimit the ways that truth can be produced, circulated, transformed and used. Like all social institutions, education exercises these techniques in order to constitute and legitimate the truths to which students and teachers are subject.

The theories of habitus and regimes of truth examined here form the basis for this study, in that they articulate a theory of the way that individuals absorb and reproduce social hierarchies and gender arrangements, even if they may sometimes consciously position themselves in resistance to them. For the teacher, intersecting discourses of constructed truths of gender and the constructed truths of the role of the teacher as inculcator of discourse may shape distinctive patterns, practices and narratives for the individual.

Understandings of Gender Differentiation

The framework for defining what is meant by the term gender draws on Butler's notion of gender as performative (1990) and Connell's notion of gender as socially embodied and relationally enacted (1995, 2000, 2002). However, biological and sex role theories, as well as social construction models of gender and gender development, are extant and sometimes intermingled in school teachers' and policy analysts' talk about gender (Skelton, 2002b. See also Mills, Martino & Lingard, 2004; Martino & Berrill, 2003; Skelton, 2001). Consequently, an understanding of how gender is constructed and negotiated in schools must take account of these notions which also dictate teachers' practices. Connell (2002) and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) provide overviews of the historical but still influential views that root gender in biological, neurological, hormonal and evolutionary differences. These claims remain common in pedagogical literature, but Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) demonstrate that such "scientific" evidence often rests on "unwarranted generalization and gross oversimplification" (p. 39).

In the late 1970's and 1980's, sex role theory emerged as an explication for how gender differences emerge in boys and girls. Sex role theory argues that children learn how to relate to the world in appropriately gendered ways through observing and mimicking same sex models in their environments and in popular culture. Appropriate performance would be reinforced by rewards and sanctions of their behaviour by others (See Skelton, 2001, and Connell, 2002, for a fuller historical account).

This theory emphasized the social rather than the more traditionally evoked biological origins of gender difference, thus offering the possibility of social change. However, as Connell (2002) points out, this theory is limited in that it emphasises one

normative way of practicing gender despite the rich evidence of multiple patterns of masculinity and femininity that co-exist in all social settings. Davies (2003) and Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) argue that sex role theory positions the gender learner as passive despite the obvious evidence that young people practice gender in resistant, transformative, alternative and experimental ways.

In Connell's (2002) model of socially embodied gender, bodies as agents in social practice are involved in the construction of the social world. In these terms, the bodily structures and processes of human reproduction that constitute gender "do not constitute a 'biological base,' a natural mechanism that has social effects. Rather they constitute an arena, a bodily site where something social happens. Among the things that can happen is the creation of the cultural categories 'woman' and 'man'"(p.48). Gender is not, however, the passive impression of social structures upon the body because, like Butler (1990), Connell argues that "[t]he structure of gender relations has no existence outside the practices through which people and groups conduct these relations. Structures do not continue...unless they are reconstituted from moment to moment in social action" (p. 55). Connell views the physical body as the locus to be worked upon by social structures as well as the enactor of social structures. In this way, although gender is constructed through and inseparable from the body, it is not biologically dictated by the body.

Connell (2002) notes that in organizations, there are invariably regular patterns or gender arrangements: who does what work, how social interactions are organized, and how emotional relations are conducted. Connell refers to this as the "gender regime" of an institution (p. 52). Gender regimes within organizations can change, but such change is often resisted by members of the organizations. Working in resistance to, or

ambiguously, within institutional gender arrangements can often result in disapproval,

loss of status, ostracism, and even violence (Connell, 2002; Davies, 2003; Mills, 2000;

Martino & Palloto-Chiarolli, 2003).

Theories of Masculinity

Writers exploring masculinity often associate it with dominance. Long (1994)

notes that masculinity can be seen as

> a performance of dominance... [that] pervade[s] language systems,
> physical kinesics, and proxemics, psychoanalytic structures, and symbol
> categories. The ways in which men speak, move, express desire, and
> construct symbols become dramatic performances that, due to the process
> of naturalization...are often outside the realm of social and political
> discourse. (p. 71)

Socially, McClean (1996) sees men as competitive, willing to sacrifice personal life for

achievement, and as typically creating camaraderie through competitive ritual and

experiences of conquest. Thus, masculine power comes at a price of alienation,

emotional dependence, and distance (see also Kaufmann, 1994). McClean (1996)

describes numbing or at least withholding of emotion as a key component of masculine

identity and masculine power. Smith (1996) associates the withholding of emotion with

the value placed on control. Smith also identifies dichotomies characteristic of men's

mindset in which rationality, universalism, separateness, and individualism are associated

with masculinity. Failure to live up to standards is interpreted as inadequacy, rather than

development.

Gender hierarchies exist as a system of power not only between men and women,

but also within groups of individuals sharing the same gender. While men enjoy the

privilege of their gender, these privileges are not equally apportioned: gendered identity

is not monolithic. Connell (1995, 2000, 2002) identifies four primary modes of gendered

relations among masculinities: hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginal. The nature of each of these masculinities, and membership in each category, is fluid and may change over time: it is the relationship between them that constitutes a pattern of gender relations.

Hegemonic Masculinities

Hegemonic masculinity refers to a set of gender practices currently legitimizing patriarchy, which guarantees the subordination of women through its ideology and practices (Connell, 1995, p. 77). Dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity is not of fixed character: it is merely the masculinity occupying the dominant position in a society at a given time and place (Connell, 1995). It is not synonymous with power and wealth: individuals may hold or represent institutional or financial power while not practicing hegemonic patterns in their personal lives, and the most obvious bearers of hegemonic masculinity may not, necessarily, be the most powerful members of their society.

Subordinate Masculinities

Subordinate masculinities include all performances of masculinity that are actively repressed or expelled from what hegemonic masculinity deems to be legitimate. Homosexual masculinities are a principal example, but heterosexual men and boys may also be excluded from hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) remarks that subordinate masculinities generally act as a psychological repository for whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity. It is for this reason that excluded individuals are likely to be verbally associated with femininity as a mark of subordination. Ascribing femininity, or specific forms of subordinate masculinity such as homosexuality, to individuals is a common method of policing the boundaries of masculinity and ensuring

general submission to the principles of hegemonic masculinity (Francis & Skelton, 2001;

Davies, 1997; 2003; Gallas 1998; Martino, 2000; Martino & Frank, 2006).

Complicit Masculinities

Although hegemonic masculinity is articulated as a normative way of being male,

few men can live up to the standards involved: the number of men who actively and

explicitly practice hegemonic masculinity may be small (Connell, 1995). But the

majority of men enjoy what Connell terms the "patriarchal dividend," since they benefit

from privilege accrued mainly through the subordination of women. Connell describes

men who in their day-to-day lives are not in any way violent, who do not actively seek to

dominate women, and who live peaceful domestic existences as complicitly masculine.

That is, though they are not active oppressors, they do not work towards identifying or

redressing gender-based oppression in their day-to-day lives.

Marginalized Masculinities

Intersections of gender, race and class produce what Connell (1995) describes as

marginalized masculinities. He argues that dominant classes project the violence existing

within all forms of oppression upon the marginalized group, and thus displace certain

aspects of violence and sexual profligacy upon marginalized groups of men, resulting in

increased surveillance and oppression of those groups. Individuals from within a

marginalized group may be, as Connell terms it, authorized by hegemonic masculinity,

but the authorization of such individuals will have no effect on the authority of the group

as a whole, and such individuals remain at the mercy of social projection.

Protest Masculinities

Connell (1995, 2000) also identifies what he describes as protest masculinities, typically among adolescents and young men. This particular form of masculine identity is shaped in response and resistance to institutional and cultural disciplines, and is articulated as a deep investment in symbols such as toughness and confrontation. The resistance practices involved in this masculinity are not brought on by the 'raging hormones' so often referred to in mainstream culture, but by a structure of masculinity in which rule-breaking, violence, and sexual harassment result in the acquisition of prestige. Rule breaking "becomes central to the making of masculinity when boys lack other resources for gaining these ends" (Connell, 2000, p. 163). Connell notes that other constructions of masculinity are on offer at schools, but that the exclusionary and privileging practices of educational institutions may result in some boys having little access to these offers. Protest masculinities offer a way to redress what those boys see as the injustice of their situation.

Connell's theoretical model of multiple masculinities enables us to envision a constellation of masculinities co-existing within a classroom. Masculine hierarchies as experienced by men in their own boyhoods may play a role in the ways that they construct and police norms within their own classroom environments, or in the ways that they understand what will motivate or threaten boys in their classrooms. Personal experience of these hierarchies may shape, for teachers, what it is to be a man, and how it is that a boy can become a man. This, in turn, may shape the possible options available for them in the practice of literacy instruction. It is important to keep in mind Connell's (1995, 2000) emphasis on the shifting and contextual nature of masculinity: the

individual's socio-cultural context is an important aspect of how the individual positions and performs gender (See also Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

Gendered Pedagogy In Feminist Theory

Differences between masculine and feminine teaching practice, central to the conceptualizing of this study, have been theorized in feminist research. To begin, many feminist researchers identify the ways that the female elementary teacher's identity has been shaped as a maternal practice of nurture (Dubose Brunner, 1994; Gillligan, 1979; Grumet, 1988; Jipson, 1995; Lyons, 1990; Noddings, 1988; Walkerdine, 1987).

Feminist research has delineated the ways in which the trope of teacher as nurturer functions to constrain and contain the practice of female teachers. Grumet (1988) argued that teachers act as agents who deliver their children to the patriarchy. They may wield power through relationship within the public/private sphere of the classroom, but they submit to a patriarchal hierarchy, curriculum, and system of education in the larger sphere of public discourse. Other researchers identify the practice of teaching as mothering as a way of controlling teachers; that is, if the goal of the teacher is to know and have a personal relationship with each of the children in her care, then failure to do so must be individually shouldered. Systemic problems are therefore portrayed as a personal failure of nurturance, rather than a locus for social action (Simola, Heikkinen, & Silvonen, 1998). In this way, the construct of teacher/mother acts as a gender specific moral and emotional force that shapes women's teaching practice in specific ways, either in agreement with or in resistance to it.

If feminine pedagogy centers around ideas of nurturance, masculine pedagogy, in feminist literature, at least, appears to focus around principles of hierarchy, external

justice, individualism and the rule of law (King, 1998). Upper elementary and secondary teaching may also typically be associated with a more distant and professional approach to student interaction, where emotion is considered an intrusion in the classroom (Hargreaves, 2000). This aligns neatly with the views of secondary school as, traditionally, a more male dominated culture (Davies, 1992; Francis & Skelton, 2001; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 2000; Lesko, 2000), characterized by masculinized traits of rationalism and detachment (Davies, 1992).

Some studies connect the feminine in schools with the internal, and the masculine in schools with the external. In her examination of one female pre-service teacher's perceptions of masculinity in schools, Sanford (2002) demonstrates that the participant perceives her work as secret, invisible and internal, while she characterizes the work of the male pre-service teacher, across the hall, as "going outside", exciting, and visible. Davies (2003) identifies a similar gender arrangement in children's writing and organization of familial roles, where women are constructed as existing on the inside, while males occupy the space on the outside. This pattern also emerges in Thorne's (1993) ethnographic work on children, where the area directly surrounding the school is occupied by the girls, while the boys occupy the outer space (see, also, Davies, 2003). The trope of private and public discourse around teaching is more generally considered in Clandinin and Connelly's work on the secret, as opposed to the cover, stories of teachers (Clandinin, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin 1994).

Feminist research provides a useful basis for considering the ways that gender may distinctively inform the personal and practical knowledge of teachers (Clandinin, 1986, Clandinin & Connelly, 1996, Clandinin & Connelly, 2001), but because it tends to

cast men as what Yates (2000) refers to as "a more shadowy other"(p. 317) , it provides only a pathway for the possibility of examining how male teachers perceive and experience their own practice as men. The construction of teaching in which women play the internal role while men play primarily external, administrative and managerial roles does not provide a sufficient model for a study of men's practice and experience in classrooms. For example, if teacher-mother can be seen as a gender specific ethical construction of self, what comparable masculine constructions subjectivize male teachers? Research indicates that a comparable father/teacher construct exists (Sargent, 2001), but other male ethical constructions may also present themselves, given the powerful private and public gender dialectic at work. The literature on women's teaching emphasizes a secret, internal and invisible side: if men's teaching appears to lack that component, is that because men's practice is qualitatively different, or because, like women's own practice, it is invisible to outsiders?

Studies of Male Teaching Practice

My research builds on a number of studies that have directly examined male teachers' perceptions, experiences and classroom practices. These studies include examinations of males' experiences within largely female teaching environments such as primary and elementary settings, studies of male teachers as re-enforcers of masculine hegemony, and a small number of studies of alternative male discourses within classrooms. These studies work along a continuum of analysis with some emphasizing men's practice as a product of larger gender arrangements within schools while others focus on the outcomes of such practices in terms of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities.

Studies Exploring Male Teachers' Interactions with Gendered Expectations in Schools

Using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and, in the case of King, written responses, Allan (1993), King (1998) and Sargent (2001) interviewed small groups of male elementary school teachers, regarding their perceptions of being male teachers. Sumison (1999) also provides a narrative account of the experiences of one early childhood worker. These studies share a number of findings regarding gendered labour division, which include contradictions in men's professional positions in schools and heightened surveillance and constriction of men's interactions with children. Allan describes his participants' situation in elementary schools as one of "simultaneous advantage and disadvantage within the gendered structure of power in elementary schools" (p. 121).

Men in these studies noted that, fairly consistently, they were valued in schools as male presence or role models, particularly for boys. Male teachers were frequently called upon to take on authoritative roles, regardless of their comfort with this role or their level of experience, and often were given students with disciplinary problems on the unexamined basis that these students needed a male presence, by which someone with greater authority appeared to be implied. Participants also noted that they were often expected to take on roles ranging from technology expert to furniture mover, and to act as a representative voice when other teachers wanted the "male perspective." However, teachers in Sumison (1999) and King (1998) also spoke directly of their choice to become primary or early years teachers as a choice to subvert traditional patriarchal labour divisions.

Men in all of these studies consistently cited heightened surveillance of their practice around touch and physical closeness, as well as questioning of their ability to manage and assist with emotional issues and interpersonal dynamics in the classroom. Often they were troubled by constructions of men as predatory and unfeeling, which they felt did not reflect their practice as male elementary teachers.

Participants described a repertoire of physical and verbal rituals intended to replace the freer contact and physical closeness with students that they perceived as available only to female teachers. These included high fives, complex ritual handshakes, elaborate nicknaming processes, and other non-tactile physical performances, like chalk-throwing, elaborate facial gestures, and so on (See also Francis and Skelton (2001) and Skelton (2002)). Men in King's (1998) study associated these practices specifically with externally imposed constraints on the kinds of intimacy available to male, as opposed to female, practitioners because of social surveillance.

In the context of the school, male teachers in these studies reported heightened consciousness of their masculinity and masculine roles, even if, in caring for children, they acted in ways considered to be more typically feminine. However, outside of schools, male elementary teachers experienced questioning of their masculinity, where the choice to become an elementary teacher was sometimes perceived as not typically masculine. Teachers in Allan (1993) spoke of the importance of masculine identifiers, such as coaching, as methods of bolstering masculinity

Two studies of women's views of male teachers, Jones (2003) and Johanesson (2004), indicate that the British and Icelandic teachers who were interviewed expressed potentially conflicting expectations for masculine performance in schools. The view that

emerged from Jones' participants was that only the "right kind of man" would be a desirable addition to the early years school environment. While men were perceived to be motivational to boys, such a man should be both traditionally masculine ("macho – not a wimp", p. 571), and also a good listener, a team player, someone who supports a holistic approach and who really wants to teach the young child.

These findings make it clear that men in schools are subject to gender surveillance which encourages and rewards the practice of certain versions of masculinity, while proscribing others. Martino and Frank's (2006) study of male teachers in a single sex high school demonstrated pressures to conform to specific versions of masculinity from male students. The male teachers' social relations with boys were underpinned by a sense of anxiety about the students' judgment of the teacher's masculinity. Participants in Martino and Frank questioned the legitimacy of these constraints, but felt that flouting them would have negative consequences for their ability to manage boys' behaviours. This indicates that men's practices within schools are not unilateral, but are also shaped by interaction with patterns within schools.

Studies Of Hegemonic Practices In Male Teachers

Feminist observers of male teachers have reported a range of masculine practices that reproduce hegemonic male power structures. Skelton (2002) studied the role of football in one elementary school. Football talk and activity were intended to build connections and improve learning for boys, but Skelton demonstrated that they also often excluded girls and non-athletic boys. Francis and Skelton (2001) identified homophobic and sexist practices of some male teachers in classrooms, which occurred as aspects of

male bonding and as ways that these teachers constructed themselves as superior to their female students and more powerfully masculine than their male students.

Letts' (2001) and Chapman's (2001) discourse analyses of male teachers' verbal interaction demonstrated how teachers supported and encouraged the development of traditionally masculine approaches to their disciplines (science and math, respectively) in which decontextualized logic and information are prized over metaphorical and narrative approaches. According to Reichert and Kurilloff's (2004) interview-based study of boys' experiences in an all boys' school, boys perceived the school to be complicit in the hegemonic and class-based marginalization of students perceived to be outsiders through what they describe as a "tacit, common curriculum for man-making" (p. 564), involving specific rituals, rewards, policies and habits. The highly masculine environment did not appear to improve marginalized boys' connection to the school environment.

Sometimes male practices that appear at first to question hegemonic masculinities can also be construed as reinforcing them. In Roulston and Mills' (2000) case study of two music teachers' practices, male teachers manipulated gender boundaries so that boys would feel that music could be considered masculine. In doing so, they deployed traditional hegemonic masculinity as currency in increasing boys' participation. One teacher, for example, shamed boys into initially participating by suggesting that they might be inferior to girls, an accusation the boys roundly denied. Then he created singing practices reminiscent of sports coaching sessions, going so far as to "dress up" in a track suit to construct these sessions as a "camaraderie of men" (p. 232). Another teacher used his own knowledge and involvement in current popular music, emphasizing the aspects of his experiences related to protest masculinities, to make connections with resistant

boys in his classroom. However, the bands and the lyrics of the music used were consistent with hegemonic masculinity. These practices effectively engaged boys in what they had previously considered to be a feminized and proscribed activity, but they reinforced the legitimacy of the boys' perceptions of traditional male domination.

Male Teachers Engaging with Masculinity in the Classroom

In addition to studies examining the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity, some studies have also described male teachers who employ other more transformative approaches to facilitating curricular access for boys. Davies (1997) described an alternative approach adopted by one teacher, who supported the possibility of different masculinities within a classroom, and constructed literacy as compatible with all forms of being masculine. He exhibited certain aspects of dominant masculinity but also celebrated his own emotional response to experiences. He actively promoted connectedness to both the natural world and the larger world of current events as aspects of his practice. Browne and Fletcher's (1995) anthology of reflective essays by practicing teachers offers evidence that male teaching practice can employ masculine resources in the interests of transformation. In this anthology, Littlewood's essay, for example, outlines ways in which his personal understanding of masculine hegemonic interaction enabled him to assist a very aggressive and challenging group of boys to reflect on their practices and attitudes in part by consistently modelling inclusive and respectful interaction with them. Littlewood advocates using a more fine-grained approach to curbing male students' choice of content and response pattern, while continuing to work at helping students to problematize ideologies of dominance (see also Browne, 1995 and Newkirk, 2002).

Studies of masculine pedagogical practice demonstrate a striking range of ways of being male in the classroom, one far greater than is suggested by feminist scholars such as Grumet and Gilligan, or in research on the reproduction of dominant masculinities in school settings (Connell, 2000; Mac an Ghaill, 1994, Reichert & Kuriloff, 2004). The identity, perspectives and practices of the individual teacher, and the way in which he positions himself within the gendered social context of the school and society, may have far reaching consequences for the ways that students interact and position themselves with regard to the curriculum.

Literacy: Towards a Definition

Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert and Muspratt (2002) define literacy as mastery of the system of spoken and written language, print and media culture. They identify four key sets of practices: code breaking, meaning making, text use, and text analysis. They also state that in different places and times "what counts as literacy" may be different, as "selective traditions of literacy can come to count as literacy-for-that-culture, while others... come to be allocated elsewhere in the institution of schooling or outside of it, or simply fail to appear in the public and private activities of the culture" (p. 32). This notion of social constructions of valued literacy is also supported by Gee (1999) who argues that literacy instruction privileges specific values and ways of constructing narratives and knowledge, which may impede marginalized groups' participation in school literacy (Gee, 1999). Any individual could be seen as the meeting point of "many, sometimes conflicting socially and historically defined discourses" (Gee, 1992, p. 23) and competing claims among the discourses in which he or she participates may result in

partial or problematic insertion into dominant discourses. One mediating characteristic in these discourses may be gender.

Perceptions of Gender in Literacy Curricula

It is very common for boys and mainstream commentators to view Language Arts curricula as feminized (Martino, 1995; Rowan, Knobel, Bigum, & Lankshear, 2002; Rowe, 2000). Both boys and girls often position boys' enjoyment of reading and writing as effeminate (Hall & Coles, 1997; Martino, 1995; Millard, 1997; Sanderson, 1995). According to Millard (1997) early experiences of gendered family reading patterns may normalize gender differences, so that students and teachers arrive at school with certain built in biases regarding gender appropriate practices of literacy.

Underlying ways that teachers and curricula conceive of and value emotion and relationship in text response may privilege feminine patterns of social interaction, including the conception of both reading and writing as self-exploratory and confessional, the emphasis on pleasure in reading, rather than pragmatism, the emphasis on emotional response, and the choice of literature based on its demonstration of characters' psychological development (Davies, 1997; Millard, 1997; Newkirk, 2002). Boundaries of school literacy deny many typical masculine literacy activities, including technological, multimedia, and gaming related uses of literacy (Blair & Sanford, 2004), as well as devaluing many topics and styles of writing that are popular with boys (Hall & Coles, 1997; Kendrick & McKay, 2002; Newkirk, 2002). In his study of elementary aged boys' reading and writing, Newkirk (2002) argued that boys' topical interests in reading and writing often focus on types of humour, intertextual borrowings from popular culture, and the use of fiction to assume power, in ways that are sometimes seen as resistant,

disruptive, or disrespectful in classroom settings. Thus, potentially gender-mediated factors such as the teachers' attitudes towards discipline and authority, sense of propriety, personal taste, and sense of humour may also play a role in the accessibility of literacy for some boys.

Some studies indicate that engagement with literacy can become a component of gender differentiation work among children, for example, by resisting literacy as a way of asserting masculinity (Skelton, 2001). Davies (1997, 2003) described how boys sexualized storytelling and response activities to silence female teachers' and students' attempts to question male dominance, and made homophobic remarks to police other boys' participation (See also Peyton Young, 2001).

Competitive intragroup hierarchies among boys can also be played out in literacy practices (Blair & Sanford, 2004; Hall & Coles, 1997; Millard, 1997; Newkirk, 2002). Gallas (1998) delineated the way that, among boys, delayed readers may be excluded from social groups, and socially strong boys may intentionally elicit oral reading performances from more socially isolated weak readers to reinforce their exclusion. Alloway, Gilbert, Gilbert & Henderson (2003) found that in secondary English classes providing "boy-friendly" oral work could effectively meet the needs of hegemonically masculine boys but disenfranchise other boys because of boundary policing and surveillance practices by the more dominant male students. Smith and Wilhelm (2002, 2004) found that boys in their study more typically avoided literacy because they found potential failure threatening, rather than because they viewed literacy as feminine. Gendered subject positions inform boys' decisions about engaging with literacy both in

terms of their relationship to femininity and in terms of their relationships with other boys.

The Teacher's Role in Boys' Literacy

In addressing the sociocultural issues considered in the previous section, Alloway et al. (2002) examined teachers' interventions in boys' literacy practices in schools in terms of their contributions to three repertoires of practice, three "orchestrated set of capabilities and dispositions for acting purposefully in the world" (p. 127). These repertoires include sets of management procedures, reasoning practices, and shared norms. Specifically, they identified three kinds of repertoires whose wider development was seen by teachers as key to advancing boys' literacy achievement: repertoires for representing the self, for relating to others and to the work of the classroom, and for negotiating with the culture beyond the classroom. This culture beyond the classroom includes the "hypermasculine world" and what it means "to be male in such a world, and the meanings and ways of being constructed in such a world" (p. 128). Though Alloway et al.'s study does not make reference to teachers' gender, engaging in this sociocultural work with boys could be profoundly influenced by one's knowledge of and credibility within the masculine social and academic landscape (See Martino (1995) and Mills (2000)). A review of effective practices in British schools with small gender gaps in literacy achievement identified the conscious development of a "non-macho" masculine culture, including (but not exclusive to) the presence of non-macho but highly literate male teachers, and the involvement of older boys as role models for literacy practices among younger boys (Daly, 2003; OFSTED, 2003). These practices suggest that teacher gender could play a role in social practices that influence boys' literacy engagement.

How different men experienced literacy as boys, whether they found it appealing, difficult, easy, socially problematic, or simply unengaging can shape their notions of literacy and what students need in significant ways. Though very little research offers insight into the literacy practices or thinking of male teachers, Booth's (2005) observations about male education students' self-perceptions as non-readers because of distorted definitions of what constituted "real" reading offer the important possibility that male teachers' personal literacy histories may have consequences for their practices of literacy instruction. Goodwyn (2002) identifies secondary pre-service English teachers' normalizing assumptions around the love of reading as having a potentially distorting effect on the learning opportunities of those who do not share their perspective, an observation also at the root of Newkirk's (2002) attempts to articulate what it is to be a non-reader for his highly literate teacher audience. As with the issue of male role models, a more nuanced understanding of the multiple ways men enact literacy, and the role that their understanding and access to discourses of masculinity might be playing in those practices, seems vital to understanding the role of gender in literacy pedagogy.

Summary

Gender performance involves the formulation and enactment of specific discourses and practices by individuals, as well as negotiations of these relations in social contexts. Gender plays a key role in the construction of what is possible and necessary for us and others, and of what we consider to be our position vis à vis others in society. To a great extent personal histories, infused with gendered experience, will tend to shape what individuals understand to be the needs and range of options available to them and to students. The gender arrangements of schools, as constructed through current and

historical institutional understandings of what is normal and natural, also shape the kinds of labour, interactions, and roles available and expected of both men and women. But men and women may be complicit, resistant, or ambivalent towards these roles, and may also demonstrate a range of understandings regarding the effects of such gender arrangements within schools.

Gender in literacy instruction requires further exploration on a number of levels. At a conceptual level there is the issue of whether the male teacher's experience of dominant discourses of literacy is different from that of female teachers. The position of the male teacher with regard to a curriculum that is often viewed as feminized by students and society, and whether there are ways in which the curriculum is actually gendered, may also play an important role. The teacher's capacity to position himself in the gendered student social network of his classroom, and the processes he uses to do that, may play a role in the way that students access the curriculum or see themselves as able or not able to take risks, to feel safe, or to succeed in the classroom. It is possible that the role of the male teacher, as distinct from the predominantly female culture of elementary schools, may be a location of possibilities for children, but there is also the risk of reconstructing hegemonic masculinity in counterproductive ways. The complex and contradictory ways in which male teachers' gendered identity is perceived within the layers of their classroom, school, and social environments, and the ways in which this experience is in turn shaped by their personal histories and understanding of the needs of boys in becoming literate men, require close scrutiny if we are to begin to get a clearer sense of how gender informs curriculum enactment for teachers and children.

Research Questions

This study explores the following questions:

How does gendered life experience inform these teachers' understanding of boys' needs in elementary classrooms and the teachers' practices in meeting those needs?

How did being male affect the literacy history of these teachers? What influence have these histories had on their literacy teaching?

Definition of Terms

Discourse: a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network" (Gee, 1992). A discourse is ideological, in that it privileges a specific set of values and viewpoints in terms of which one must speak and act, and which are generally defined in opposition to other, opposing discourses. The production and control of discourses is related to the distribution of social power and the hierarchical structure of society, and may lead to the acquisition of social goods in a society (Gee, 1999).

Gender: the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between female/male bodies into social processes feminine/masculine. Gender patterns may vary from one cultural context to another. Gender arrangements are socially reproduced by the power of structures to delimit individual action so that they often appear natural and unchanging, but they are always changing as human activity produces new situations and structural imperatives. (Connell, 2002, p. 10)

Literacy: Literacy is the mastery of a variety of forms of communication, including the systems of spoken and written language, print culture, and media texts. Although

operating within this framework, this study focuses primarily on reading and writing as key components of how literacy is envisioned, practiced, and valued within schools.

Masculinity: a concept that names patterns of gender practice as related, generally, to practices typical of men. Masculinity is relational, in that it does not exist except by contrast to femininity. Practices perceived as masculine are not solely enacted by male bodies. However, the focus of this study, on men and boys, means that my use of the term tends generally to examine the embodied social experiences of males. Although all men engage in masculine social practices, I am borrowing from Connell's (1990, 1995, 2000) framework of masculinities which indicates that males participate in forms of masculinity that are hierarchically valued. Its instantiation by individuals is also mediated by their negotiation of their own cultural spaces, as intersected, for example, by race, class, and sexuality. In this study, the term "ways of being male" will be used interchangeably with the term "masculinity" in order to encompass both the social practices and embodied experiences of individuals living in male bodies.

Subject Position: A subject position is a location in a network of social relations into which a person inserts him or herself, or is inserted by social forces. This position forms a standpoint for his or her ethical disposition, activity, and knowledge formation, and can involve taking up specific roles. Some subject positions have agency, while others may constitute a person as an 'outsider' without a voice (Blunden, 2005).

Significance of Study

This study offers an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices around boys in schools, which may lead to more nuanced and reflective practice in the long-term. Given the current debates about boys' literacy and the need for more men in

schools, this study may offer participants the opportunity to see their own gendered practice more clearly, and to examine the social and personal assumptions that surround these debates more critically.

This study provides insights into a repertoire of ideas and practices that can support boys' learning. It also provides data regarding the perceptions of men in schools and the practice of same- and cross-gender teaching that will assist teachers and administrators in offering more equitable access to the curriculum. For policy makers, the study provides a more robust understanding of the roles men play in schools, as well as the opportunity to develop more critical and complex approaches to the issues of boys' learning in schools. For researchers, it contributes to the body of literature regarding male teaching practices. This is of particular value at the current time, when data regarding boys' achievement in schools is both highly contentious and problematic to analyze.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the design of the study, the analytical framework, and the steps taken to ensure the validity of the study. It also provides a participant summary and brief observations concerning participants' practices during interviews.

<u>Design and Procedure</u>

This is a qualitative research study employing narrative inquiry methods. The interpretive stage is also informed by critical discourse analysis (CDA) and ethnographic methods. Data collection included reflective journal entries and two sets of transcribed, semi-structured interviews supported by field notes.

I have chosen to explore my research questions through qualitative methods because of the nature of those questions, which emphasize the effects of the nuanced particularities of individuals' gendered experiences. Employing a qualitative methodology enabled me to gain insight into the idiosyncratic ways that the participants understand, take up, and leave aside aspects of their experience in working with boys, offering a counterpoint to the kinds of statistical analyses of gender effects that form such a significant component of research into boys' learning. As Grumet (1991) said in reference to narrative research, it is a kind of research that foregrounds "the spontaneity, complexity and ambiguity of experience" (p. 67).

Procedure

Application was made to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor outlining the intent of the study. A letter of information and permission to conduct research was sent to the school boards involved (Appendix A). Letters of consent and

information for prospective participants were prepared (Appendix B) and reviewed in detail with participants prior to data collection. Permission from the GECDSB was conditional upon informing principals that a member of their staff was taking part in the study. With the written consent of each participant from that board, I sent a letter to the school principals informing them that a member of their staff was participating in the study, but without identifying the specific individual (Appendix C).

Data Collection and Transcription

(i) Prior to the interview, each teacher was asked to keep a reflective journal or take part in an electronic dialogue around their experiences of teaching and daily practice in schools. Teachers were provided with three prompts over a three-week period and were encouraged to write in their journals, independently, as much as they wished to about their teaching practice (see Appendix D for prompts). Participants generally completed three journal entries with an average length of about three quarters of a single-spaced page. I also used these journal entries, completed before interviews, to develop more specific questions for each participant.

(ii) Each participant took part in two semi-structured interviews (1.5-2 hours each). Interviews took place away from school premises. Interviews were recorded on audio-tape, and observations and reflections were documented by the researcher directly after interviews in order to provide a wider context for the analysis of interview data.

Prior to the first interview, I gathered biographical information about each participant. To serve as an open ended prompt to tell their literacy histories, participants were asked to bring a "memory box" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), of representative artefacts of their literacy practices that they felt elucidated the history and nature of their

construct of literacy. Students' work included in this collection was not analyzed as part of the data. In the first interview, participants shared their biographical stories around growing up male and becoming literate, as well as their experiences of the gender arrangements in their schools. Day One Interview Protocol is attached as Appendix E.

The purpose of the second interview was to elicit the participant's understanding and practice in enacting Language Arts curriculum. Questions centred on interpretive practices, performance of teaching, understanding of key concepts in literacy and teacher practice, focusing specifically on work with boys. The Day Two Interview Protocol is attached as Appendix F. The use of multiple interviews served to allow participants to foreground their notions around gender and teaching over time, since I had anticipated that some of the teachers might not have focused their reflective practice specifically on their gender locations within schools and teaching.

(iii) Interviews were transcribed and participants were invited to verify the accuracy of the transcripts. Transcripts of interviews noted such gestures as hesitations, repetitions, as well as tonal information as insertions within the transcript, as described by Gee (1999) and Gee and Green (1998). This allowed for a higher level of analysis regarding both the saliency of information as the speaker perceives it (Gee, 1999), and the level of affinity (Fairclough, 1993) that the speaker indicates during utterances. As well, these gestural notations enabled me to incorporate examinations of communication breakdowns and other problematic aspects of the interchange (Briggs, 1986). All data from interviews was identified by alphanumeric code in order to preserve confidentiality.

(iv) Subsequent to analysis, participants were contacted for member checking.

Analytical Framework

Narrative inquirers have traditionally drawn on a wide and multi-disciplinary range of analytical practices (Cortazzi, 1993; Gee & Green, 1998; Merriam, 1998). Data analysis in this study is informed by literary, ethnographic, and sociolinguistic approaches. The use of narrative inquiry takes up Gudmundsdottir's (1996) argument that narrative inquiry provides a powerful tool in researching education because of its capacity to take into account the contextual and social features of classrooms, as well as the unique and contingent aspects of teachers' practice. It offers a process for revealing the intentions and beliefs of teachers (Fenstermacher, 1997).

This thesis examines men's stories to gain an understanding of how their gendered experiences, the ways they focus on certain aspects of those experiences, and the meaning they attach to those experiences now shape their curricular practice. The analysis of these stories therefore follows Hall's (1996) observation that narrativity plays a profound role in enabling individuals to negotiate the diverse cultural spaces they traverse. Individuals tell their stories of and to themselves in particular ways, taking up particular aspects of their own stories, while leaving others aside. In Hall's terms, there are ways in which others tell your story, which may position you in certain ways in society, and ways in which you tell your own story. Sometimes your version of your story flatly contradicts the way others have positioned you: often, though, you may tell your story in ways that offer your more room to manoeuvre, more leverage, within the spaces into which dominant culture has placed you.

Examining individual participant narratives was conducted through the coding of data for common categories of experience and practice across the participants' narratives.

Coding themes emerged from the data itself, employing an etic perspective (Merriam, 1998), with transcripts examined repeatedly as new codes emerged. Created categories were thematically linked to the research questions. Focus was on examining specific statements and descriptions of practices through which the participants articulated a sense of themselves as male teachers of literacy. This data was then examined for commonalities as well as exceptionalities in order to develop a broader sense of the nature of the men's experiences as teachers.

Transcript excerpts were also examined using aspects of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as outlined by Fairclough, 1993, 1995; Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Lemke, 1998; Luke, 1997). CDA uses a framework that maps "three separate forms of analysis onto one another: analysis of (spoken or written) language texts, analysis of discourse practice (processes of text production, distribution, and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as instances of sociocultural practice (Fairclough, 1995, p. 2). The incorporation of sociolinguistic analysis in narrative as well as ethnographic studies is becoming more common (Cortazzi, 1993; Rogan & de Kock 2005), as it allows researchers to unearth and examine underlying constructs that shape the practices and understandings of participants: the 'cultural models', situated meanings, and the personal cultural repertoires for meaning construction (Gee& Green, 1997). I examined the data to trace the ways in which participants have negotiated discursive patterns such as gender arrangements of schools and "common sense" articulations of gender differences.

Participants

Participants were drawn from both the Windsor-Essex County District School Board (WECDSB) and the Greater Windsor Essex Catholic School Board (GWECSB).

Selection was purposeful: I accessed teachers through a network of experts (Fairclough, 1993), including system administrators, education professors, individuals who oversee practicum programs, and local teachers, in order to draw on participants with wide ranging experiences. Participants were identified by members of the referral network as currently teaching Language Arts, having a reputation for reflective practices and for demonstrating concern for students; therefore, they could provide rich and varied data on masculine literacy practices in schools. All participants had five or more years of teaching experience, or a significant amount of professional experience working with children. Ten participants were selected, five from the primary/junior panel, and five from the intermediate/senior panel. Care was taken to ensure that the participant's decision to participate or to decline participation was not communicated to the referring individual.

Specific Forms of Data Used

In the interviews and journal entries, I was interested in:

1. Ways that participants referred to themselves as gendered teachers.

   Example:

   > When I'm home with my family... I don't have to be, you know, the tall, confident, of course, I'm not tall, but you know, the big, confident [intermediate] person who, [intermediate] teacher who knows everything....And then, he's a Phys. Ed. guy so he must be a jock kind of guy. That guy's strong, guy, you know, that persona, of it all. (Dan)

2. Ways that participants spoke about other male teachers.

   Example:

   > ...and then I had Mr. Thomas. Um, and he was a big guy. He was really neat, but he was a big guy. A gentle giant. Soft-spoken guy, and he was just a nice personality. Respectful of you. (Mark)

3. Ways that participants spoke about female teachers.

Example:

[T]here are female teachers who have an unnatural resonance in their voice that grates on your every nerve that I couldn't stand being in the classroom for half an hour. (Cameron)

4. Statements about gender arrangements and perceptions of gender in schools.

Example:

About being a pseudo-janitor when our male janitor wasn't there. You know, I didn't mind chipping in, I don't mind helping out, but I don't like being pegged for the same job all the time, just because [I'm] male. (John)

5. Statements about how teachers viewed their own teaching as drawing on their lived

male experience.

Example:

...I would think that my identity as a male, having gone through, and grown through, and been through, everything that they're about to go through. That all adds up, to me, just is natural. I would have a natural bent to working with the boys, because I've lived their life, I've seen what they have to go through. (Cameron)

6. Statements describing their lives as boys, and the lives of boys more generally, in and

out of school.

Example:

Because I'm a classic example. I hated school. And I was petrified of the teacher, but I learned, because if I didn't have that homework done, I got the strap. And so I did my homework. And I'm not sure if I would have done my homework if I had the idea – if the strap wasn't out there. If it was optional. (Dave)

7. Statements that indicated differences between boys and girls.

Example:

> Where I know if it's the same type of thing with boys outside, the one boy's going to, like he'll just pummel the other guy and say, "Okay, now we're friends again. Let's go play soccer." And where the girls, it's just so much remembering, you know, so and so did this and she called me on the phone and then this happened. (Tim)

8. Statements about boys' literacy, including descriptions of their personal literacy experience and of how the participants taught literacy to boys:

Example:

> I was interested in stuff that was relevant to me. If you wanted to talk about motorcycles, and you wanted to talk about sports... and I find the kids are still like that. The boys want stuff that's kind of interesting to them. And they like more non-fiction books than the girls do. (Matt)

9. Statements indicating perceptions of the gendered nature of curriculum, especially related to literacy.

Example:

> So and I've read too, that schools often seem to be designed more for girls, at least in the younger grades. So I guess I was, in my mind, those seeds have been supplanted and I'm thinking how can I counter that? (John)

Finally, my own notes about how I understood participants during the interviews were also instrumental in the analysis.

Validity

Given that this model of analysis is based so much on the notion of socially constructed realities, validity is an issue that requires careful consideration. If the meaning of the text is informed by the individual's attempts to open its listeners to certain privileged understandings, and simultaneously by the resources that listeners bring to the text (Fairclough, 1993; Gee, 1999), then how does one legitimately describe findings as valid? How can one argue that one's findings reflect some sort of reality given the premise that reality is socially constructed?

Aspects of the construction of this study argue for its validity. Participants were selected based on the expertise of a number of well-informed sources. The interview process asked participants to speak about a range of social practices and perceptions, and accessed a range of discourse practices and traditions. Data was triangulated through three sources: the memory box activity, the reflective journals, and the interviews. The extended interview process allowed for clarification of previous responses over the course of the interviews. I have accessed a wide range of literature regarding literacy practices, social constructions of identity, and gender studies to assist in examining my own position within these discourses, and to understand more clearly the discourses upon which participants have drawn. Validation has also taken place through member checking, reference to experts in qualitative analysis methods and sociocultural issues in education, and by placing the findings in a context of other research in this field. As well, the emphasis in the analysis on seeking out areas where communication seems to 'go wrong' has provided opportunities for me to consider biases and assumptions in my analytical practice. As part of the analytical process, I systematically attempted to examine ways in which data might support opposite findings. Because the cross-gendered nature of the interviews may have affected participant response, awareness of these issues related to gender difference were an ongoing and conscious component of the analysis of data and writing of this study. While qualitative research inevitably reflects the researcher's stance, these strategies provide a range of opportunities for ensuring the credibility and trustworthiness of the final reporting.

<u>Participant Summary</u>

In my analysis of the participants' childhood stories, I found that they ultimately fell into three categories. Certain men in the study , specifically Matt, Dan, and Mark were leaders in groups of boys who were physically strong and athletic, and engaged in both competitive and recreational sports at a high level. These men's stories tended to reflect characteristics Mac an Ghaill (1994) associated with British working class youth masculinity, where "'looking after your mates', 'acting tough', 'looking smart', and 'having a good time' were key social practices" (p. 56). Their stories also tended to reflect a resistance to what were constructed as feminine discourses of school as a component of a more general undervaluing of women's practices. For leaders in this group, sports and sports scholarships were often the route to university education. Two more participants in this study, Sam and George, exhibited many of the same values and family patterns as this group as children. For a variety of reasons, they occupy a comparatively less central position within this group.

A second group of men, Cameron, Tim and John, were less physically dominant as boys. They engaged in recreational, but not necessarily competitive sports. These men's boyhood narratives tend to reflect a more middle class emphasis, in which families promoted literacy activities as a part of the home culture, creating what Connell (1995) refers to as "a life course being constructed collectively and institutionally... through the education system and the family's relationship to it" (p.141). Family involvement in literacy and academic practice meant that as boys these participants often brought cultural capital to bear in their school experiences, which offered them more potential avenues for academic and professional success (Connell, 1995). As boys, these participants were often aware of not fitting into, or of occupying a lower position, in the hierarchy of

physical dominance that shaped boys' social practices in their school lives, and often recounted a search for alternative social spaces in which to belong, band being the one most commonly mentioned. Typically middle class engagements such as music lessons and high levels of involvement with school-based organizations such as the PTA indicate a more generally middle-class pattern of social and cultural capital development in the case of this group. Andrew shares in many of the patterns of family practice and academic engagement charted here, though a number of factors make him a less typical example of this group.

Ed represents a more anomalous figure in the data. Ed grew up in an isolated town with almost no competitive sports and a strong work culture where many boys and girls worked from childhood. As a boy, his highly verbal and creative style and his knowledge of popular music earned him popularity even though he was different from his peers and he was neither interested in nor able to play sports. A middle class upbringing in a working class setting offered him access to knowledge and to goods, like records and baseball gloves, that sometimes gave him more room to manoeuvre, though it also differentiated him in more isolating ways at times. Boarding in a larger town for high school meant contending with different constructions of masculinity. A detailed participant profile representing each category mentioned here can be found in Appendix G.

Observations from Interviews

In this section, I will elaborate on three sets of practices I observed as I conducted the interviews.

My first observation was that when participants wanted to make statements that they perceived as negative about their female colleagues, they often engaged in Fairclough (1995) refers to as "hedging." Hedging is a process in which the speaker attempts to soften the thrust of the message, for example by including the listener through the repeated use of phrases that foster a sense that the listener agrees, or by statements that distance the speaker from his or her own idea. Fairclough states that hedging is always positioning in function: it indicates the degree to which the speaker is willing to be positively identified with his or her statement. In the example below, phrases such as "you know," "like," "I hate to say this" indicate moments of hesitation, of attempts to be seen as not sexist and to include me in the conversation. In this example the participant's overall point was that female teachers are "too uptight" with boys about small issues, which is a point the speaker thought might position him as sexist.

> **I think**, just the way that the men, male teachers, deal with problems. **I find they just, they tend** to be, **and I'm not saying this is a good thing or bad thing, it's just different. They tend to, I hate to say this, but I guess, I guess** not overreact to all the little things. **Like I see** some of my female counterparts that I teach with, **like some of the things that they**, they nitpick about the kids, and **I'm thinking, like I would, I would** never bring that up. **And, you know, I'm thinking, sometimes I think, well maybe I should. And, you know**, they're being very thorough and that's great that they're doing that. **And, you know**, thankfully they have someone saying those types of things but well, just even, **like, you know**, oh, you're holding your pencil wrong and you're doing this and you're doing that and, **you know, maybe I'm saying, making it sound like it's in a mean way but I think** it's in a very thorough way. **And, I don't know, I guess** sometimes I just don't even pay attention to stuff like that. **And I think** a lot of the little things that they go out and teach your, a lot of men teachers just don't necessarily pay attention to or maybe we're not just wired to pay attention to stuff like that. **And I think we tend** to be a little bit more patient in terms of not letting little things bother us... **But, I don't know, we've, I think** we've got a pretty clear difference between male teachers at my school and the female teachers. A lot of our female teachers, very uptight, and just get very emotional and very upset if a kid does something. And they just

wear it upon themselves and, you know, the venting that they do in the staff room. Like with the male teachers, like a kid can do something, it's like five minutes later, we've forgot about it, **you know**. Whereas, like I know we've got a few female teachers on staff, they just remember and chalk up every little thing. Well, he did this today and this and this. And just everything, it just builds and it just bothers them and it's just like this heavy suit that's just weighing down on them. **And, I don't know, like** sometimes we talk about this, **you know**, the men teachers at our school, and we just, we joke around and say, like so and so, she just needs to relax. Like she's like, and she's letting these little things bother her so much.

My second observation was that since I, as an interviewer, was female, participants often didn't know how to articulate even fairly straightforward pedagogical points if the point was gender specific. Dave, for example, said, "[The content in textbooks is] all sort of , uh – I don't know how to put it without being offensive [laughter]. Sort of, it's very feminine orientated in a lot of respects."

My third observation relates to the ways in which participants expressed gender in their narratives through intonation, as identified in field notes and during transcription. Although participants did not always explicitly say that they were drawing a distinction between typical male and female practices, their incorporation of specific voices as forms of mimicry within the text often provided powerful evidence of underlying gender structures. Though difficult to capture in written transcripts, a sameness in the sing-song softness of these pieces of mimicry throughout the data suggested much about ways in which participants were implicitly characterizing some feminine teaching practice. In general, the use of these high-pitched, slow tones was associated with practices the men considered to be ineffectual, soft, or in some way unnecessary. In the following example, Matt was describing the practices of a male teacher he particularly admires:

Yup. And they have a lot of, uh, he gives them a lot of responsibility for himself. He's not [somewhat high pitched voice – a bit like an old lady]

"Well, you hafta, do doo do doo do doo." He's like [male voice] "Okay, we're gonna do this" and the kids just go.

Here, the tone of voice suggested a distinction in positioning the children, partially captured also by the difference between "you hafta" and "we're gonna."

Although participants did make many explicit gender characterizations as a part of the narratives, the observations here point to the manifold ways in which underlying structures of gender emerged in a multi-layered way in the data.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the networks of data collection and analysis used in this study. I have also provided sketches of the three groups of teachers I interviewed. The following chapter offers an analysis of the results of the study.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter first offers an exploration of the ways in which ten male teachers'

lived experienced has shaped their understanding of and work with boys. Secondly, it

examines how being male influenced their experiences of the literacy curriculum as boys,

and how those literacy histories inform their work as literacy teachers.

In this examination of participants' narratives of boyhood and of current practice,

I will primarily be focusing on two patterns of practice that emerged from teachers'

descriptions of their work with boys, and that are further reflected in their mediation of

the literacy curriculum for boys. Participants worked to tailor school environments to

meet boys' needs and dispositions as they understood them. Many also worked,

sometimes simultaneously, to shift boys towards what those participants understood as

more "balanced" notions of an ideal masculinity which they felt would enable boys to fit

into school more successfully. The individual's personal history often shaped the

specific ways in which these patterns were produced, as well as the gendered resources

he could draw on to work with boys.

In enacting the literacy curriculum for boys, teachers mediated between what they

understood to be the dispositions and natures of boys, and what they understood to be the

nature of the curriculum. Both of these understandings were informed by their gendered

and historical experiences. They employed gendered resources, as limited or enhanced by

their individual school context, in enacting this mediation, but gendered factors could

also limit their practices. Please see Appendix H for a graphic overview of this process.

The analysis of results, includes four sections. The first section offers an examination of how participants' knowledge of boys and efforts to tailor school settings to meet boys' needs are informed by their individual experiences of being a boy. The second section examines patterns in the participants' life histories that inform their priorities and practices in working transformatively with boys. The third and fourth sections examine participants' literacy histories and literacy teaching, tracing the patterns of how their personal histories as male language learners inform their literacy work with boys.

4.1. Narratives of Boyhood and Belonging in the Work of Male Teachers

In this section of the analysis, I begin by offering participants' perspectives about advantages they feel they have in working with boys and how these advantages draw on their lived experiences. The participants in the study viewed being male as a distinct advantage in understanding the biological and social characteristics of boys, in being credible to boys, and in understanding boys' relationships to school settings. They viewed this knowledge of boys as embodied and non-transferable, as they understood it to be based on their lived male experiences. In general, an important pattern that emerged in men's talk around boys was that, though participants were generally sympathetic to the problems of boys in schools, they constructed boys as pedagogical and behavioural problems. They tended to deploy their own boyhood experiences in explanatory ways, justifying the behavioural and social problems of boys through recourse to their own histories.

In the second part of this section, through participants' stories, I examine in more detail how participants' "knowledge" of boys, as informed by their individual histories, shapes their teaching practice. I offer, first, a synopsis of general trends typical in many of the stories that participants tell of their boyhood lives. I then continue with specific representational biographical examples. Overall, a recurring theme in participants' narratives had to do with the ways that, when they were in school, boys typically valued a common set of characteristics in males, including size, physical strength, sporting ability, toughness and the avoidance of the feminine. No matter what kinds of skills, abilities, bodies or dispositions the individual had, being a boy always meant contending with this

notion of manhood somehow. Although most participants remember their boyhoods pleasurably, many shared memories of challenges that were connected to this traditional, valued way of being a boy. Being that type of boy could make school an uncomfortable place. However, not being that type of boy could also make school an uncomfortable place, although in different ways. These experiences often influenced participants' ideas of why boys struggle in school, which boys need help in school, and what they need. They further informed how the individual teacher tailors school environments in ways that he believes will help boys to thrive in school. In analyzing these stories, I will draw upon the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.

How Men Know About Boys

Participants felt that as men, they were better able to interpret the behaviours and underlying needs of boys. This interpretive ability was based on essentialized biological knowledge as well as on their social experiences as males. They also felt they had greater credibility with boys, which enabled them to gather more information and to be perceived as more trustworthy by male students. In some cases, credibility with boys specifically rested on living in a male body, as opposed to a female one, and had little to do with personal characteristics of trustworthiness, as demonstrated by Cameron:

> And I think maybe... that's easier done for a male teacher by virtue of his gender...[A] female teacher has to devise ways, early in the year, in September, of how she can automatically have her boys here [*gestures to palm of hand*]. Now if she's athletic and they don't know her, she's brand new on staff, she needs to be in that gym, and she needs to go one on one with one of her boys, not to humiliate, but to show the other, the other boys more so than the girls, hey. I'm female, and I can do sports, too.... So, find something, if you're not athletic, that a boy values, that you can do, that you are proficient at, and put it on public display, and get their, get their admiration, and then eventually you will get their trust.

The female teacher here is not earning credibility through demonstrating honesty, but through engaging in physical activities that a boy values as masculine.

Men's Knowledge of Boys

Biologically, numerous participants asserted that boys possess distinctive masculine learning patterns similar to those discussed in scientific theories of gender difference. In adopting the language of science, participants borrowed from a range of literature that applies "brain science" to articulate gender differences, generally positioning men and boys as requiring more action, more space, and more attention within school and institutional settings (See, for example Gurian & Ballew, 2003; Moir & Jessel, 1989). Examples of this biological distinctiveness include first, statements that defined girls as more verbal than boys, as exemplified by Tim:

> I almost wonder if that's just something that's **hard-wired** for guys,
> they're just more cut to the chase kind of things and women are just so
> much better at describing feelings. Like I think even of colours, like if my
> wife would say, "Okay, what colour is that apple?" And I'd go, "Well, it's
> red." And she'd say, "Well, it's a number of different shades." And I
> never even thought of that. I almost wonder if it's just the way **we're
> hard-wired**. (Emphasis mine)

Another example was drawn from men's emphasis on the importance of providing gender-specific bodily care to boys, though, in general, it was exemplified through references to girls going to women for issues around menstruation, rather than by providing a specific male example of knowledge of boys' biological development during adolescence.[1] As Dave said:

> Where you have lived through it yourself as a male, and you understand it,
> and vice versa. Girls have – there's no man every going to understand
> what it's like to go through your period in grade seven. Like, even though
> you've had kids start in your class. Female teachers can understand it.
> The same thing with males – there's certain things that happen with males
> in class that you understand.

Socially, boys were generally seen as more likely to be competitive and individualistic than girls. As Andrew said, "I think it's a male thing...you don't like to be seen as one of the lower class men." Boys were also seen as generally resistant to expressing emotion. As Tim put it, "Like, you don't hear Superman espousing about his feelings, you know... Man of Steel. Keeps everything inside." Boys were also viewed as avoidant of, as Mark put it, "anything doing with girls." Based on these biological and social differences, participants tended to view school as a setting more suited to girls, while viewing it as a place of constraint and potential coercion for boys because of their natures.

Despite the strong conviction that that their lived experience was an advantage in working with boys, participants' stories also indicated that their knowledge was limited by two factors. The first limiting factor was that emerging resources such as computer games have resulted in changes to practices and attitudes since participants' boyhoods. Thus, while the participants had insider knowledge around certain areas of boyhood, other areas, particularly around popular culture, were less accessible.[2] The second limiting factor was that in situations where there were more pronounced social, cultural and class differences between the participants and the boys, these differences tended to reduce participants' sense of the resonance between their own experience and the boys'. Therefore, intersections of difference such as class and ethnicity could also signal shifts in their sympathies. This passage from Mark's interviews is very typical of the data around intersections of masculinity and ethnicity, where participants identified specific ethnicities as more patriarchal in their practices:

> I have a hard time with that, with them being that way....I mean you have
> a high Arabic population, I can just leave it go, but if they're like that in
> front of me, I would tell them, listen I don't – please. Even the students...
> you get the Arabic boys that they're disrespectful to the girls – I'm all over
> that, right away. I have a hard time with that, so I deal with it right away,
> just tell them that it's not acceptable, and just, in front of me. And I say, I
> understand some of their cultural ways, but here we don't do that.

When asked specifically about issues of sexism and patriarchal practices in schools,

ethnicity often emerged as the key determinant, even though a range of individual stories

indicated that sexist, patriarchal attitudes could be found among many other students

regardless of ethnic background. These boundaries around the value and accuracy of

knowledge based on lived experience, of essentialized knowing of boys, suggest that

intersecting categories of difference may affect how men understand boys and the degree

to which their resources can be effectively employed in working with them.[3]

Boyhood Stories

Because participants' assertions of knowledge of boys so frequently drew on their

own boyhoods as a key resource, understanding participants' narratives of their boyhood

lives is an important aspect of understanding how men work with boys. This section

provides a synopsis of the general patterns typical of participants' stories of their

boyhood lives.

In general, for men in this study, boy culture was most vibrantly enacted outside,

both of school and of their own homes, although school life could also be influenced by

it. The accoutrements of boyhood life varied according to the age of the participants, but

the value of independent movement through the world, on bikes, motorbikes, horses, or

on foot, was invariable. As Dave described it,

> [W]e grew up in a real boys' type of neighbourhood. We played a lot of
> street vs. street sports, we did, we'd go on hikes, we'd horseback ride, it

was very – go swimming, ride our bikes to Point Pelee, go up and do, like
little hikes with our bow and arrows and beebee guns, and fight each
other, and, you know…We rode to Point Pelee, and we rode right out here,
to Malden Road, and we'd pay two dollars and ride horses. So we'd wash
cars and cut grass so we could come out here and do that. And then we'd
ride out to Emeryville, and swim, in Emeryville, cause none of us had
pools, we weren't well off, so….

In this street life, boys' social networks were to a degree self-governed, managed

by competition and physical conflict, and shaped by physical toughness, loyalty to

friends, sports prowess and willingness to take risks and pull pranks on outsiders (usually

adults). Membership, or even proximity to this social network required control of one's

emotions, limited self-expression, and distance from females or from practices generally

perceived as feminine. These values and practices could be said to constitute a

traditionally valued way of being a boy, a kind of hegemonic boyhood, as expressed by

participants in the study.

This social world of boys was to an extent shaped by class, as well, so that the

most pronounced version of this masculinity was often enunciated by men who had

working class boyhoods, based on their own self-identifications of their family's socio-

economic status. While participants from working class communities described fighting

as a key component of the social order, for example, middle-class boy life tended to

revolve more consistently around playing a variety of sports close to home. Dave, who

moved into a working class neighbourhood after his family suffered financial setbacks,

said, at that time:

I had to learn how to fight, and I learned how to fight, I ended up being – I boxed
for a while – so I could handle myself. It was not a pleasant thing. After losing a
few teeth, and breaking a few knuckles, and things, that's not a fun atmosphere,
but that sort of promoted leadership, which was really sort of a hierarchy in the
neighbourhood was that if you're somebody, your friend got in a fight, then you

backed them up. It was very important, that sort of thing, so... we had sort of a street gang. We all did.

These patterns of difference reflect the findings of many studies of masculinity that identify intersections of class, race and ethnicity as key determinants of gender performance among boys (Connell, 1995; 2000; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Reichert & Kuriloff, 2004).

Participants in the study described ways in which, as boys, they were invited to take part in activities by men, such as specific sports, paid work or arts-based activities. Matt's story of how boys were identified as athletes at the beginning of high school based on size is a typical one:

> They recruit – when they seen you walking down the halls – "You ever thought about playing football?" You know, you're only there a week. "You're coming out for the football team, right?" So... they picked, they just, "Oh yeah, he's big enough, he's big enough, gotta get that big kid over there.

For men with working class boyhoods, these invitations most frequently emerged in the contexts of sports or work. For men with middle class boyhoods, these invitations could also include what were perceived as more literate or arts-based practices, which subsequently offered these boys a wider range of options academically and professionally. This finding is in tune with Connell (2000) who states that middle class values tend to emphasize skills necessary to the "credentialing" process that enables access to the higher levels of the labour market.[4]

In school, physical strength and size tended to be predictive of social position. Cameron, who suffered from a severe illness in high school, remembers his physical slightness as a social problem: "my introduction to high school, I got picked on because I was so slender, and so ill, and uh, I wasn't an athlete." Those who "physically developed

quicker than others, were definitely the top of the pecking order. You know… if your body was developing, and…your… hand-eye co-ordination, that was it, that was the way it was." Like a number of other participants, Cameron's narratives of the social hierarchy seem to suggest a kind of physical sweepstakes of winners and losers. Participants on the losing end of the sweepstakes often found more conducive settings in secondary school, where programs such as band or drama offered alternative social environments for boys. These divided settings of sports on the one hand and arts-based activities on the other, tended also to correspond with more and less resistant attitudes towards academics.

Many participants recounted stories about practices, like fighting, or avoiding 'soft' boys, that were important to conform to if one wanted to be accepted by other boys. For some boys, living up to the demands of this boy culture seemed natural, but for others, it was not easy. For many boys, the way that they did so depended on the cultural capital and other resources they brought into these environments. At times, attempting to fit in meant behaving in ways that did not feel comfortable, as in Dave's literal fight for position in the hierarchies of his working class neighbourhood. These experiences of poor fit, of the costs and difficulty of fitting into the subject positions available to one, often shape specific patterns in men's ideas about boys' lives in schools, ones that I will now examine in stories of Dan and Tim. I have chosen these two participants because their stories illustrate distinctly different relationships to the traditional, hegemonic form of boyhood described above. In examining these participants' stories, I will begin with a brief outline of their childhood stories, and then examine the way that their stories inform their ideas about the boys in schools who need help, what they need, and the roles that these teachers play in offering that help.

Dan's Story

Dan grew up in a large family of highly competitive, very physical boys:

> It was all boy-life.... So everything was boy, boy, boy, boy, boy. We
> were all athletic, we all fought. We all did the boy things you could think
> of. We got in trouble. We had a pool so we all swam. Like we're all
> extremely athletic, so we would, and athletic with each other. So we were
> very, "I'm better than you at this." "No, you're better than –" you know,
> "I'm better than you," that kind of thing....Extremely competitive,
> especially once we got into high school because then we were all roughly
> the same height, size.

Sports were his particular niche in the family competition, in school, and in his

community life. Sports were where he felt most comfortable:

> [W]hen I'm in my element, I'm open and care-free. When I'm not in my
> element, which is anywhere other than sports, I get quiet and I sit back and
> I relax and I try not to say too much, I guess.

Dan was an enormously successful high school athlete. As a result, he got to do what he

refers to as really "cool things." He credits his university education to sports as well,

saying that he was "heavily recruited" because of his athletic abilities. His sports coaches

were key facilitators of his post-secondary education, pushing him and facilitating his

entry into both his first degree and the Teacher Education program even when, in some

instances, his marks would have presented an entrance challenge.

The academic aspects of school were challenging, as he struggled with reading.

He had difficulties with focus and was always bored and thinking about sports and girls.

Dan attributes his declining marks in high school to deepening involvement in sports, and

his discovery that he "could be really good at other things...School was the back burner

involvement."

Although in his early high school years, Dan anticipated a sports career at the

national or perhaps even international level, ultimately, he was not as successful as he

had hoped. He got a sports scholarship to go to university but "couldn't get a full scholarship to a big school." Post-secondary education proved a difficult path. He "coped all the way through" with the support of mostly female peers who helped him to study and understand classroom material. As an adult, he still does not enjoy reading or writing, and would not teach Language Arts if he did not have to.

When he completed his first degree, and it came time to make a career decision, he wanted either to be a chiropractor or a Phys. Ed. teacher. He "loved the human body. I loved the way it worked." He wanted to be a doctor but felt he "wasn't that smart. My fall back was to be a Phys. Ed. teacher." The decision was not based on convenience alone: rather, it was also based on anxiety about his abilities, "knowing that if I had a doctor, I'd want them to be extremely smart and competent, you know, being able to do everything that they could for me. So I'm like, I'm not a doctor."

Dan feels that his is the story of a typical, normal boy, and that making decisions about what boys need based on his life experience is a legitimate and natural step:

> I am a boy and I know what worked for me. And we all, we only know about ourselves. We're the experts about ourselves. We know what works for us or what doesn't sometimes, again, on the norm. And I would say, I was a norm, a normal boy. And learning when I wanted to. I wasn't bad. I wasn't very outspoken. I wasn't too quiet. I just did what I had to do. I was right in the norm, right in the middle. I know what worked for me and I know what worked for some of my friends or what didn't work for some of my friends. And now as a teacher, I'm sitting there thinking, now okay, well what worked for me? What's going to help these boys?

In the story Dan tells, one which he suggests is the "normal" story of boys in school, he was deeply integrated into his school's sports culture, which entailed his compliance with academic work through bonds of loyalty to specific coaches who were also teachers, and whom he did not want to disappoint.

Which Boys

Like all teachers, Dan must determine priorities in apportioning his limited time within his large homeroom class. His priorities emerge out of his history of struggling with literacy in school; therefore, his aim is "to help that kid, that was like me that didn't get it. Didn't get that help….I want to help that kid as much as I can. That was like me." He doesn't forge these kinds of connections with all kids. Some

> just kind of push themselves to me or I push myself towards them. There are kids that don't need, don't need to make sure I make a connection with them for them to learn or for them to do well at school…I've always made a connection right away with the kids that I know are going to struggle. Boom, right away, they're the first ones I make connections with. And then the other ones usually make the connections with me, the athletic kids.

He feels that he has less to offer to kids who are already academically successful. According to Dan, kids working well above grade level don't need him as much, because they'll achieve on their own, while kids working below grade level need him a lot more. Dan describes girls in his classes as not "need[ing] me as much whereas maybe some of those boys would…need that extra help. Need that push. Need that incentive. Sort of need the incentive program." His priorities in the classroom continue to be set by his narratives of his own boyhood experiences in school, by the notion of what it takes for a boy, as he defines them, to cope in school settings.

What Boys Need

What boys need is an extension of how Dan defines what it is to be a boy, based on his personal experiences. He understands school as a place diametrically opposed to boys' concerns and interests. Literacy is not a "normal" interest for most boys:

> I think the guys are outside playing baseball, basketball, fooling around with their friends. Their way to communicate is not on the phone. They

watch T.V. They are on the computers, maybe. They don't communicate
like girls do especially at a younger age. Guys, when they're outside, say
at recess time or even with their friends, they're not talking while they're
playing. They're, you know, "Here, watch that guy. Over here." You
know, "Jump, get the rebound." Girls are blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah
all the time. Like, they're not playing as much, they're talking, they're
conversing, they're gossiping. And that is so much different from what a
guy does. And I don't think there is much you can do about it.... Like,
no, it's not going to happen and that's where a boy's interest lies on the
norm. You'll get your five or ten percent whatever that aren't like that
and, but, the norm is that's what boys do. Boys are active. And when
they're active, they're not speaking or they're not conversing, they're not
using those language skills like a female would.

While some boys may succeed without his direct attention and demands, in his

view, struggling boys need an approach consistent with what has been referred to earlier

as the discourses of hegemonic masculinity; that is, practices in which young boys work

to live up to traditional images and notions of what men should be (such as, competitive,

challenge-based , masterful, and loyal to other males). Dan says that he is "in their face"

and will "push and push and push until [the students] get it." Dan constructs the kind of

care and nurture that boys need from men in terms of demands, regulation, and control:

"It's like, there's a line, don't cross it. And you cross it, I'm going to be upset."

Forging bonds of personal loyalty with a male teacher will supersede boys'

disinclination for academic work:

And I guarantee you I had five boys in my classroom this year that did that
for me. All five of them. Absolutely the exact same thing. They knew
that I would be so extremely disappointed if they did not do the work, in
fact, they would come in the next morning, "Sir, sir, I'm so sorry I didn't
get my homework done.... They just had that rapport with me because I
was male and interested in some of the things they were interested in.

He sees engagement with a male teacher as a way of saving boys at risk of school

disenfranchisement. He emphasizes pulling them into relationships with male teachers

who can inspire their compliance rather than, for example, trying to identify factors that might be contributing to boys' disinterest.

In his teaching, Dan draws upon popular professional athletes and uses language and idioms from sports to make his teaching relevant and to connect with the lives of students. He sees this practice as connecting the curriculum to topics that "everyone" enjoys:

> When I'm doing that, I will use subject specific things that they enjoy. Basketball. All right, we're going to write an essay or a speech on Michael Jordan. Everybody knows who Michael Jordan is. Or, actually, I would use Allen Iverson now...

Focusing on sports does not necessarily mean that Dan excludes other topics of interest to children. He does provide examples of how he seeks out topics of interest to a broader range of students:

> Well, obviously relating things to sports and that's the biggest thing. I relate things, if I, and it's not just sports like, the girls in my class just sit there going, "Uhh uhh." I relate it to shopping. I relate it to T.V. shows. I relate everything to things that they enjoy. And I'll pick a kid like right in class. "You're not listening right now, why?" "I don't know, it's boring sir." Okay, good. So you love basketball, you love shopping. I know that the other day you bowled a two-eighty. So let's relate it to bowling. Or let's relate it to doing your nails, doing your hair, whatever we can.

The girls in his class emerge here as at least occasionally resistant to his sports content. The examples Dan provides still imply gender division: boys engage in sports such as basketball, while girls shop and do their nails and hair. When he's working with boys who don't like sports, he says, he draws on other materials he thinks will be of interest to them: "I would relate it to *Trailer Park Boys*,[5] I would relate it to mechanical stuff. I would relate it to cars." But this strategy is not always successful: for some kids it "didn't matter what I did."

Dan is aware that his "jock guy" identity does not play well with all students,

identifying female students, in particular, as likely to resist it:

> I decrease it a tone whenever I'm talking to females. Boom, I'm a
> sensitive guy when I'm, and I'm a full blown jock that's going to kick
> your butt on the basketball court at basketball practice after school.
> Absolutely.

He says that he is more likely to "rip into" a male than a female, based on his

understanding that "females are softer and males are harder." When it comes to non-

athletic girls, he acknowledges that a gulf exists. He says, "I can't teach her. She won't

listen to me, she doesn't want to do it... So yeah, it definitely works against me," but

feels that these exclusions resulting from his performance of the masculine jock persona

are worth it: "Every year... does it help me more than it hurts me? I think so. I think

every year, because I'm the Phys. Ed. teacher, I get twenty and lose ten."

The range of practices he uses to engage other students remained quite narrow.

Dan says , for example, that "stuff that's not male, I wouldn't do." He believes that there

are limitations to the roles it is possible for him to play in the classroom that have to do

with what students would accept coming from a teacher with his gendered identity:

> Soothing influence, yeah. I do that as well, but I don't know if I could do
> it as well as she could. Or as a female could. And I might be perceived a
> lot different. Like, you know, "Sir, stop being like that. That's Miss
> [Davis'] job." Like, you know, I know that's how they would think too.

This excerpt together with others offered above bears out Martino and Franke's (2006)

findings that men felt that boys' practices in classrooms often re-enforced hegemonic

masculine practices of male teachers in schools. Gendered knowledge, including his

historical experience of what students accept from female and male teachers, what

constitutes the possible range of boyhood interests, and his own gender boundaries affect

his sense of what teaching entails and of what he sees as possible in his own practice.

Dan also tends to conflate notions of homosexuality with femininity in ways

typical of hegemonic masculine discourses.[6] In describing a boy he believes to be

homosexual in his class, Dan says:

> I definitely treat him differently than I would a normal boy, yeah....A lot
> more soft. Easier...[w]ith that kid it would be, "Yeah, let's go, what's the
> problem? Need help? Sure no problem, what is it?" But a lot softer.
> Yeah, there would be no...huff-ness to it, you know.

This interaction style is informed by his ideas about gender identities, by a conflation of

physical with emotional and mental strength, by an assumption that homosexuality is

readily visible as fragility and physical weakness: "I would never be tough with him

because he's gay...So even the softer kind of guys, like, that aren't as athletic or harder,

stronger, you know, you're softer with them." These practices echo his understanding of

appropriate and effective interaction with girls, as well. As Connell (1995) observes:

> Gayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is
> symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity, from home decoration
> to receptive anal pleasure. Hence, from the point of view of hegemonic
> masculinity, gayness is easily assimilated to femininity (p. 78).

What Teaching Is

Dan delineates a number of specific roles that are central to his teaching practice,

which are informed by the resources he has as a man. These include teaching as

entertaining, teaching as coaching, and teaching as parenting.

Teaching as Entertaining

Dan sees teaching as a performance intended to keep the audience (students)

engaged with what is being enacted. As he states, a teacher has "got to do everything that

[he] possibly can to keep [students] interested." As a result, he performs jokes and tells

stories to students to "[keep] students' attention":

> Oh, yeah, I'm a goof in front of the class in more ways, in all ways. And
> use that as much as I can to teach and keep them, like it's a show. Have
> you ever, it's a six hour show every single day. I go to bed as early as I
> can and get up and sleep as long as I can just because I know that if I'm
> not rested, they'll eat me alive. And I have to put on that show to be a
> good teacher, every single day. That's the way I look at it.

He identifies this practice as important in "boring subjects" exemplified in his narratives

by academic disciplines. Younger and Warrington (1999) demonstrated that male

students expect teachers to take greater responsibility for generating enjoyment and

motivation in lessons. In this sense, Dan's entertainment emphasis can be seen as

emerging out of this commonly held understanding that boys need enjoyment to balance

the academic tedium they experience, especially the boys he sees as "needing" him.

Teaching as Coaching

Dan's teaching career has been highly influenced by his own high school sports

coach, of whom he says, "I didn't want to be like him, I wanted to be him." He draws on

sports and his practices as a sports coach not only for content, as described above, but

also as a field with its own system of practices and language. This use of sports and its

language is important with students who are not succeeding in academics. In fact, when

asked how he draws on his athletic history in classroom practice, he identified practices

around managing exclusion and failure:

> How do you let go of a kid, or how do you cut a kid from a basketball
> team. Well, you've better be able to talk to him well enough so he doesn't
> go freaky on you and then when you give a paper back to somebody that
> they failed, "Sir, I can't believe I failed this." Well, did you put the work
> into it? Did you do this? Did you do that?

As well, he draws on his identity as a sports coach and a former premier athlete as social capital in demanding respect, especially from boys:

> And I know that they respect me because, you know, I make sure they know what I've done in university. They know [I was a very successful athlete]... and, you know, there's that small respect factor there. Probably for the boys it's a huge respect factor. For the girls, it's a small respect factor. Except for the athletes, it would be bigger.

Teaching as Parenting

Dan is comfortable with being a male role model and a father figure for children in his school. He says "In a school like mine, it's unbelievable, there are no fathers." Here, Dan echoes what Mills, Martino and Lingard (2004) describe as the recurring "theme of the missing father" (p. 363) within debates around boys' schooling, which draw on notions of a lost masculine tradition that ostensibly feminized schools are not able to provide. In Dan's case, however, this theme also reflects a more literal understanding of boys' need for a masculine connection. His own father, he says, was "not a totally great father." He was "so not there.... When he spoke...for me, it wasn't that there was no line. He was just, there, was non-existent." In part, Dan views his role as a father figure as clarifying limits for children. A father figure's "parenting practice" might include:

> [Y]ou know, those are things that we can't do. You know, in society, we don't do that kind of stuff. We do that all the time. Like, you're not wearing your hat in a public place, you just don't do that. You, those are rules that we have to follow. You need to raise your hand and ask to go to the washroom. Or, I had a better one. We don't swear in classrooms. Yeah, you can go outside and swear with your friends all you want. But when you're around adults, you're not supposed to. However, you know, swearing shows that you're ignorant and that you don't understand different things and you're using that to, you know, mask the fact that you're not as smart as other people or you're not as intelligent as you should be and you need to be doing more. You know, so those are the,

when you shake hands, when you talk to somebody, look at them in their eye. Those little things.

Dan's image of a father as a drawer of lines, as maker of rules and as teacher of appropriate behaviours for boys fits well both with what Dan feels he did not receive from his own father, and what he did receive from his mentor.

Tensions

Although Dan remains positioned within a discourse of hegemonic masculinity through his relationship with competitive sports, and reproduces many of its patterns in his teaching, there are tensions in the way he experiences the value of this discourse, both for himself and for the athletes he teaches. Dan's narratives indicate that he, too, experiences anxiety around his own sense of identity within the schools and around his relationship to the image of the athlete in schools. As Reichert & Kuriloff (2004) argue the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities in school is saturated with anxiety around the difficulty of maintaining an appropriately masculine image.

On the one hand, Dan feels that sports is a real benefit to students, as it was to him. On the other hand, he discourages them from excessive engagement with sports at the expense of academics, especially if he believes that the student is not a good athlete. Dan views himself as someone able to speak the truth of the sports world to boys, and, in several anecdotes, demonstrated that he felt that doing so was a component of good teaching practice. For most boys, professional sports is not a good thing to pin your hopes on:

> The chances of you going to the NHL are 0.0000276. Got no chance.
> You might. That might actually happen. You might be that point zero,
> zero, zero, and I write it on the board for them....I had a kid in my class
> who was, he wasn't even a really good athlete, but he thought he was
> going to the NHL...and then [a kinesiology professor at the university]

> came up with an article that a Canadian born kid has this, and it was right
> in the paper, and I pulled it out and I shoved it right in the window, right
> beside his desk. You're not going to the NHL. And, you know, I don't
> want, and I tell them, I'm not trying to kill your dreams like, you should
> have these dreams, that's great. This is first. You know, this is first. And
> if anybody understands that, it's me.

This passage demonstrates that in his practice, Dan attempts to provide a better situation for boys who engage with practices similar to his as a boy. Clearly, academics were not first, from his personal story, and his understanding of the costs and consequences of that boyhood transaction is one that prompts a slightly different emphasis in his own practice, compared to what he experienced in school. Although being an athlete enabled him to go to university and to become a teacher, it is not an unalloyed blessing for him, and he is justifiably cautious about its merits for others.

These tensions are also reflected in the pressure that Dan feels to live up to the image he views as appropriate for him in his role as Phys. Ed. teacher, coach, and homeroom teacher:

> I'm conscious of that. And I try to be that perfect guy at school as much
> as I can. Because I'm a teacher, I'm a role model, whether I like it or not.
> Even though Charles Barkley didn't like it, whether it be in a sports area,
> he is. In that case, I am. Got to be as perfect as I can be. You know, there
> are hypocritical teachers that say, "Oh don't smoke, don't have sex, don't
> do drugs." Blah, blah, blah. And they go home and drink like fishes and
> smoke like crazy.

He feels that his responsibility to be a role model places high demands on him, demands he does not feel he can always live up to. For instance, maintaining his image as an athlete at school is more difficult as he gets older, as his own priorities shift, "with looks or even being, becoming, putting on weight, very self-conscious of that and feeling that I need to keep up that image."

Dan is also aware of ways in which he deliberately calls on his reputation as an athlete to avoid situations in which he feels intellectually vulnerable, both in the classroom, where he uses it as "a crutch, right, when I'm teaching. I'm just a jock, I'm not sure about all this stuff, or I'm not that great at all this stuff but at least I'll give it a shot" and in the staffroom, where he uses it in a similar fashion:

> But I, you know, when it comes down to it there are times when I might not know a certain answer to a question and every teacher should. Not knowing that I do know the answer, because, you know, I do it every single day, not understand the question maybe....So I play it off as being, oh, I'm a jock....[M]y defence mechanism's, I'm a jock. Definitely.

Dan's complex use of his own athletic resources, and the way in which he perceives those resources to fit, or not fit, into the practices in schools helps him to navigate in vulnerable situations.

To sum up, much of Dan's practice rests on a theory of boys that emerges out of his own experience. Dan is an excellent athlete and a strongly committed, caring teacher who works hard to connect with students in powerful and productive ways. Even though he states that his own boyhood was "right in the norm," at times his stories also express some anxiety when he compares himself to other students, teachers, and, in some ways, other high-calibre athletes. He feels that only his athletic talent enabled him to access university and the life he now leads. While it is true that his involvement with the sports world and its culture may have alienated him from accessing educational engagement in other potentially fruitful ways, it also offered him what was perhaps his most certain route to university education. The possibility of not succeeding, if, for example, he had not been so loyal to his coaches, or had not been athletic enough, hangs over his boyhood narrative. These perceptions shape his understanding of boys' dispositions and needs,

and the relationships he tends to build with them. His personal experience shape the ways in which he helps boys, perhaps leaving the needs of some girls and boys less clearly attended to at times.

Tim's Story

Tim's boyhood narrative is provided in more detail in Appendix G. To briefly summarize, Tim navigated the local street world of his boyhood comfortably, but found little purchase in the hierarchies of size and physical ability that dominated boys' social arrangements at school and on the playground. He was small and "intensely shy" and, though he had friends in school, was always conscious of the possibility of isolation on the playground. In high school, Tim was very involved with the school band. He was also an athlete: he played and still plays baseball. However, this sports life did not play a significant role in his social status at school. Tim's father was a teacher, and his family nurtured literacy and academic practices intended to support Tim's entry and continued success in school life.

Like Dan, Tim tends to normalize his gendered identity and to view himself as the norm, occupying a position somewhere in the middle of a range of ways in which he understands that boys and men act. He views himself as:

> more of a balancing act... [A] lot of times, like the boys that are the one of the testosterone charged boys, it seems more often to me that the male figures in their life are like that too....And I guess even, more so for the other too. Like because I'm a sports person too, I love sports....And so, maybe I'm kind of like a balancing act, a little bit.

From Tim's perspective, part of his work is in offering himself as a model that may enable those positioned at the extremities to move towards his own "balanced" position, a

pattern taken up in more detail in section 4.2. His main focus, however, is on boys who

don't fit in at school.

Which Boys

Like Sam, Tim's priority and natural focus is on boys who "were like me as a

kid" which in his case means:

> [O]nes that are a little bit more shy, at times a little bit more removed from
> the group. Those are the ones that I would have a very easy time kind of,
> really kind of picking into their brain to know what they're thinking and,
> but, I don't know, in terms, it's more and more so from experience. I
> guess, just my own experience in school.

When growing up, Tim sometimes felt vulnerable around boys at school and in the

playground; thus, he makes an extra effort with boys who feel "removed from the group,"

as he did as a boy. His memories of his own boyhood inspire him to address these

students' isolation, and to ensure that they are known in the school context, at least by

him:

> Well, I think as a teacher, it's caused me to pay attention to all the kids, to
> look out for those kids that seem to, you know, just kind of hang back a
> little bit and, you know, aren't always...running around getting right into
> the soccer game on the playground. And so... if I'm on yard duty, I make
> a point of trying to talk to all the kids even those the teachers will tend to
> ignore because they think they're weird or something like that.

What Boys Need

Tim believes that it's important for boys in school to feel socially accepted, and

even admired, from time to time. Though he qualifies it as possibly an experience of

both boys and girls, his emphasis is on boys as he says that:

> boys they just, when they want to feel, you know, every boy sometime in
> their life they just want to feel like...they're the champ and...that they're
> looked up to a little bit. They want to feel like they belong but, I guess,
> that's the same for the girls too. [T]hat overwhelming need to feel that
> they belong in a group.

As a consequence of this belief, Tim focuses on creating environments where students who are not entirely accepted within boys' sports networks can feel comfortable. For example, Tim coaches chess:

> Because I get...a lot of the kids that would never be on any sports team and...even some of the kids, ...even teachers say some really degrading things about... "That kid's so weird." And, "I can't stand that kid." And they come to my chess club and they're just absolutely brilliant. So I had one grade eight boy this year, truly a really, very odd kid, and but, there's something about him that I really liked at the same time too...And I always thought, if he didn't at least have this, like he would have no activities outside of the classroom. And so, I don't remember a lot of activities other than, you know, the band and sports. I don't remember a lot of activities at my school.

His lunchtime guitar jam sessions with boys, some of whom "really struggle with other teachers" enable them to "come and talk to me or just even come and hang out with me....They just like that comfort." Repeatedly, Tim's narratives returned to this notion of boys' comfort with him and their need for comfort zones. He sees himself as especially good at providing that "sense of comfort" and explicitly views this as something boys are not getting from their female teachers to the same degree:

> But the opposite's true with some of our female teachers too like, the fear, the fear of doing something wrong, the fear of getting called upon for...any type of infraction. And, at least with me and with the male students that I teach, and I do think it's partly because... I'm a male role model for them, but I know they feel very comfortable around me.

What Teaching Is

Tim identifies several important roles that teachers can play in working with boys. Although at first glance, the roles he plays are very similar to Dan's, how he understands what these roles entail and why they are necessary emerge from his distinctive personal history.

Teaching as Parenting

Tim connects his role as a father figure to children's need for comfort. To be a father in a school is to be a bit more "accepting of [children's] flaws." To be a father is "being well-rounded, being able to listen.... [Kids'] [k]nowing that they can come and talk to me, not just overreacting and yelling at them all the time." Accessibility, steadiness, gentleness and perhaps unconditional acceptance are the foundations of this image.

Teaching as Entertaining

Tim sees "fun" as an important part of what he offers. He believes that many students feel "a little bit more at ease with some male teachers" because they are fun, which is another facet of his emphasis on boys' need to feel comfort at school. For Tim, humour plays a more social, affective role for boys who may sometimes worry about getting in trouble and about fitting in with their peers.

Teaching as Limiting Dominant and Competitive Behaviour

Tim takes a strong position against bullying and abuses of physical dominance, a position that is based on his boyhood experiences of occasionally feeling threatened by others at school: "I had some, and it wasn't a terrible experience but it just, but I do remember that and I think...that shaped me later in life, just thinking back to...how certain kids can't treat other kids, so." In this regard, part of Tim's practice focuses on attempting to reduce dominant and competitive behaviors he sees in boys at school.

> In terms of long term growth in their life, I don't know, it just seems so
> pervasive in society today for boys, they're just so overt in their actions
> and just so in your face and that. And that's totally not my personality.
> And that's, I tried to, I don't know how successful I am but I try, in the
> way that I teach, in the model of my personality at school, but just, like a
> humbleness. Just to be more gentle and respectful and that's just

becoming such a hard thing to like even explain to a kid, you know, like if you win this you shouldn't be in your face. "I'm number one." And, you know, so much, I find so many of the boys that I teach, they're just so uncaring about somebody else's feelings. And that's, you know, that's a difficult thing to teach but that's one of my goals to, you know, to make them more empathetic, more gentle.

His attempts to reduce these behaviours often require modeling of "an alternative to that. The gentle, more sensitive side of what guys can be." Tim's sense that modeling gentleness is important is based on his personal experiences of vulnerability as a boy and of the value of more gentle demeanour for all boys.

Tensions

Tim's boyhood experiences of feeling out of place around more dominant and competitive boys in school now serve as a resource for him in understanding and helping boys who resemble the boy he was, and in mitigating the effects of the practices of boys whose lives do not resemble his boyhood experiences. Although he attempts to change dominant boys' behaviours by modeling, he is not confident that he is successful in these efforts.

Tim generally occupies a position that resists competitive and aggressive practices among boys. Still, "as a male teacher", he accepts some of what he understands to be boys' typical physically competitive behaviours in some settings such as on the school playground:

> [M]aybe as a male teacher we might look at that a little bit more as, you know, not that we'd let them fight, obviously, but more that attitude, well, you know, just let them duke it out and solve it kind of thing. Instead of trying to go in and micro manage....I don't know. Like it's, I don't know, again I guess guys are just a little bit more the type where we would maybe just allow a little bit more of that power struggle and just accept maybe that... in certain situations maybe the stronger one is going to win out a little bit and the other ones are just going to have to follow along.

Also, his efforts to be gentle with boys and to create comfort zones for them have limits in that they do not always address girls' needs. He is aware that girls do not take part in some of the comfort zones that he has created, despite his encouragement:

> You know, and my students that play, I really try to encourage the girls to come out to it but I get so few girls coming out to it. And the ones that do, they're just so intimidated when they see so many guys there that they just end up dropping off anyways.

Tim emphasizes gentleness, empathy, and comfort as important and distinctive parts of how he is a man at school. What he offers is consistent with how, in his boyhood, he found comfort zones in music and with specific teachers. His work attempts to create comparable clubs, activities, and opportunities and relationships for boys in his school. This practice is very significant in terms of the support it offers to individual students, though he views his capacity to change boys' aggressive practices as limited.

Discussion

Egan (1990) argues that our practices of curriculum are often a "covert autobiography, projecting outwards into a different form an idealized image of ourselves" (p. 80). This notion of covert autobiography is a useful lens through which to consider Dan and Tim's stories, for, in their separate projects of helping boys belong and thrive in schools, they draw on their distinctive personal resources and work from theories of boys informed by those resources.

Both participants, for example, demonstrate a particular focus on boys who were "like them" as boys and demonstrate a belief that strong relationships with male teachers are important for boys in schools. They understand the relationships and activities that boys need in terms of their own historically experienced needs. In Dan's case, he identifies that boys need pushing and boundary setting by a physically strong man whom

they admire and want to emulate. In Tim's case, he sees boys needing re-assurance and safe spaces in schools.

Dan's notion of the father as rule maker, and Tim's notion of the father as accepting listener demonstrate different understandings about the kinds of parenting children need. While both believe that teachers need to be entertaining, the purpose of that entertainment is also informed by their historical experiences of what caused them to feel disengaged at school: boredom with non-active academics for Dan, and uneasy discomfort at school, for Tim. Their work attempts to protect boys from the parts of schools that they understand to be alien and difficult for the type of boys that are their priority. Their work with boys emerges from a sense of what was not available for 'a boy like them' when they were in school. They are also aware that there are students whose needs they do not meet as effectively as they would like to, and girls who do not appear to respond as positively to their efforts.

It is clear from these narratives that being men, and having been boys who contended with traditional, hegemonic ways of being male, profoundly inform both Dan and Tim's practice. But the wide differences in their understanding of their roles as male teachers, and in their theories of boys and what boys need, clearly demonstrate why policies that advocate for generic recruitment of male teachers will not work. The practices of male teachers are not uniform, and neither are boys' problems. The individual's gendered stories and experiences, rather than biological sex, shape gendered patterns of practice in schools.

In this section, I have examined participants' perspectives about the sources of their knowledge of boys, and identified some key outcomes resulting from the ways that

men draw on their lived experience in working with boys in schools. Drawing on lived experienced tends to inform the sympathetic tone that many participants adopt in enunciating mismatches between their perceptions of boys' dispositions and school environments. Lived experience also tends to shape their priorities in working with boys, their theories about boys' needs, and their understanding of how to respond to those needs, often in ways that reproduce patterns found in their boyhood stories. Although participants' stories and practices were not uniform, projection of the complexities of their own boyhoods was a common element informing their priorities and practices as teachers. The distinctive ways in which participants theorize, prioritize, and intervene to meet boys' needs suggest that, as Skelton (2002b, 2003) argues, the recruitment of male teachers is not a panacea for boys. The resources that men bring to their teaching practices, though gendered, are highly individual and may help or harm specific boys. In the following section, I will examine stories that participants shared about changes in their ideas about the kinds of characteristics that should be valued in men, and the factors that influenced these changing ideas. These stories often informed participants' work to provide boys with alternatives to traditionally valued ways of being men.

4.2. Narratives of Personal Transformation in the Work of Male Teachers

In the last section, I examined continuities between participants' boyhood experiences of trying to negotiate the values and expected practices of hegemonic boyhood typical of their environments, and their current work, as teachers, with boys in schools. In this section, I examine a second common pattern in participants' narratives, in which they articulated the responsibility they often feel to encourage boys to engage with what they described as a more balanced ideal of masculinity. This ideal generally involves adopting a broader range of activities and patterns of interaction. In promoting this ideal, teachers described strategies they employ in working to shift boys away from excessive attachment to traditional ways of being male, characterized by toughness, limited self-expression, competitiveness, and avoidance of practices that the boys view as feminine. At times, the teachers' work also focused on encouraging some boys to attain this balance by becoming more physically or socially assertive.

Like the practices described in the previous section, the strategies teachers employed in this transformative work to move boys towards this balance very often reflected the trajectory of participants' own understandings of ideal ways of being male, which have shifted as they matured. These shifts were often a result of coming to see some of the limitations and consequences of the ideals they held previously. Their work to interest boys in more balanced ways of being male draws on the teachers' lived experience as boys and men.

In this section, I will first outline participants' perspectives on negative masculine influences in boys' lives, and then examine participants' explications about what they hope that boys will learn from them about being men, and why they feel these lessons are

important. Then I will examine in more detail the transformative efforts of two

participants, Matt and Cameron, who have been chosen as representative teachers whose

goals and practices reflect common patterns of transformative work with boys. Each one

represents a typical trajectory in participants' ideas about the ideals men should aspire to.

While Matt's work focuses primarily on presenting boys with alternatives to traditional

ways of being male, Cameron's work additionally emphasizes providing students with

the tools to critically question social patterns based on physical or social dominance.

Finally, their narratives will be further examined to elucidate some of the tensions and

complexities of engaging in transformative work within school settings.

Participants' Notions of Balanced Masculinity

Many participants' narratives reflected concerns with the confluence of masculine

influences affecting boys. The first influence frequently cited was media images of male

sports and music celebrities, and film and video-game representations of men. Tim, for

example, is concerned by the media influence that he believes informs the aggressive

behaviours of boys in his school:

> The discipline problems have been, nine times out of ten, boys. And the
> types of discipline problems …sometimes have been more…violent
> actions on the playground. And in some cases I think I've sensed in those
> kids, it's just emulating, you know, things that they've been seeing in
> videogames that they played.

The second influence participants identified was the presence of negative male

figures in the home lives of children, particularly evident in participants' stories

about working with children who attend inner city schools. The influence of

negative males appeared in two forms. One form had to do with parents who were

present in boys' lives, but were poor role models, or had destructive ideas about

being a boy. Matt asserted that he represented a contrast to the men in some children's home lives because he was "wasn't drunk, wasn't hitting them, wasn't yelling at them, stuff like that." Andrew described a boy whose "father had this approach of, you know, you're a guy, if anyone messes with you, hit him. Just really dumb stereotypical stuff – reading's a sissy thing, school's a sissy thing...." Participants also characterized the men in some children's lives as absent or neglectful, as in Mark's statement: "Where's the Dad? The dad's not there, so then you're really missing that boy thing." In such instances, participants often felt compelled to step in and work with boys. They viewed this as a gendered responsibility because, as Cameron further argued, "I can tell them, as a man, there's nothing wrong... with show[ing] emotion....[C]oming from a man, it sounds a lot more powerful than when it's coming from a woman, who's expected to be that way, whereas a man is not."

Participants frequently positioned themselves as representing an alternative to these images of what Alloway et al. (2002) call "the hypermasculine world" (p. 128). Cameron, for example, feels that it is his responsibility to:

> Break down the macho, male older brother, dad kind of thing – sports. You know, sports are wonderful. That's great. But, you know, why can't there be other heroes in life that do so much more for the world? Like, when you think of that sports figure or rap star....what do they do for humanity, for the world? Can you think of anything? And so, we'll get a little bit of breakdown of, you know, the male machoness there.

Participants' descriptions of what they hoped boys would learn from them about being men were strikingly similar, and Matt's is representative:

> That they can be more than just the athletic persona...that's out there. That they can be a caring, compassionate person who likes to read, and likes books, and likes literature, and [is] involved in drama....Rather than,

> you're men, you play sports, you...don't get upset...Rather than that traditional view of men, that -- Wooh! Wooh! Wooh! Wooh! Wooh! [Kind of a manly grunt/singing with marching gestures], and it's all dirt bikes and hockey, and those are the only things that matter.

These descriptions typically involved, as Matt's does, adding more gentle and expressive characteristics to the traditional characteristics of athleticism and toughness, rather than rejecting "that traditional view of men" in its entirety.

Many participants saw themselves as positive models of this balanced way of being male. As John said:

> I think I am a good role model for kids...that my personality is diverse....I want to show...boys, that your personality can be broad. You don't have to be a jock. You don't have to be a nerd. You don't have to be an egghead. You can be all of those things, and it's okay to be soft. It's okay to raise your voice if you have to. It's okay to be fearful, you know what I mean? I feel that's something I can offer.

Guiding boys towards "balanced" versions of being male could mean attempting to gentle aggressive and dominant boys. It could also mean encouraging less physically or socially assertive boys to toughen up and become more competitive. I will now turn to a detailed examination of Matt and Cameron's narratives, in which I first trace the trajectory of their understanding of positive ways of being male, and then consider the ways in which their work in attempting to shift boys towards a more constructive relationship with school environments reflect these trajectories.

Matt: Shifting Perceptions of the Price of Privilege

In high school, Matt was competitive, physically dominant, terse, and bound by the standards of his nearly all male social group. These characteristics describe a kind of man quite different from his current description of himself as a father figure who is

"caring, nurturing,... responsible [and] honest...someone who is interested in what [children are] doing", and as someone who takes parts in plays and shares favourite poems with his nephew. From his point of view, he has come to understand some of the costs attached to the strong, dominant and competitive persona he exhibited in high school and to some degree, in university; therefore, he views part of his work as encouraging boys to be more expressive, more relaxed about the boundaries of appropriate boy behavior, more self-sufficient, and more caring and compassionate.

The first shift in his ideas of how to be a boy occurred when he gradually became interested in reading in his private time, even though his public persona continued to involve "screwing around" in English class quite a bit. This shift indicates a gradual awakening to the ways that his adherence to traditional ways of being a boy limited his options around self-expression and literacy. He remembers wanting to take part in the "plays and stuff" that the young male English teacher at school began to put on, but "I didn't. I would have been way too nervous to do it. But it was the first time I thought, 'Wow. That's really cool. I'd like to do that some time.'" He sees boys in school now performing in talent shows, and thinks "We never would have done that. Ever. 'Cause they would go, 'What are you doing?'"

A second shift occurred as he began to re-conceptualize how to use physical strength. In a central story from his youth, he rescued a "little kid" who was in the same grade as him from some older, physically menacing bullies. The bullies kept shoving the boy into his locker. Matt stopped them from doing so:

> I said, "What are you doing?" "Shut up. Nothing to you, Niner. You'll go
> in the locker." I looked down, and said, "Ain't enough of youse to put me
> in a locker!" And I said, "You better leave him alone." And, uh, so, we got
> pushing, and some hands were thrown, and some blood was spilt, and

> some people were on the floor, and at the end of it, he didn't go in the
> locker, and they didn't bug him any more

In this incident, Matt could have used physical strength in a number of ways: he could have joined the bullies, or ignored them, or reproduced their practices as he grew older; but he did not. This reflects a shift in his understanding of the effects physical dominance: although Matt's stories make it clear that size was a social determinant for a lot of boys, he came to see that as a problematic pattern through relationships with males who were not strong and aggressive.

A third shift involved his experiences of independence as a university student, which resulted in a more critical stance towards his athletic peers. Several factors informed this shift. University allowed him to further develop his first awakening into reading. He was able to explore literature more freely and to choose courses that expanded upon his reading interests independent of his peer group. Matt's university sports coaches also influenced his involvement with literacy by getting him involved in an elementary school reading program as a volunteer while he still was a university student. Living independently as a student also resulted in a reconsideration of his mother's parenting when he went away to university. When asked how he made the transition from the terse adolescent he describes in his childhood stories to the expansive storyteller of today, he said that university gave him more confidence. He remembers thinking that it was "a good thing Mom was such a pain in the back" in his adolescence. He remembers thinking that his peers, also university athletes, "couldn't do anything for themselves …they weren't self-sufficient." Though Matt continued to participate in the tough and physically competitive practices that his athlete friends engaged in, such as playing and coaching highly competitive sports, and working as a bouncer at a bar, he

began to put more stock in the values of responsibility and competence espoused in his family home.

A fourth shift occurred during his early years of teaching, when he began to move from a traditional teacher-centred curriculum to a more play-based curriculum. When he was first teaching, he adopted what he described as a "drill and kill" curriculum, because it was "one, what I had available to me, and two, how we learned. So, well, it had to work, right?" His more play-based approach to curriculum design developed gradually, but he

> knew that it, that I, that it the way I was presenting the information was
> wrong. It wasn't – it wasn't in a form that was easily learnable for them.
> And, so it wasn't – aah, kids, they won't learn. It was, no, there has, there
> has to be something I'm doing, or can I do this differently? That was my
> first question, is, what can I do differently in order to teach this?

Matt has a strong bent towards problem solving in his classroom: techniques to deal with problems should be "self-ending. If you have to keep doing the same discipline thing over and over and over again, it's not working." In other words, Matt began to practice reflectively. He questioned his received wisdom about how to work with children and about his role in the classroom. As well, he began to question his historical understanding that girls were academic, while boys were not, and to question whether traditional classroom practices were impeding some boys' learning.

A fifth shift occurred because of his situation as a male primary teacher at school. In the school setting, Matt deals both with situations where other teachers use him as a male authority figure with their own students, and situations where other teachers view his nurturing and playful practices with students as incongruous and humorous. This complex positioning has made him realize how dominant notions of masculinity limit the

options of boys and men and has necessitated a shift in which he attempts to address these limits.

Matt's Pedagogy: Deferred Boundaries as a Space of Opportunity

Matt's narratives returned repeatedly to the idea that boys need opportunities to learn in an environment that protects them from pressure to conform to narrow constructions of acceptable ways of being a boy. This theme reflects his own boyhood memories of being reluctant to take part in certain kinds of activities for fear of ridicule or comparison. Matt protects boys from pressures to conform to traditional ways of being male through modeling, classroom activities that limit competition, and acts that influence parents' and other teachers' notions about gender-appropriate behaviour.

Matt values adventure in classroom practice. A male teacher whose practices he greatly admires is described as "an adventurer. He's not afraid of anything. He's gonna try anything, and just go with it." He himself is working on becoming "more open-ended, and like, being more adventuresome, stuff like that, and just – trying something new and, letting them go." He draws a direct contrast between this adventurous and open-ended style and what he generally sees in most primary teachers whose styles are more "regimental," "controlled," and "contrived."

> Since beginning to teach at this school, Matt has
>
> been involved in the plays, all the plays that we do, whether...I've only been in one acting, the other ones behind the scenes, doing stuff, helping with lines, helping with music, so that they can see that, yeah, they can do that, too.

In his classroom, he sings songs, does finger plays, dances the hokey-pokey, takes part in dress up, makes art projects, and engages in a range of expressive activities with children. He also celebrates sports culture by displaying posters of his favourite hockey team, and

encourages students to use hammers, nails and saws, practices he views as distinctively

masculine aspects of his work as a primary school teacher. Matt also feels that the boys'

greater desire to spend time with him and to play with him enables him to have a greater

influence over them:

> The boys in my class love to play checkers. With me. They love to play
> war. With me. The card game. They want to interact more with me than
> the girls do. And so that allows me to, while we are playing a game, have
> a conversation with them about their life, this, that, something that they
> bring up, what we're doing.

Modeling greater risk-taking and self-expression as a well-liked, large, strong,

and sports-loving man is one way in which he makes boys feel comfortable trying

out a wider range of ways of expressing themselves.

Another way in which Matt models broader constructions of acceptable ways of

being male is through his care giving work at school. Matt, whose idea of care giving in

school revolves around the notion of "treating them like they're mine," wrote that

> if they are hurt I will pick them up, if they are upset they will get a hug,
> when they achieve a success I praise them, when they have difficulties I
> will work with them. They are smart energetic young people that have a
> lot to say and I try to give them every opportunity to express their thoughts
> and feelings. We joke and play and learn together.

These practices communicate, daily, that nurturing and being a man are not mutually

exclusive conditions.

However, Matt views his nurturing as qualitatively different from feminine ways

of enacting nurture. Matt says that he doesn't "coddle" and believes that the style and

tone he adopts in working with children communicate a type of equality to children. He

says that he tries to avoid using language where "the teacher's up here, and the kids are

down here. I always want to try and talk to them like we're equal, more equal, I should

say." Matt tries to use language "like, cool, awesome, great – like, talk more to them like

they're – it's funny, you know, they're five, and you talk more to them like they're your

equal." He believes profoundly in the importance of children developing self-sufficiency

and independence, and views his caring strategies as providing nurture without stifling

independence.

As well as demonstrating empathy and nurture, Matt also works at creating a

classroom environment that minimizes the effects of competition. He understands boys

to be competitive; however, Matt does not view competitiveness as an entirely productive

trait, and identifies boys who are too competitive and aggressive as a focus of his

classroom practice. Matt described a boy whom he viewed as too competitively oriented,

for whom such activities resulted in social isolation and discipline problems:

> One boy, he has to win at everything. He has to be first at this, he has to
> be first at everything, he has to answer the question first, he wants to be
> the leader every day. And when he doesn't get his way, he lays down on
> the ground and cries, kicking and screaming. So, a lot of the
> competitiveness for that stuff, especially in the younger grades, I don't
> find it productive. It's distracting. And it brings out discipline problems
> and, and this, one student that does this all the time, when he does it, the
> whole class turns and looks at him like he's got three heads. And then,
> that hurts him socially in the class.

Competitive activities need to be carefully controlled, according to Matt, because

boys "get going, and they get competitive, they get riled up, they can't stop themselves.

So, try to not have it, or squelch it as much as you can." Matt frequently connected

excessive competition to the problem of bullying. His adamant opposition to bullying

and physical violence reflects his commitment to protecting the less physically dominant,

evident since adolescence as in the story discussed earlier. He feels that current "talk-

based" strategies for working with bullies are not severe enough.

Although Matt views competition as a normal and natural part of people's lives, he thinks that "it doesn't have to be that driving force, where you have to win, you have to be first. I think that's over the top." He believes that it is important to explicitly teach boys how to manage competition suitably. He especially emphasizes protecting young children from the effects of competition. They "don't need the competitiveness at that age. They'll get enough of it. Later on."

Although "there is a competitive side to [him]...when the kids aren't around," Matt is careful about showing it at school. Although the high school team that he coaches "see[s] my competitive side, with the younger kids, I don't believe sports should be competitive for young kids. Because they're still learning." When I asked him what it was they were learning, he said, at first "the skills." But then he added "they need the opportunity." Here, Matt places the effects of competition in direct opposition to access to opportunity, a notion also evident in his understanding of its effects in academic settings.

Matt sees competition in academics as unproductive for boys, especially because it identifies for them that they are often not as strong as girls. It is not so much girls' verbal advantage, as the comparisons imposed by teachers and parents that he views as resulting in boys' becoming disengaged from literacy activities. Parents often make these kinds of deleterious comparisons:

> I still have, even at this early age, have parents compare kids in the community. Well, yeah, you know, at this age, Sally was reading and writing, but Johnny just doesn't seem to be interested. And I've done everything at home – [slightly feminine tone] – and you're just like, Oh, God, don't do that. You know? Don't drill this poor kid into the sand because he's not where your daughter was.

In schools, comparisons can result in early identification for remedial work, which Matt

feels is premature and

> turn[s] [boys] off. They get frustrated because they can't do it, they're
> seeing others doing it, they see that there's so much importance put on it,
> and they're getting, well, they need more work, right? They need some
> remedial help with this. So they get to do – they get stuck with doing
> more of something they can't do. And so they get turned off, discipline
> problems go up, and then they'll shut down.

As an alternative to competitive and comparative practices as ways of rewarding

success and identifying failure, Matt emphasizes the importance of helping boys to

develop a sense of ownership and demonstrating appreciation for their work and effort:

> Ownership is really big for the boys.... [W]hen we just do individual
> books, that's theirs, something they created, they can read it, they take a
> lot of pride in stuff like that....I send almost all their work home so that
> they can put it on the door of their bedroom, or on their fridge so that they
> can have ownership of it, and say, " This is what I can do." And...get
> positive re-enforcement for it, so that they'll want to do more. And I find
> that the boys – especially the positive reinforcement. [A] lot of the girls,
> they're turned on to it anyways, but you can really turn the boys on with
> positive reinforcement.

Matt feels that many children who are not succeeding do not receive this kind of re-

enforcement at home, and that in such cases it is the teacher's role to help students to

recognize and celebrate their successes.

In addition to protecting boys from the effects of comparisons, Matt also attempts

to protect boys from pressures to conform to narrow gender stereotypes expressed by

their parents:

> And I have parents that get totally freaked. "You, he –." Especially the
> Dads. The Moms kind of go, "Oh, it's so nice that he's playing with the
> other kids." And the Dads are like, "What do you mean, he puts the dress
> on?" And, you, "It's okay." You know, it's normal. They should be doing
> that. They're interacting with the others, they're using the vocabulary.
> They're expanding. They're, it's, they're working on drama, you know,
> it's just – they seem to forg- I think the fathers project their own, um,

> identity of sexualness onto the kids. Like, yeah, if you're forty and putting on a dress, it might not be okay. But when you're five, it's okay. Because they're not, they're not sexual beings of that sort at that – it's normal. They should be doing that, and it's okay. And if they want to be – in a dress [chuckle] be in a dress – because the girls can be in the hardhats. At that, you know, and it's okay.

In thinking about how parents react to boys dressing up a girls, Matt does not really question that there are different expectations for men's and women's behaviours, but he defers the requirement to live by them until boys are older, so that they have the opportunity to explore a wider range of activities and possible identities. His attitude towards his students reflects the importance of protecting them from influences that could limit the range of their opportunities and providing them with alternative models of masculine behaviour and values.

Tensions

An initial tension identified in Matt's work is that although Matt is explicitly concerned about the expressive abilities of boys, and actively works to prompt greater levels of self-expression for them in a variety of ways, his practices and attitudes sometimes reveal boundaries he explicitly rejects. For example, Matt does not always value the kinds of self-expression and emotional responses that he sees enacted by females, student or teacher, in the school. Matt sometimes feels that female teachers "overcomplicate things and read stuff in that isn't there." Girls' emotional responses often seem overblown to him, as well:

> Like…sometimes I think, I do have a hard time empathizing when [girls]…they've totally lost it and they're bawling over what seems to you as something being so trivial. Because the boys don't seem to get to that situation. Right? If Johnny says he's not going to be my friend, well, then he's gonna give him a shove and say, well, I don't want to play with you either, sort of thing. And they'll work it out – like, in five minutes, they'll

> be friends again. But the girls seem to take on – it seems to take on a
> whole life of its own.

Although Matt is an advocate for boys' becoming more self-expressive and more able to

express emotions, there are limits to what he views as reasonable emotion, and these

limits tend to be more in line with the practices boys and men exhibit than with the

practices that women exhibit.

A second tension in Matt's transformative work emerges out of conflicts between

the expectations and norms shaped by gender arrangements in his school, and his own

vision of what boys may need from him. For example, he specifically identified the

authoritarian male, the kind who "always think they have to be the heavy, and get out that

intermediate voice, and bellow down the hallway at everybody" as a kind of male teacher

he does not want to be. But, as a physically imposing presence in the primary wing, he

says, some female teachers will "use you as a threat, right? Like, to the kid. 'I'm gonna

get Mr. [Frederickson]' or something like that. And, I hate it, but you, you know, you

gotta help 'em out, because obviously what they're doing's not going to work."

A school's expectations that men should be authority figures can make

transformative practices more difficult by encouraging dominant and patriarchal ways of

being men in schools. This is especially true, as the fulfillment of expectations for

patriarchal authority may be a source of positive reinforcement for male teachers, while

resisting or questioning this role might negatively affect relations with both colleagues

and administration.

A third tension is that at Matt's school, the norms for masculine behaviour can

also make transformative practice more difficult by discouraging men from more

nurturing forms of interaction. Matt's play and caregiving at school sometimes

transgress teachers' and administrators' sense of appropriate boundaries for male

teachers:

> I had a little girl she was really, really afraid of loud noises. And we had
> the Ontario Hydro come in and do a demonstration about that. And the
> one where they electrocute this potato? And it's like bzh-bzhhoo-bang,
> bang – it's really loud. She's freaking – I had her in my lap, she was
> crying. I was rocking her, brushing her hair, telling her it was okay, it was
> okay, got her all settled down. And of course, all the other teachers in the
> gym thought that that was just hilarious. Right? But I thought it was just
> natural for me to just – pick her up and do that... where I thought it was
> totally natural. If it was my kid, that's what I would have done.

The use of the word "natural" here indicates the tension between Matt's normalized

understandings of being a male teacher, and what others in the school view as normal

male teaching. Administrators, as well, have found his work in primary education

incongruous:

> I had, my first principal, she would, whenever somebody came in from the
> board office, or whatever, she'd, I was right by the office, they'd stand out
> in my hall and watch. And she'd laugh. She laughed through my whole
> first evaluation... Stood at the back of the room and laughed. It's nerve
> wracking – like, I was nervous, God...Yeah! And then when she starts
> bringing, she'd bring in, like a trustee or a superintendent, and they'd be
> standing out in the hallway, and we'd be doing the Hokey Pokey, or doing
> something, she'd be laughing – "This is my [grade] teacher! Isn't he
> hilarious!" I'm a freak in a show, here! Cut it out!

Matt resists his staff's notions that a man cannot be nurturing, gentle, or playful. Dealing

with the surveillance and regulation of his role as a male primary teacher only re-enforces

his sense that boys' and men's options are limited by the culture of toughness they are

immersed in. For teachers with less self-assurance, however, similar pressures might

reduce their range of ways of interacting with children.

A fourth tension in Matt's work emerges out of his awareness that his

effectiveness in working to shift parents' stereotypical gender expectations rest on his

credibility as a male. Matt says that fathers, especially, are more likely to accept his guidance, as opposed to a female teacher's, in reconsidering their ideas about gender boundaries: "if a female teacher says it, it's suspect, if a male says it, it's kind of gospel." Matt's interactions with these fathers draw on patriarchal patterns in male relationships that privilege what men say and that exclude women. Matt's credibility with fathers helps him to work transformatively to change other men's views of appropriate gender boundaries for boys, and to protect boys, but in order to work for change, Matt has to draw on patriarchal notions that men are more trustworthy and authoritative than women.

Because of these complexities in the gender arrangements of the school environment, both male and female teachers rely on him in ways that may put pressure on his transformative goals. Women's credibility in working with boys and families may be undermined by such practices, and at times, patterns of boys' activities and values could be reinforced through male camaraderie. However, trading on patriarchal credibility may sometimes be unavoidable for men in schools, especially given the kinds of expectations and gender arrangements they have to negotiate in those settings.

Cameron: Frailty and the Growth of Strength

As a child, Cameron remembers "racing around, playing tag" playing on the street and in his neighborhood and feeling comfortable and happy in that environment. However, he was neither athletic nor comfortable with the kinds of aggressive and physically dominant practices that many boys at school engaged in. He remembers not fitting in as a kid, and having more female friends than male friends, because of differences between his interests and those of most of the boys in his classes. He said that sometimes, "I was hurt, a few times…you don't want to be different. You want to fit in."

He felt there was little he could do to fit in, as "he had no control over the social."

Despite these challenges, Cameron does not feel that these experiences were too

traumatic, as his family was very supportive, and encouraged his interest in reading,

writing, and music. Cameron excelled at school, particularly in literacy and music, but

noted that although he took pleasure in these skills, he was sometimes made

uncomfortably aware of the way that they differentiated him from other boys.

In adolescence, Cameron developed a severe but intermittent illness, and missed a

term of school. He feels that he had "two separate lives, before and...after" becoming ill.

Afterwards, it was "all based around what could I do that day, or what couldn't I do that

day." He was very tall and slender before the illness, but remembers himself as

physically frail afterwards, a condition he felt self-conscious about and which he feels

contributed to a certain amount of teasing at the beginning of high school. Although he

had been a strong student previous to his illness, after losing a term, he remembers

struggling more to keep up, even in his strength areas like English, where he became

"more of a passive listener, because my confidence was shaken." However, Cameron's

involvement with band became a greater and greater focus, and he ultimately pursued

music at the university level.

This experience of illness resulted in an initial shift in Cameron's perspectives

around what it meant to be a boy. At this point in his life, Cameron felt isolated from his

peers. He felt that he was "existing on a different plateau from most of my peers, for

most of my life, because of my illness." Although he had been aware, to this point, of

some unpleasant consequences of being different from the commonly valued ways of

being male among his peers, Cameron now became more conscious of those around him

who were ill or struggling, and developed greater sensitivity to those who were isolated or physically limited, as opposed to most high school kids, who, he says, feel that they're "infallible."

A second shift involved his sense of what makes a man authoritative. When he was first teaching, he felt that his physical image affected his capacity to be authoritative as he was "one hundred pounds, soaking wet… trying to establish my authority…. [i]n a rough school." More experienced teachers provided him with many strategies that assisted him to be more assertive and forceful, including one whom he views as a powerful mentor, of whom he says, "I learned a bit of my aggressiveness from her." He gradually became a strong disciplinarian who feels that working with behaviourally problematic boys is one of his specialties.

However, this shift took on a further dimension when he began to be aware of how his students perceived the consequences of his approach to being authoritative. Despite beginning from a position where he felt that he was not forceful, experiences with individual students and classes taught him that they felt he yelled too much and sometimes frightened them. He has changed much of his disciplinary practice and now focuses on creating very consistent consequences and expectations, clearly modeling appropriate behaviour, and keeping a careful rein on his temper. He has:

> made a conscious effort – well, for a long time now. But earlier, I know I
> was harsh. I still, I catch myself, just about ready to lace into a kid, and
> realize, this isn't going to benefit the kid.

Put together, Cameron's understanding of how authority emerges has shifted from notions that physical dominance results in authority, to notions that verbal dominance and

outbursts of anger result in authority, to notions that the fact that they "knew me, and that I was there for them" combined with consistent consequences, constitute authority.

A third shift occurred in his adult years, when doctors were able to stabilize his medical condition. Previously, concerns about his unpredictable health had precluded many of the experiences typical of others as they grew to maturity. Cameron feels that he lacked "confidence in daily living" that comes from such experiences. As his health has improved, Cameron has taken up many activities, like driving a car and traveling, that were not part of his life formerly. He says that he "had to be content growing up, due to my restrictions" and that the experience has taught him to appreciate "the small things, the little things of life.... I can go for a walk now. I couldn't, growing up... so, just going for a walk, still, to this day, I think, isn't this fantastic, this kind of freedom." He feels that his past history limited his confidence and willingness to take risks, and now, with relatively stable health, he is "forcing himself" to do many things that others view as completely normal parts of day-to-day life. Growing able to do so much more has influenced his notions about the value of physical risk taking and the importance of pushing children to be more physically assertive.

A fourth shift involves his understanding of limits in the practices of male teachers who were very physically active and played competitive sports as boys. Even though he felt as a young teacher, and still acknowledges, that men who participated in sports and are more physically dominant in terms of voice and physique have some natural advantages as teachers, Cameron now feels that his more balanced pattern of experience offers boys much greater opportunities:

> If you are very strong right-brained as a male growing up...you are
> labeled. You're labeled as whatever, a fairy....And unfortunately, both

genres suffer, because we have to be conscious of both sides of the brain, what they stand for, and how to go about strengthening them. Well, how can you do that if you're Mr. Joe Jock?...It's a perpetuat[ion] from one generation to the next. If the child doesn't get it, and becomes the teacher who doesn't get it, who then has to deliver it to his students, who can't get it. And the more that can be broken through these barriers, the less...that occurs.

He now has come to see himself as a teacher who offers what he calls "the whole package":

> And I think because of that, I have been valued on each staff I've gone to, because I can portray both sides.... I'm a strong male teacher with discipline intact, everything's there – and yet, I've got...this feminine side, who can do all these artsy fartsy things, and I can be accepted for the whole package. So, I bring to the school...both sides of that brain, an acceptance of that as a model.

To summarize, Cameron's sense that his physique, physical abilities, and artistic and creative skills did not correspond to traditionally valued ways of being male has given way to an understanding that these traits form components of a positive way of being male that can benefit him as a teacher and an individual. He has come to see trust and commitment as the source of authority, rather than physical or verbal domination. And finally, he has come to view the characteristics of "macho" forms of being a man as both limiting and perpetuating limitation for boys in schools.

Cameron's goals and practices as a teacher reflect his awareness of what his lack of physical dominance meant to him as a youth, and his transition from physical frailty to greater physical risk taking. They also reflect his understanding of the constitution of the authority he sees as a component of his strength as a male teacher, and his experiences of some of the limits in the practices of teachers with more traditionally hegemonic boyhood histories. A first focus of his work involves helping boys reposition themselves more constructively as learners within classrooms. A second focus involves explicitly

questioning traditional gender boundaries, and modeling alternatives, especially with regard to the experience and expression of emotion. As well, however, he demonstrates a focus on working with boys who are less assertive and less physically dominant, to move them towards more physical risk taking and self-assertion.

Cameron's work in repositioning boys in school environments draws on his sense that by the time boys have reached his classroom, they have often repeatedly experienced failure and comparison to more able students in the classrooms of teachers who do not understand their needs or way of learning. For Cameron, getting boys to trust that he really values their progress, and that he is not judging their work negatively in comparison to others' is the key to what he calls his "unengraining process":

> They perhaps perceive themselves in the past...what has been ingrained in them, until I get them, and then oftentimes I have to undo something. And I don't mean that as a negative thing on the teacher, it's just what the teacher, for whatever reasons, good or bad, have not been able to pull out of that child....[T]hat's my challenge to do that. As it is the next teacher's challenge, if I'm not successful....I would say most of the time, they are capable, they can do it. They just, again, the trust thing, they have to understand that I don't care what they give me, as long as they give me a little bit more each day. And if they get that figured out, they will come forth.

Unengraining is a process through which boys can learn to value their own work in new ways and to believe that their school work will be valued by the teacher. A trusting relationship with the teacher is a central part of this. Cameron feels that it is critical to "invest the time" in students before making curricular demands on them.

In adopting this continuous growth approach, Cameron also tries to offer boys ways of identifying achievement, and to give them ownership over their own accomplishments. For example, he encourages reluctant writers to recognize their own growth as writers by measuring the increasing length of a weekly timed writing journal.

Helping students to identify and build on their strengths is also a critical part of this practice. As Cameron says, "within two weeks, you've got a brand new child on your hands."

But Cameron also views making boys accountable as a part of this repositioning. Sometimes, he says,

> it comes down to it's just your nasty personality against my persistence.
> And if that's the way it's gonna be, you're gonna have your back on the
> wall at recess, you're gonna be missing part of your lunch hour, you're
> gonna be in after school, but you're gonna figure out, 'cause it isn't
> ability, it's attitude.

The teacher has to "do a little diagnostic" to figure out what he can push them with. He feels that often, boys, especially, need to understand that in his class, "not only will you be accountable, but you will be accountable consistently, or you will pay a price." Cameron says that his students "want to be held accountable" and that boys, especially, want to be given opportunities to "own" their problems: "if the boys think they were part of the solution, they'll own their mistake and move on." These practices of continuous growth and enforced accountability reflect Cameron's sense that some boys' inability to engage with specific kinds of academic practice is part of a perpetual social cycle that needs to be broken by explicit intervention to help them to see and realize their potential.

The second transformative focus in Cameron's work involves questioning the legitimacy of the gender boundaries to which boys adhere and which his experiences have taught him limit their opportunities for growth, risk-taking and development. One emphasis of this work has to do with the expression of emotion. He says that:

> if a boy gets pushed to tears, that's got to be, just the most devastating
> thing. And, you know, I can tell them, as a man, there's nothing wrong
> with that. That's admired and valued, and, and the quality of a man when

you grow up, that you can show emotion, and that's part of what's wrong with our culture, men are taught not to, and that's not healthy.

He also told stories about times in which he had cried in front of students, identifying these serendipitous events as teaching opportunities, and noting that, even with grade eight students who didn't know him well, he felt that both male and female students had responded positively both to him and the experience.

Cameron also identifies this work in getting boys to express and identify their emotions as an important part of working with students who feel marginalized or threatened. In discussing his interactions with several boys he taught over the years who were perceived as gay by teachers and students, he said,

> [they] would put on a front that it didn't bother [them].... And yet I would, my job would be to get to them, and say, yeah, it does bother you, I'm sure it does. I went through that. You know, the same old thing. And, you know, if I can get you to at least accept that, it does bother you, it makes you a less happy person as you're growing up. Let me tell you how, what a crime that is, because these are supposed to be the happiest years of your life...you're being labelled, you're being criticized, you're being teased and tortured in ways that I'm sure you would much rather be accepted.

Here, Cameron's work around emotions helped the boys to examine the way that their treatment by others made them feel, and thus to question the legitimacy of the way they were being treated. As Cameron said, learning to speak one's experiences of injustice is profoundly important because "once that child from his...own words explains the dilemma, then it becomes part of their realm, a part of their experience." This work reflects his desire to empower children, in ways that appear to have been less available to him as a boy.

Another aspect of Cameron's work around gender boundaries involves the practices he employs to encourage boys to become more engaged with the arts and other

creative practices. Cameron feels that his own personality and history are central

resources in this work, as his skills and abilities enable him to move boys beyond their

resistance to the arts and into creative projects. He says:

> I'm not your stereotypical male. I think that has worked in my favour as a
> teacher, so that they can actually watch a male who will be silly, and who
> will sing. That's one example I can think of who will actually sing in
> front of them. That just blows them away, and, after, I mean, each time I
> go to a new school, that just blows them away, but then they get used to it.

Cameron also consciously addresses issues of male chauvinism in his classroom.

He says that over the course of his career, students have developed "a far keener

awareness of the fact that men are equal to women, and vice versa. And each have equal

rights." Still, he is conscious of working to ensure that boys and girls are equally heard

in his classroom, and is also aware that male dominance remains an issue to be attended

to within the dynamics of his classroom. In this regard, he watches his own practices for

signs that he is privileging boys' responses, attends to issues of dominance through

classroom meetings, and will also sometimes meet with girls separately to support and

encourage their becoming more assertive.

A third focus in Cameron's work with boys involves encouraging them to take

risks, specifically, in terms of encouraging non-athletic students:

> If you are not a sports-minded person, I encourage you...to take the risk of
> trying out for the volleyball team. If you've never tried out for the track
> team, you have nothing to lose. If you don't make it, then I admire you
> because you were there trying out for it

He connects his encouragement of risk-taking to his own personal history of physical

caution: "I was not a risk taker, and had to learn to be one far too late in life, too late in

life to be effective." He says that he wants all the boys in his class to learn "that there's

far more to life than just what they're living right now, than just what they're good at

right now, and that leads me right into risk taking....If they learn at a very young age to take risks, then they're so much more open to them."

Encouraging risk-taking and assertiveness also takes the form of creating forums where children who feel that they have been threatened or harmed can speak out. Cameron says,

> we talk about harassment. And we talk about verbal, we talk about sexual, and we talk about physical. And, usually it's the physical that appears first, and then sexual will happen when they get to know each other a little bit more, and uh, so they get that....You've got them right there, because it's coming from a student. So I discuss the issue with the student ahead of time, privately and I'll say...I can solve this with you, as a team, we can get to the bottom of this, so that you will be a happier student, next week....Can you trust me a little bit more, and can you let me use this as a learning lesson?...And, nine times out of then, they'll say, I'll do that. So, I'll say, well okay, you can, you can still remain separate, and I don't have to mention your name, or...you can be part of...the teaching team, and you can...explain to the class why you got upset, why you lost your temper.

Cameron notes that students also need to be encouraged and taught how to speak out when teachers, including him, do something unfair. He sees these skills as part of "their student portfolio," and believes that being able to "call [him] on things" is important, because "[i]t's a two-way street, and [they feel more] empowered as part of the whole classroom." Cameron's practices here encourage those who feel threatened to be more assertive, and present those who are more dominant with the consequences of their actions.

Tensions

Cameron noted that in certain cases his practices with boys appear to have unintended consequences in the larger school setting. Female teachers that he works with have identified a certain kind of boy who becomes "cocky and obnoxious" in Cameron's

class. These boys' relationships with Cameron appear to reinforce their sense of male superiority and female teachers experience the boys as "chauvinist...very, women are nothing." Cameron says that he does not see this behaviour in class because the boy is "not allowed" to be like that in his class. While Cameron's work encourages boys to explore what he calls their "feminine side," somehow their resistance towards female teachers can still be re-enforced by his interventions.

The story above also suggests a second tension in Cameron's work. Cameron's emphasis on the fact that the boy is "not allowed" to be like that in his classroom suggests that in some way he is allowed to be like that in other teachers' classrooms. Cameron values and relies on his capacity to be an authority figure in his classroom. But while patterns of dominance play a strong role in his classroom, so do patterns that promote greater equality, and the balance between dominance and its interrogation in his classroom is complex. As he said at one point, "There's no democracy, unless I tell them ahead of time. This is a dictatorial class, and there will be an occasional democracy." He is aware that at times some of his students continue to find him intimidating, particularly some of the girls, but also feels that assertions of authority are a way of building trust with boys, and a component of re-positioning them in the academic environment.

Discussion: Transformative Goals and the Lived Context

Matt and Cameron's narratives demonstrate how participants' priorities to shift boys towards a more "balanced" masculinity often reflect the path travelled by the individual participant as he has grown into his current understanding of valued ways of being male. Although their transformative work does engage with all boys, Matt's own childhood of "dirt bikes and hockey", and Cameron's of physical and social caution, also

represent starting points for them, more limited ways of being boys, away from which they hope to shift boys.

Although they began from quite different boyhood experiences, Matt and Cameron articulated similar constructions of an ideal way of being male. This construction echoes patterns in the research on interactions of class and masculinity in schools. As Mac an Ghaill (1994) put it, ways of being boys in schools are intersected by class-based notions of the characteristics that men of a given class require in order to enter either "the masculine world of physical labour, with its 'distinctive complex of chauvinism, toughness, and machismo' or to engage in a middle class version of masculinity, with an emphasis on academic individualism, sporting prowess, and overt careerism" (p. 42). Cameron and Matt's efforts to reposition boys clearly include considerable effort to detach boys from engagement with the values Mac an Ghaill describes as working class, but their emphasis on self-expression, emotional response, and creativity offers a less straightforward connection to Mac an Ghaill's descriptions of middle class masculinity. However, as Kelly (1997) writes, "We learn to desire some things and not others as ways of participating in and being literate in the world" (p. 97) and learning to appreciate these practices and characteristics may form a pre-requisite to engaging with dominant forms of literacy, inscribed, as Gee (1992) argues, with the "mainstream middle class values of quiescence and placidity" (p. 25). Selling boys on emotional response, the arts and self-expression may constitute one thrust in these teachers' work to engage students in becoming what Mac an Ghaill described as 'academic individualists.' Seen in this light, much of these teachers' efforts to reposition boys can be seen as attempts to help them to redefine themselves in ways that offer them

more legitimate entry points into the discourses of academic practice, and to keep the possibility of defining oneself in such ways open to them for as long as possible. In fact, despite the consistency of their stated images of ideal ways of being male, work to maintain greater flexibility in boys' self-definitions appears to be a central thrust of participants' transformative work.

Much of the transformative work that participants engage in focuses on maintaining as much flexibility as possible in the ways students could understand themselves and their position in the school setting. A key element found in both Matt and Cameron's stories involves their efforts to limit comparison and focus boys on an ethos of personal growth. These practices enable teachers to offer boys many and repeated opportunities to re-define themselves as students, or, in Matt's case, to avoid being defined, for as long as possible. They echo Alloway et al.'s (2002) finding that productive practices for engaging boys with literacy involve strategies that extend boys repertoires of the self and their repertoires for relating to others.

Another practice that fosters flexibility is the way that these teachers work to confound gendered expectations and resist what Davies (1997) refers to as traditional male/female binaries. Rowan et al. (2002) argue that working towards new conceptions of masculinity with boys is a process of constructing counternarratives "that [begin] with the familiar and [stretch] to the new" (p. 73) and which offer boys:

> the possibility of making connections between ideas, people and places
> that are commonly kept apart.....[to connect] traditionally 'masculine'
> characteristics...to other more traditionally 'feminine' characteristics...
> [to] resist the distinction between masculine and feminine spaces and seek
> to combine commonly distinctive fields and to cross boundaries into new
> transformative spaces (p. 75).

Matt and Cameron's activities intentionally work to connect being male, and being an authoritative male, with many other characteristics, among them, silliness, nurture, singing, tears, vulnerability, and dancing the hokey pokey. This practice models that men can do all of these things, but more significantly, it confounds expectations, gradually building up the notion that gender categories are flexible, thus repositioning the possibility of crossing boundaries for boys.

A third element that fosters flexibility is the participants' consistent valuing of risk taking. Participants' own practices reflect the risks they take in terms of students' expectations, parents' expectations, and the gender arrangements of their schools. Cameron more explicitly articulates the importance of risk taking for students, saying that it allows students to move beyond their current conceptions of what they are good or bad at. Thus, developing a tolerance for risk taking constitutes an important pre-requisite for being able to re-define oneself. In all of these ways, fostering greater flexibility enables participants to protect boys from early self-definition.

One telling aspect of these two narratives is the degree to which, in working with older boys than Matt, Cameron appears to explicitly and directly work at undoing patterns of self-identification that boys have already taken up. Matt, on the other hand, is more able to focus on initiating an environment of flexibility for boys, rather than on dismantling already existing self-definitions and boundaries. This distinction suggests age-related differences in the transformative needs of boys. However, other factors, such as Cameron's boyhood positioning as a less dominant male, may also account for his more explicit emphasis on working with boys, and girls, who have less voice and agency in the classroom. This echoes patterns in the work of Dan and Tim, where Tim, who sees

himself as having been more on the margins as a boy, also articulated more responsibility to address "how certain kids...treat other kids" in the classroom.

Davies' (1997) description of the practices of a male teacher working transformatively with boys, describes Mr. Good's work as a "move toward multiplicity" for the boys in his class (p. 19):

> Mr. Good reveals his own preferences, and does not censor the boys' reading of how to be masculine. Rather, he invites them to broaden their range and celebrates their achievements in articulating a range of possibilities. What he does not offer them is the kind of reflexive knowledge that would allow them to see what is happening and to critique the various discourses that are made available to them (p. 25).

Like Mr. Good, Cameron and Matt offer boys many opportunities to "broaden their range" and celebrate their achievements in trying out new possibilities. Like Mr. Good, as well, their emphasis tends to be on broadening boys' range of options, rather than on providing them with tools that might enable the boys to identify and critique the discourses of masculinity that are made available to them. However, Cameron also told stories in which he identified specific images of masculinity and attempted to get boys reflect on the values communicated by those images. He also creates a classroom environment that facilitates speaking out about harassment and intimidation, even when he was the culprit, and works explicitly to intervene in the dynamics between boys and girls in his classroom. Cameron's work, then, also begins to offer boys the capacity to identify, speak about, and critique some of the patterns that shape their lives as boys.

Being male, rather than female, did appear to offer these teachers certain advantages in working transformatively with boys. Both participants have noted ways in which men working with boys are able to draw on pleasurable commonalities of experience to create relationships with them and to inspire them. Further, participants

identified the higher levels of trust and credibility they could trade on in working with both boys and parents. Their capacity to be authority figures assisted them in limiting aggression and resistance in boys, and, while this is not necessarily a male trait, both men connected authoritativeness with their style of being a male teacher. Also, confounding boys' expectations about what men should do is clearly easier as a male teacher, than it would be as a female teacher. As Cameron pointed out, similar practices coming from a woman are less likely to have an impact on boys' attachment to traditional ways of being male.

On the other hand, being male also positions men in specific ways within the gender arrangements of schools, and the expectation to offer patriarchal regulation of students, and to avoid a range of practices considered effeminate or inappropriate, can also limit the kinds of practices men can engage in effectively in schools. Furthermore, culturally inscribed gender differences may interfere with one's desire to model practices traditionally associated with the feminine. Finally, valued ways of being male have been demonstrated to be informed by class and culture, demonstrating the importance of careful reflection on the practices and goals that individuals take into their transformative work with boys.

In this section, I presented the stories of two men, examining how shifts in their understanding of how to be men within their own lives informed transformative practices with boys in schools. This examination demonstrated the ways in which experiences of shift tended to support teachers' emphasis on defending a territory of more flexible understandings of gender boundaries, but also noted that transformative goals can be influenced by other salient categories in the individual's experiences such as class and

gendered social positioning. Complexities resulting from school gender arrangements, from the patterns of patriarchal relations and from conflicts between men's multiple subject positions in and out of schools were also examined. Rowan et al.'s (2002) notion of the role of counternarratives that gradually connect traditional masculinities with new possibilities was identified as a relevant depiction of participants' practices in the lived context of gender work in schools, as was Davies' (1997) notion of gender work as a "move towards multiplicity." In the next chapter, I examine the literacy histories of the participants.

4.3. Capture and Evasion: Narratives of Conditional Literacy

As we have seen in previous sections, participants draw on their boyhood

memories to understand the needs of the boys they teach and to develop practices that

they believe those needs. This section examines the literacy histories of the participants

in order to examine how they have typically felt excluded from literacy or engaged with

literacy. In doing so, it provides insights into the resources and understandings that male

teachers bring to their literacy pedagogy. Although I acknowledge that literacies take

many shapes, including cultural, functional, technological, media-based, emotional, and

critical (Ball, Kenny & Gardiner, 1990; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998; Rowan et al., 2002), I

have chosen to focus primarily on the men's narratives of their engagement with reading

and writing in order to maintain an emphasis on the practices participants are primarily

concerned with in their classrooms.

Conditional Literacy

For many of the men in the study, involvement in literacy as boys was conditional

on a number of factors, and their ultimate, more permanent engagement with it was still

in question as they neared adulthood. Even when they could generally read and write

competently for their age, they often did not view themselves as readers or writers, and

did not read or write unless forced to. As Sam put it, "I was never a big reader. I would

read because I had to for something, or if it was something I was really interested in, I

would read it. But just to pick up a book, sit down, and read, I've never really been big

on that."

The Action/Literacy Divide

In participants' narratives, reading is often placed in opposition to more valued

activity, as in Matt's explanation that he and his friends were "not that interested" in

reading because they were "really active." Mark recalled:

> My sister and I, as younger kids, I read a lot. I read a lot until I really got,
> you know, my sporting rising getting into high school, went from baseball
> actually starting grade eight, baseball and hockey to football starting in
> grade eight, and running, and you know, soccer and I was doing
> everything, so, at that time in my life that's when my reading came kind of
> a back burner thing

Sam said, "When I was young, when I was growing up, I really didn't do much reading at

all other than what was required at school." Anything "related to school, you just didn't

do at home. I mean, you did your required homework" and then you went outside to play

as soon as possible. Action still takes priority over literacy in Dan's life. He rarely

engages in it because, as he says, "I don't have time for that. I've got to go train. I've

got to go lift weights. I've got to run."

Even participants whose literacy skills generally outstripped their physical skills

when they were boys sometimes identified literacy as secondary, valuable in the absence

of the more highly valued physical abilities. As an adolescent, during a prolonged and

severe episode of his illness, described in the previous section, Cameron became a more

engaged reader, although literacy had always come easily to him. He said, " I remember

reading avidly because I had nothing else to do. I mean, I read, *Pride and Prejudice*[7] as a

grade ten kid when I was first sick and confined to my room for months on end." Though

Cameron is proud of his literacy accomplishments, he does also frame them as an

alternative to the socially valued physical skills of other boys:

> Public speaking. Well rewarded for that, in the response I got, but not in the, like, you won a prize, but it was never anything great. But it was the fun of being first...'Cause I couldn't be first on a sports team, I guess, I could do this.

Although Cameron felt that he was still able to fit in to his school setting well, his narratives do indicate that he was aware of this skill in literacy as something that made him different from most of the other boys in his classes: "I was always different, in that respect, for a guy. Hurtful at times, the older I got, it was."

Captured by Literacy

Many participants' narratives reflect the possibility that boys might never seriously engage with literacy. John, whose father was a high school teacher, now feels that his father worried about his inconsistent engagement with reading as a boy:

> I think there was a lot of worry on his part when I was young that I wouldn't be a reader, that I wouldn't find it enjoyable....But I guess, from his perspective, it would be a hit and miss thing. Like, I'd read this book for a week and then I wouldn't read for two months or something, right? So I think he was always worried that way.

While he described several books that he read, loved, and still remembers vividly, his engagement with literacy was intermittent, conditional on interest. He identified grade nine as his first real engagement with literacy:

> My first real memories of being hooked on literacy are Grade Nine when I went to a boys' school out west. The [teacher] who taught us language out there started reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* to us. Automatically hooked, right? Great stories. That's my first vivid memory of being captured in school by literacy.[8]

Here, John is "hooked" and "captured" by literacy in school. He is willingly engaged, not forced, but the language is telling. Participants remember being "hooked" by literacy with pleasure, but were strongly aware that, often, academic literacy stood in

opposition to the values of free, active boy life, explored in section 4.1. The need for "hooks" is a central theme that emerges in participants' stories.

Natural ability and familial encouragement eased Andrew, Ed, Cameron and Tim's entry into and practice of literacy. They also became more closely allied with literacy because of their more moderate participation in competitive sports and other more action-oriented aspects of boyhood life in their environments. Others escaped literacy's clutches, or were captured and released intermittently. Participants' evasion of literacy as boys was also shaped by social factors, such as a lack of family engagement with reading and writing that affected their ideas about who reads and who doesn't. Peer and sports-team cultures that either resisted literacy, or, at the very least, privileged physical activity, could leave little time or desire to read or write. Personal limitations, such as learning disabilities or a lack of fine motor control, might affect one's willingness to try hard or to enjoy Language Arts, especially if comparison played a role in how one's limitations were experienced in classroom settings.

While some participants reported lessening involvement in literacy in their adolescent years, this was not uniform. Matt's story, for example, demonstrates growing involvement with reading as he discovered authors and genres more suited to his tastes. Andrew's shift from a more sports-oriented childhood to a more music-oriented adolescence tended to support his continuing interest in literacy. Some participants, like Ed, who had enjoyed reading as children continued to enjoy reading on their own and sometimes in class throughout high school. However, Matt was the only one of the very successful high school athletes who grew increasingly interested in reading during his adolescence. Except for Andrew, who wrote pop lyrics, none of the men recounted

stories of spontaneous childhood writing outside of school: for this reason, discussion of their boyhood experiences of writing will be taken up in the section on school literacies. The following sections are discussions of the factors that influenced men's gradual or intermittent engagement with literacy.

Out of School Literacies

Family Reading Patterns

In Millard's (1997) detailed survey of family reading patterns, children were more likely to see their mothers reading, and to be read to by their mothers, who often took primary responsibility for children's home-based literacy development. About half the men in the study talked about their mothers reading to them as young children. Mothers were generally most responsible for home-based literacy learning and practice, which included reading aloud to children, practicing reading and writing with children, encouraging children to read, and ensuring that literacy-based homework was completed. Mark's involvement with literacy as a child emerged out of a close and pleasurable literacy relationship with his mother:

> My Mom was an avid reader. Always. And, she would either, she would
> read to us all the time. Especially, when we were really younger, my Dad
> worked afternoons, and so, he wasn't in, so my Mom entertained us by
> reading. She read a lot, she would sing, she would play music and sing to
> us all the time. I have so many memories of my mother always reading
> and singing, all the time, growing up as a kid.

He also remembers that his mother helped him a lot with his homework because of his weak writing skills:

> I always had to make sure I was doing my homework and that, but, you
> know she would help me with assignments. Like she wouldn't, she
> wouldn't write 'em for me, but she, you know, she worked a lot with me
> on them.

In some of the narratives, pressure to read, or to improve Language Arts marks, caused conflicts between the mother and the boy. Dan described his mother as 'forcing' him to read:

> My mom tried, tried to make me read. Nope, I hated it, couldn't stand it. I tried to read *Hardy Boy* books, I couldn't tell you, I mean, what any single one of them were about. I probably read maybe three or four. She had comic books for me. She had little thick comic books....[9]

About half of the participants remember their fathers recommending books that their sons might enjoy. John, whose father, previously mentioned, worried that he might not become a reader, was "always throwing different things at me. To try and make it interesting. And he did a great job. There was a lot of books that he passed my way that I loved, really loved." Ed's father died when he was a baby, and he was raised by his mother who read to him "constantly" and taught him to read before he went to school. But he credits a neighbouring farmer, for whom he worked, with engaging him in reading:

> [T]he man I worked for...owned a farm. He was a very brilliant man. And I spent a lot of time with him, cause I worked for him, all summer. So we'd hoe beans together, and he always gave me, always, always, he gave me his old *Time* magazines, which I read constantly. I was very young, too.... Well, I learned a lot of stuff from him. But he was always, he was a deep reader. He read a lot of stuff. And we liked a lot of stuff, so then we talked about it, so like, a lot of history, and that, and we talked about things, and so I got interested in it....Loved war and all that stuff, ...But I do love all that kind of stuff. And I would say he was an integral part of my getting hold of that stuff, originally.

Participants who spoke about fathers or another significant male figure supporting their literacy tended to be those who were more successful in integrating into school literacy. As well, descriptions of this kind of shared male literacy were more common among middle-class families than among working-class families in the study.

Independent Reading as Children

Many of the participants also recounted stories around intense personal or private

childhood reading, relatively independent of the influences of parents or other caregivers.

This reading often centred around non-academic types of texts such as comic books,

books based on favourite films, or hockey cards. Dan, for whom reading was always a

chore, remembers reading two very thick *Star Wars*[10] comics repeatedly and by choice.

The moral message of these books, and the films, were deeply internalized:

> I lived and breathed *Star Wars* and followed everything...Master Yoda
> said and everything that was good. I learned the difference between good
> and evil and right and wrong...through *Star Wars*. I knew the difference
> between right and wrong and I, honesty was, being a moral person but, or,
> having morals....[A]nd because of that, I think, I chose, you know, the
> right path, many, or all the time, I wouldn't say all the time, most of the
> times.

For some participants, independent visits to the library were pleasurable and powerful

private literacy experiences. John recounted:

> I remember this. I remember this....On our way back and forth to school,
> walking, we always passed by the...Library....[I]t was like, oh, I can go in
> there on the way home. And I remember a version of *Moby Dick* in there,
> it was a pictorial version of *Moby Dick*. For months, every day I would
> stop on the way home from school, look for it on the shelf, pull it out, sit
> at one of the desks and look at that book. I think, I don't know, maybe
> five minutes, I'm sure, but it seemed like longer. It was just this, you
> know, these awesome graphic pictures of that whale, and they're trying to
> catch it. And then I discovered you could take it out. That was all a
> mystery too, right? So when I started to take it out and bring it home, for
> some reason, maybe I'd looked at it so often by then it just became less
> attractive. But I just remember that whole activity, that I'd be going home
> thinking, "Oh yeah, I hope it's there." Because sometimes it wouldn't be
> there. It would be moved or whatever. Always looking for the same spot,
> right? And that seemed to go on forever. [11]

Favourite Books

In their memory boxes, a number of men included specific books that were very important to them as children, or that they now love to read to children. These books (with the exception of Mark's reading of Judy Blume books) often involved homosocial or father-son relationships, or focused on moral dilemmas experienced by male characters. John remembers reading *A Day No Pigs would Die*[12] when he was ten, a book his father recommended:

> My Dad gave it to me. It was the first book I ever cried reading. Like, I had a hard time, I mean, how can you cry reading this book....I never thought I could, that that would happen with a book. But I remember that book moved me as a child.

He described the book as "a relationship between a boy and his dad... A sort of boy coming of age thing, and how the dad guides him or doesn't guide him."

In Sam's choices, the books are about men, but his description of the books does not draw attention to that. Sam loves to read *The Great Kapok Tree*[13] to his students, because he thinks "there's a great message in [it] about what we need to do for the environment, protecting the environment and what kids can do." This book is about

> a man who walks in to the forest and he starts cutting down a Great Kapok tree, he gets tired so he lays down and all the animals come down from the tree and they start whispering into his ear about why he shouldn't cut that tree down. So he wakes up, he has a change of heart and he walks out of the forest.

Another book he likes to read to the children is *The Lorax*,[14] a book where "the little guy pops out of the tree and he speaks for the trees which the guy's cutting down." Comic books, of course, provide a very obvious example of moral conflicts between men (or at least, male creatures), where, as Dan said, "you didn't want to be that bad guy. You wanted to be the good guy."

Often the participants' book choices also reflected the enjoyment of the outdoor

world, walking in the forest, or "rocketing" around town, as Tim put it in describing a

book called *Stop that Ball*,[15] a "crazy story about this kid chasing this ball around town."

John described a favourite book[16] that he frequently reads to children in terms that reflect

these values:

> There are some lines in here that are almost like poetry for me....it's about
> these three animals but this one where [paper noise] "Where after dinner
> in the evening they'd play games or read and sometimes the night would
> call to them." Almost like they're confused about it. They're living like
> people but the night calls to them and that's natural because they're
> animals. I just think that's funny. Anyway, they're just two best buddies
> and...they live together. Essentially, it says, the longer they were friends
> the better friends they became. They do stuff. They build a house. They
> grow vegetables. They cook. They play games. They chase their friend
> Ernest the Goose around.

This passage reflects the themes of male camaraderie, the value of 'doing stuff', and the

lure of the outside world. As participants grew older, sometimes satirical humour, such

as *Mad Magazine*[17] or *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*,[18] was also important.

Participants seemed to be largely unaware that their books tended to focus on

male characters and activities that tend to appeal more to boys, or, at least, did not remark

upon it. For example, Tim vividly remembers the images from *Stop that Ball* from his

childhood, and now frequently reads the book to his own son. Until I remarked upon it,

though, it had never struck him that many of the images in the book corresponded to his

own life interests, including baseball, horn playing, and the restless activity of the

character involved. Participants' book choices sometimes reflected the influence of their

gendered lives in ways that appear natural to them. School-based literacy, however,

tended not to provide these kinds of options to as great a degree.

School-Based Literacy

Perhaps the most striking features of men's narratives of school literacy was the repeated statement that they really couldn't remember very much about Language Arts. Dan, for example, says, "I can tell you exactly what we did in math, history, science, Phys. Ed., of course. Nope, I don't remember a single thing from English." John said, "I have no memory of like reading in class, none at all." Sam remembers many things about grade one, but doesn't remember ever being read to or looking at books as a group.

Even men who were strong literacy students, like Andrew, had few impressions of their elementary Language Arts classes:

> But, I can, I started thinking about my grade 6 program, I remember my
> project on Australia, and I remember Francis Drake, and Magellan, and I
> remember my solar system unit, and then I start thinking, what were we
> doing in Language Arts? I remember the noun and the verb posters on top
> of the chalk board. I remember looking at them. And..but I start, honestly
> I tried to make a conscious effort of what we were doing in these grades,
> and... I remember there was a girl named Kelly who sat next to me, and,
> we used to have our weekly spelling test.

In this passage, Andrew demonstrates a sense of ownership around 'his' project on Australia and 'his solar system unit,' but constructs Language Arts in a more impersonal way: noun and verb posters above the chalk board, and "our weekly spelling test."

Many of the men described Language Arts classes as tedious or irrelevant to their boyhood interests and concerns. Matt provided a detailed description of the tedium of the elementary Language Arts classroom:

> I just remember like, especially in the elementary school, you had a book
> for grammar, you had a book for spelling, we did spelling tests up the...
> hated 'em, never did well, and the words would come home, and Mum
> [tapping the paper hard] Get on these things and you need to study....I
> hated spelling tests, hated spelling... [I]t was all dry and boring, and there
> was no wiggle room, it was This Way and No Way.

It is telling that, by contrast, "Science was cool. 'Cause you could do stuff." There was

very little "action" in the Language Arts classroom. The identifiable activities, spelling,

grammar and handwriting, were not generally considered interesting.

The majority of participants described themselves as non-attentive, disengaged,

and reluctant to volunteer in Language Arts classrooms. Sometimes reluctance to

participate related to fear of making mistakes and feeling foolish:

> I do remember that they would ask questions...I would raise my hand,
> answer the question and, "Nope, you were wrong." Great. I remember
> there was a poem that we read and what was it about? And I said
> something about changing or I said something about the leaves were
> crackling and, you know, that was part of his persona, that he was
> crumbling, falling apart. And everybody laughed at me and I went, oh,
> that's how I perceived it, it was about the changing of the seasons in the
> poem. Don't get it and I never answered another question (Dan).

John also remembers being afraid in English class, particularly the year that he returned

to a co-educational setting after being in an all-boys school:

> For sure because I remember the next year in school, being in a class with more
> girls than boys....Just shut right down. Just scared. I didn't even know why but I
> was. Just scared.

This sense of unease and silence was not limited to boys who were typically not strong

readers and writers. As Ed said:

> I didn't like to... I didn't like to participate in it. Like, again, because I
> wasn't interested. That was another fear. I hated to be called upon about
> expressing your opinion about a book, or something. I didn't like that.

Participants remembered that high school English focused more on literary

response with a concomitant emphasis on the literary essay. This transition was positive

for some participants, who remember the texts in high school much more vividly. It also

entailed shifting to a greater focus on classics and more sophisticated forms of literature,

which, for some, was more problematic. Mark remembers, for example, that poetry,

which he had enjoyed in elementary school, "turned almost into that, you know, Shakespearean, these big poetries, hey, I don't have any time for that stuff."

Mark also appears to have been quite resistant in literacy classes. He was often sent out of class for "just laughing....I would just goof around with people and so I got sent out quite a bit." Stories of "goofing off" and "screwing around" in secondary English class, seen by participants as just having fun, but no doubt experienced by teachers as resistance, are common among the participants who tended to be less engaged with literacy.

Many participants became more clear about their reading and writing strengths and weaknesses at the secondary level. Although Language had always been his weakest subject, Mark remembers this becoming more clear to him as a high school student:

> And you know, maybe, maybe in high school it got to the point where it just, you know, I wasn't a good writer. You know, 'cause you're more knowledgeable, then, and, you know, I wasn't a writer, and I should be a writer, and, but I was so carefree that I you know... Yeah, I could slide you know, and nobody kind of would look at it, me being weaker in Language, cause you know, I would always be one of the top ones in Math, or in Science.

Others, like Tim, remember being identified as a good writer, and beginning to see that as part of his academic identity:

> Well probably more in high school. I think, well just again, I think I enjoyed it a lot more in high school....I got more into writing. I had some, some teachers, like my OAC English teacher, I remember her complimenting me on my writing and that kind of really stuck with me. And, because we were doing some essay writing and...some comparisons on some different authors and, and that stuck with me, saying, "You're really good at that." So and that was the point when I thought, okay, I'm ready for university.

In this way the more narrow confines of the literacy curriculum in high school contributed to a sense of membership or exclusion for different participants.

Challenges in School Literacy

The parts of Language Arts that participants found difficult were not consistent: there was no one way of being a boy in Language Arts. Among the aspects of Language Arts that presented themselves as barriers to different men were various issues in mechanics, response activities in reading, and the issues of voice, style, and topic selection in writing.

Mechanics: Spelling, Grammar, and Handwriting

Practicing the surface features of writing was generally among the most common activity recalled by participants. In general, participants tended to focus on the skills that they experienced as barriers to or emblems of success. Matt, Dan, and Sam all remember being penalized for their handwriting and neatness, either losing marks on assignments or having to redo them all together. Sam remembers "redoing that stuff over and over and not liking it." As a left-handed writer, "this part of your hand's smearing it all over so you do it again." Matt felt that his work was often unfairly compared to the work of other, neater (female, in his examples, though not explicitly) students. Dan recalls that his handwriting was "horrible" when he was a boy, and that he routinely received poor marks on work where neatness was emphasized. For a few others, handwriting was a strength. Cameron, for example, remembers "being very proud at my handwriting, cause I am a left-handed person, and it was my goal to be as good as the right-handed kids. I remember ...most of the other kids thought it was very dry and boring, where, I quite liked it. I really did. And excelling at it."

Inability to spell, do grammar, or write neatly did sometimes affect participants' sense of themselves as successfully literate, but not in all cases. Andrew, for example,

was not good at spelling and grammar, but viewed himself as excellent at reading and writing. Mark's handwriting was excellent, but he self-identifies as a weak writer. No single skill practiced in the Language Arts classroom is sufficient as a marker of the likelihood of feeling like a successful literacy student. Few participants expressed any interest or engagement with mechanics activities, though some enjoyed being good at them. In general their memories of this work contribute to their feelings of lack of engagement with Language Arts. For those with messy handwriting, however, the experience of redoing things and of being penalized did tend to be more discouraging.

Reading Response

Many participants recounted a reluctance to participate in literature response activities, even when they actually enjoyed reading. Ed said:

> I didn't like literature. I hated it. I really did. I did okay. Uh, actually, I did quite well, but I despised it. I didn't like it, you know? ...My thing is, who cares what they were thinking or whatever. I just liked reading what they did. To me it was pointless. Why do I care what they're trying to say to me, or whatever?

Like Ed, Sam remembers himself as "a good reader. I think I picked it up quickly" but he didn't like "the comprehension stuff." Many participants did not mind reading the texts, but disliked response activities, whether in the form of comprehension questions, discussion, or essays. A few participants, like Tim and Cameron, came to enjoy writing essays in high school.

Participants rarely remarked upon the types of reading they did in class, though older participants did note that the readings they had engaged in as students had been more difficult, more complex, and more substantial, in comparison to the texts provided by textbook publishers today. Many could not remember very much of the literature they

had read before high school. Only Matt connected this to the possibility that the curriculum was feminized: "I know we read a bunch of books before we got to grade 5, but I don't – like, I'm sure we did *Anne of Green Gables*, and that, but if we did, I probably slept through it, cause I wouldn't have enjoyed it."[19] The fact that they found the material generally unengaging, though, and the response activities uninviting, is clear from the data.

Writing

In general, writing was viewed much more problematically than reading. As Mark succinctly put it, "Reading was easy. Writing was hard." Sam referred to writing as "a burden" since he didn't like "writing out those big, long answers, that sort of thing." Participants remember not knowing what to write about, but also resented being forced to write about specific topics. Sam remembers "as far as getting creative and writing about topics you maybe wanted to, I don't recall doing that." Ed said that "like most guys" he just "didn't know what to do" when it came to writing.

The roots of their boyhood disengagement with writing are not always clear to them. Dan felt that writing somehow did not seem to reflect the content or facility of his thinking, as "when it was time to write a story, I'm thinking of something else, like if I could write as fast as I could think, what I was thinking about, it probably would be a pretty good story." Many felt that they lacked facility and fluency in writing. As Mark said,

> I just, I just couldn't get into it. No, I can't really pinpoint anything. It wasn't that it was physically hard, 'cause like I said I was, perfect handwriting, perfect writer, so it wasn't that. I just it wasn't something I enjoyed doing. I didn't want to do it. Unless it was interesting to me. If it was interesting, then I could just flow. And, then, you know, do it, but – but it couldn't be formal writing, like it couldn't be creative – I could be

creative, but it wouldn't be like formal writing. Very slang. And I speak slang. I'm really bad with my slang. I try to watch it in the classroom.

Like a number of participants, Dave feels that, even as an adult, his writing lacks a powerful voice. When asked if he viewed himself as a writer, he responded:

> I wish I was. I wish, I wish, I really wish I could. I had a little girl in my class last year, from China. Four years in Canada. Probably one of the most outstanding writers I have ever met in my life. For grade seven? Light years beyond me. And I've got a little boy in my class this year. Same thing. Outstanding. I'm reading him. Wow! They paint pictures with words, and I can't do that. I can't seem to sit down and you know do all the things, like walking from here to the door, and all the gestures, and nuances that go with it, and I can't put it in words and make it sound right, you know? I wish I could, but I can't.

Engagements in School Literacy Contexts

Although participants' stories about literacy often depicted tedium and frustration, their narratives also captured points of engagement in which they experienced literacy positively in schools. Three themes emerged in participants' stories as factors that helped them to be or become engaged: literacy as an achievement, literacy where students could "do stuff," and the role of the teacher in mediating literacy for boys.

Literacy as Achievement

Men's stories of successful literacy events, especially in elementary school, tended to focus on competition and on experiences of external recognition. Even participants who were consistently good at literacy in elementary school tended to take more pleasure in the fact that they were better at it, than in the skill itself. As Tim said, in relation to phonics, "I don't remember it being particularly interesting but I remember liking it because I was good at it where others weren't."

Many positive literacy experiences rested on memories of reading or writing something of great length. John remembers one particularly positive writing experience in his grade three class:

> I remember filling up a sheet of legal sized paper with a story. She'd ask us to write stories. I remember just writing and writing and I remember some of the kids around me going like, wow, look how much John's writing. And filling up the whole page was like a huge deal.

The length of it "was the point, right? Who knows what it was about?" Here, length, rather than quality, is the social measure of writing success. Similarly, participants' recounted their pleasure in reading large books as an accomplishment, rather than an engagement with the text. Cameron "started by taking enjoyment out of the accomplishment of reading from beginning to end." At that point he did "not care about what was in the middle – what the content was." Later, however, as his enforced bedrest continued and he read more, he thought, "Ohhh, there's more to reading than just getting from the beginning to the end. And I do remember that not happening until grade 10." After that, he "read one book after another...and, it actually got in the way of my schooling, because I would rather read this, than that – textbooks, kind of thing." In some cases, then, this sense of accomplishment was the pre-cursor to more sustained engagement with literacy.

In other cases, the experience of reading a long book might be tinged with a sense of competition:

> I'd pick things up that were really out of my reach. I remember going and getting, as a novel, James Michener's *Hawaii*.[20] And I loved the fact that it was so big. You know, kids today they look, that's too big. Go on, how long is this? Twenty pages. [reluctant kid voice] Well, that's long. Here's this book, almost 1000 pages, I'm reading, because, that's neat.

Here, the number of pages seems particularly important. There are few stories in the data in which, as boys, participants shared books or other literacy experiences together socially except in this competitive way.

Literacy experiences were sometimes competitive in more explicit ways, and their value was clearly tied to the experience of being better than others. Participants who attended school in the early 1970's, for example, did Science Research Associates (SRA) reading kits[21], individually paced levelled reading comprehension activities. The levels were color coded, so that it was relatively easy to identify which students were ahead of you or behind you in the series. Andrew "really, really enjoyed them." He "enjoyed the competition of nobody being ahead of me....And I enjoyed the fact that, oh, look at Jim, he's on the brown level, or whatever, and, some of you are still back there on the red level or whatever. And some of you can't."

Sometimes participants also told stories about pieces of writing they had written that received public recognition in or out of class. These stories tended to be about their pleased surprise in discovering they had written something of quality:

> [W]e used to have English tests, and part of the English test was a composition you had to write. Well, nobody ever, every read my compositions. They weren't good enough. And so, I wrote this exam, and then the teacher the following week was reading, giving out the exams, and he stopped, and he said, "I want everybody to listen to this piece of writing of somebody." And he starts reading it, and I'm sitting there listening, and thinking, "Wow, is that ever good." And then he said it was me, and I went, What? I didn't even remember doing it. But it made me feel good. (Dave)

Again, this story tends to reflect a sense of literacy as achievement, rather than engagement, as well as a sense of literary ability as something externally identified rather than internally experienced.

Stories of achievement and competition might easily be dismissed as merely one more example of boys' competitiveness. Still, they suggest that these men experienced literacy more in terms of measurable achievement than in terms of personal meaning making. While competition was highly engaging for successful literacy students, it's important to note that these activities, so positive for some, were disliked by others who did not enjoy the same competitive edge. Sam remembers "hating" SRA reading because "it was always the same thing and it was always dry, it was always very boring, I found it. And I did not like them at all." Competitive experiences were sometimes moments that clearly defined some participants as outsiders to literacy practices. Matt, for example, remembers public speaking as "just brutal...just terrible....The boys got up and stumbled all over themselves, they were sweatin'. You couldn't have got two of us on a stage if our lives depended on it." Matt identifies girls as the group who mostly belonged to this particular literacy club. The sense of disengagement from this highly competitive practice is clear in his story.

Literacy as Doing Stuff

In contrast to the typical experience of tedium in Language Arts class, some teachers did provide oases of more pleasurable literacy activity where students could "do stuff." Andrew's grade seven class

> was fun because you did stuff....[W]e wrote letters as one of our
> Language things. He...had a pen pal in Red Deer, Alberta, so we had pen
> pals in Alberta. That was a million miles away from here. So, I found
> that really cool. He was an artist. He had a book on his desk. It was *The
> Official I Hate Cats Book*. It was, you know, stupid guy humour, you
> know. Yeah. And he'd let you read it for silent reading....It was
> fantastic! It was great for me. And I really liked him. And as an artist, he
> was silk screening rock t-shirts in the class. He was doing it as a
> fundraiser. And I bought an AC/DC *Back in Black* shirt from this guy.

You brought in the t-shirt, and he put the thing on, and he would charge a buck or two, and give it to the school.[22]

When Language Arts became about "doing stuff", it became more fun, but determining what made certain activities "doing stuff" and not more school literacy is more complicated. For one thing "doing stuff" appeared often to involve opportunities to share your work with others for real purposes, as in Andrew's description above. Sam's description of a radio journalism project suggests that "doing stuff" could also involve taking on roles, managing on one's own, and dealing with technology as part of the literacy project. "Doing" might also involve more creative projects that involved crafts as well as writing. There was more choice of topic and assignment. As Matt said about his favourite elementary teacher,

> [W]e never had a grammar book with her, or a spelling book, or a -- it was all in one, like she...taught us how to write...a short story, and through that, she taught us about prefixes and grammar while we were doing that exercise. So, those things were tools that we were learning to get to the end of writing our short story. And she didn't care what we wrote. She always said, I don't care what you write about, as long as you write.

Literacy became more personally owned, and learning skills was submerged within "doing" stuff.

Literacy and Teachers

As demonstrated above, teachers who helped participants engage with literacy made it accessible, in part by providing interesting and unusual reading materials. Teachers also made literacy more accessible by mediating text in ways that met students partway. Matt's first active connection with books and school-based literacy arose in grade five, when his teacher read *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* aloud to the class. Matt recalled that she "would read to us, so it was, you didn't have to fight with

the words, or anything. You just sat, you listened, and you used your imagination." He

remembers thinking, when she read *The Hobbit*[23] aloud to them, "Wow, there's

something other than bla-blah, bla-blah, bla-blah, that's something I could be interested

in. Oh! There's elves, there's trouble, there's this and there's that. It's kind of like comic

books that we read. And I got interested." Oral reading meant that he could focus on the

meaning of a text, rather than simply struggling to decode it. This enabled him to

experience the same kind of pleasure in classroom texts that he did with comic books,

another form of mediated text. Later, in high school, he had an English teacher who

mediated text by connecting reading Shakespeare to sports:

> his whole thing was, it's the jargon. It's jargon, guys. It's just like
> football. It's jargon. Once you know the jargon, you're all right. And he
> taught us the jargon. And so you could sit and read, and understand what
> they were saying. Oooh yeah. That's really cool.

Teachers also made literacy accessible by being the kinds of people that children

felt cared about them and could be sympathetic to their social interests. Often, the

teacher in question was young, or as John put it, "young and hip and cool." The phrase

"a good guy" came up so often in participants' descriptions of male teachers that I began

to ask what the phrase meant. John explained it in the following way:

> He's friendly. He's with it. You get a sense about him that they like to
> have fun. That they're not going to be one of these rule guys. No talking.
> He's not like that. Cool in the sense that, you know, he understands that
> things happen, right? Spontaneous things will happen in class and be
> funny and you can go with that. It's not something to be rigid about and
> be strict about. How the flow of the class works. But, you know, to bring
> in the line of, you know, well we've got to get business now, so.

Teachers who could have fun with students, but also control students gave many

participants a feeling of both security and flexibility. John's description suggests that

such a teacher shared a sense of humour with students and communicated care and

appreciation for them.

Eccentricities also sometimes played a role in these boys' engagement in the

classroom. Tim connects the eccentric practices of teachers specifically with their

concern for students' needs – not just to be eccentric, but to perform eccentricity to help

students learn:

> I had him, I guess in grade eleven and grade twelve. And he was, I just
> always remembered his teaching style... Like he was really off the wall.
> I'm not really off the wall but, just his, his willingness to show, to show
> different parts of your personality and, you know, to act kind of crazy
> sometimes but for, for a reason. So, like acting out parts of *Catcher in the
> Rye*...throwing open the door to the classroom and yelling out into the
> hallway.[24]

Here, Tim describes how the teacher models showing "different parts of your

personality" and acting "kind of crazy." Alloway et al. (2002) identified increasing the

range of subject positions boys felt able to take up in literacy classrooms as a key factor

in increasing their literacy success. Perhaps these characters appear repeatedly in men's

stories because of their value in broadening the range of "normal" behaviour, or in

limiting its importance for students.

> As well, participants often remembered a specific teacher for his or her passion:

> So he was passionate, he was pretty green as a teacher. He was pretty
> passionate about the books, passionate about teaching. And then it was a
> combination of that with a good book that kept the whole class gripped
> every time he came in to teach. We loved it. Just loved talking about the
> book, hearing him read it. I remember he'd spit, like I just, you know
> mimicking the lines and stuff, you know, if you saw him in the right light
> he'd be like spitting. He was so into it.

In their 1999 study of English elementary school children, Younger and Warrington

demonstrate that boys tended to see engagement as more the responsibility of the teacher,

whereas girls tend to view it as more a function of personal discipline. Similarly, in the participants' stories, the power of an individual teacher to engage students, compared to the many others who did not, was a central theme.

Adult Literacy

Many participants identified their university years as the period where they became personally engaged with literacy in a sustained fashion. Dan began reading at twenty-two, at a friend's suggestion:

> "You should start reading. It, you sure are dull. It'll grow your brain." I
> had a lot of trouble my first couple of years in university. I got bored
> because I was there for a week on my own during Reading Week because
> I couldn't go home, it was too far away. And I picked up one of the John
> Grisham books and read that. And that started it.

Although Dan still does not view himself as either an active reader or writer, he feels that regular reading did improve his academic skills. He says that beginning to read "was a turning point in my brain developing and me being able to learn better, being able to take in more knowledge."

For many, this engagement was driven by necessity; that is, for some participants it stemmed from a sense that the world of work and self-sufficiency was close at hand. Mark recounted that in his first semester at university, he "had two D+'s and three C+'s…and then I was like, 'Oh.' It was painful for me. So, I had to kind of teach myself a study skills system and all that." He had to teach himself to write, and as part of that process, began reading fiction. Like Mark, Dave's engagement with reading was driven by the academic demands of university, but the outcomes were more dramatic:

> When I got to university, I was so inundated by reading, and I wasn't
> really a good reader. So, I took speed reading in university. And we had,
> one requirement was to read five hours a day. Well, reading science
> books five hours a day was enough to put you to sleep as it is, so I started

reading other books. And the more I read, the more I started to enjoy it.
You know now I love reading. I read all the time. I'd rather read than
watch TV.

For others, necessity was intertwined with a motivating sense of greater self-determination, supported by the freedom of topic choice that university afforded. Sam feels that "as far as the learning curve, I think I learned most of my writing when I got to university." For him, "the motivation was, I wanted to learn at that point. At that point I wanted to learn and it wasn't because someone else was telling me to." He felt driven because "you're kind of where you're going....[Y]our life is now at stake. I think I realized that." Choice of topics and self-determination changed his outlook on literacy:

I think it's because I was paying for my university. I wanted to be there
for my university and I wanted to take it. Before that, it was kind of
you're taking this, this is what you're doing. I know we had options in
high school and all that, and it's funny, because English was mandatory all
the way through.

For John, the impetus in becoming more engaged with reading was simply that there was more to read, and more that interested him: "All through high school, I don't remember being a big reader or finding things enjoyable to read. But once I hit university, and from then on, now, it's a matter of, you know, wading through a lot of crap to find something good."

These stories focus primarily on reading, which many participants learned to enjoy. Fewer of the men, however, were able to find a comfortable transition into writing. Though most identified their writing skills as having improved in university, for many, real comfort with writing has never really materialized. As Mark put it, "I'm not very good at the writing part. Like, I can do it, but it's still something that I, you know – not that I struggle, cause I'm definitely a much better writer....Like anything, if you don't

practice it." Mark feels that his engagement with literacy came too late for him to ever be a really good writer.

One interesting insight that emerged from Ed's narratives is that developing an engagement with writing can be a side effect of working with children on writing. Although as a youth he disliked writing intensely, he is an enthusiastic literacy teacher who has written much of his own effective material over the years. When I asked how this transition was effected, he said,

> I have no idea. I think it started when I started lying to kids about it. And, 'cause, I had to teach writing, and all that stuff, and so, of course, what I did was I wrote. Either wrote with them, or I wrote as modelling and I remember this story, and, of course, we did book reviews and all that stuff. And so, in order for them to realize exactly how I wanted them done, of course I wrote one. And it was interesting – I wrote a number of them, but this one I used to use for the last five or six years... *Tales from the Outback or how Julie Moon Caught a Husband...* And so, I think it was because when you're doing it with kids, you don't worry too much about what it's going to be like. But it turned out really nice. And the kids were always amazed. Wow... you did that? And I do it, you know, they'd say, I don't want to write, and I'd start 'em off with something –I'd give 'em a lead in topic and sentence, and it was always kind of crazy or something, and it got 'em, oh, yeah, that's easy, and they said, you just did that off the top of your head, you made it up! Yeah. And I don't know why, I think it's because I had to....And I got to the point where ...it wasn't a chore.

The act of writing with and for students has provided him with an appreciative audience and a purpose for writing, and, somewhere in the midst of performing the enjoyment of literacy for children, he began to believe his own performance. In effect, he "lied" his way into engagement with literacy.

Currently, most of the teachers in the study see themselves as readers, while less than half self-identified as regular and comfortable writers. Among those who self-identified as writers, most use their writing for work-related purposes. However, people's definitions of readers and writers vary. Sam, for example, does not view

himself as a reader, but he reads with his own children regularly, and also reads a number

of magazines. Dan does not view himself as a reader, but reads the paper every day.

Others identified themselves as readers, like Cameron, who reads regularly for work and

an outside leadership role, but rarely reads for pleasure. Dave does not see himself as an

effective writer, yet, has had articles published. Participants in the study use writing

primarily for teaching purposes, but also use it for outside hobbies such as for writing

sports newsletters, for correspondence, for song-writing, and in electronic forums.

Several have also been involved in textbook editing, article and curriculum publication.

These very diverse ways in which participants defined themselves in relation to reading

and writing is in tune with Booth's (2005) observation that people's self-identifications as

readers or writers have a great deal to do with the ways in which they define literacy, and

that many people employ narrow academic definitions of literacy.

In this chapter, I have explored participants' literacy histories in order to examine

how they have typically been called into or felt excluded from literacy, as well as the

ways that they have been most engaged with literacy. As boys, many participants'

engagement with literacy was conditional, so that they read and wrote only in certain

circumstances.

On the one hand, school-based literacies, especially at the elementary level, were

often viewed as tedious and lacking connection to their personal interests or to their

boyhood valuing of action and avoidance of emotional expression. While a smaller

number of teachers were successful literacy students, many recall a sense of inadequacy,

sometimes exacerbated by comparison and competition, that played an important role in

their disengagement with literacy. On the other hand, however, participants' narratives

also reflected intermittent engagement with school-based literacy. Specific teachers played a role in temporary and sometimes more prolonged involvement with literacy practices, and participants remember particularly valuing classrooms where you could "do stuff" and teachers who mediated literacy effectively.

For those who did not find a ready entry into literacy before university, engagement with literacy became a proving ground at the post-secondary level. Many participants told stories of how they had to teach themselves to "really" read and write at that time. In short, teachers highlighted the role of specific mediating individuals and the role of contextual factors such as a sense that literacy was necessary to meet a specific goal, or that literacy was now a choice rather than an obligation, as elements that were often influential in their engagements with literacy. As adults, more of the participants view themselves as readers than as writers, though their definitions of readers and writers also varied. In the following section, I build on this literacy history as well as the patterns considered in sections 4.1 and 4.2 to examine ways in which their lived experience has shaped and continues to influence the strategies participants employ in teaching literacy to boys.

4.4. Male Teachers' Narratives of Engaging Boys With Literacy

In previous sections that explored how participants' lived experience as males has shaped their work with boys in schools, I delineated two common patterns found in participants' practices with boys. The first pattern, examined in detail in section 4.1, involved practices that attempted to tailor school environments to better meet the needs and dispositions of boys as the teachers understood them. The second pattern, examined in detail in section 4.2, outlined practices intended to encourage boys towards a more balanced ideal masculinity which participants understood to be more compatible with academic success. In section 4.3, I outlined typical patterns in participants' historical engagement with literacy, identifying that as boys, many of them experienced engagement with literacy as conditional, in that they would read and write only in specific circumstances. In this chapter, I will illustrate how these three patterns are reflected in many typical practices that participants employ in their literacy pedagogy with boys. In the first segment, I will examine how participants' personal experiences of tedium in Language Arts inform their literacy practice. In the second segment, I will examine participants' efforts to tailor literacy to better suit what they understand to be boys' natures. The third segment outlines how they work to move boys towards different or more varied subject positions in literacy classrooms. The final segment examines practices emerging from some participants' sense that they have been, or remain, weak literacy practitioners, an issue that participants view as both a weakness and a strength.

Engaging Conditional Learners

Based on their personal history, many participants begin their work from the premise that Language Arts is generally not very interesting, especially for boys. Thus, if

boys are going to read and write in school, then teachers have to find ways to make literacy appealing.

Keeping it Fun

Many participants' long experience of disengagement with Language Arts was a central model of what not to do in their own classes. As Sam said,

> I try and liven things up in Language. And I don't know if that has to do with my past experience with Language Arts but I'll play the role of the joker and, you know, that kind of thing, and the entertainer kind of thing in Language Arts....Because I guess I see, see to me, my personal thing is Language Arts is not exciting. It can be made exciting by adding the jokes and adding the little theatrics, that sort of a thing.

Consequently, Sam says, he tends to "focus a lot on motivation in Language Arts. Getting the kids to want to do it and to enjoy doing it."

Matt views making literacy and other academic work fun as a central task for teachers, one that is not necessarily taken up by most teachers in schools. He says, "[I]t doesn't have to be bbb-bbb-bbb-bbb-bbb-bbb [kind of a trombone noise indicating lock-step] and no fun. This no fun thing kind of bugs me." In Matt's room, the daily shared reading is a "joke of the day." This activity is "a great interest to the boys and they will be telling these jokes for days." He says that the use of knock-knock jokes in particular, "That's...all for the boys....It's the humour. They like the idea of being able to tell jokes. And the girls get right into it, too, but I started it...because of the boys."

Matt partly encourages joke telling as a form of public speaking because of his own painful experiences of public speaking, in which boys suffered embarrassment and misery while girls were successful. He attempts to reposition public speaking through reducing social pressure so that boys are willing to engage in it. His emphasis on fun,

more generally, hearkens back to his own memories of Language Arts as "dry and boring."

Sneaking in Literacy

Many participants also identified effective literacy activities as those where it wasn't too clear to the students that they were doing literacy. Matt, for example, sees this as the central purpose of his play- and game-based literacy program. When the boys "get there, and they get into the activity, they're gonna get directed into this direction to learn this skill. Without them knowing that that's what they're doing." Andrew concurs, saying "the challenge there is to get them reading where it's, where they think they're not reading." Sneaking in literacy re-appeared at all grade levels in the study. George, who is an intermediate teacher, for example, shared hockey game videotapes that a group of boys in his class had made. The boys "ate that up. It was all boys, but they don't realize that's part of Language Arts, 'cause oral and visual communication is Language Arts." Like keeping things fun, these practices tend to obscure literacy in order to make it more appealing.

Related to the pedagogy of sneaking in literacy are practices in which students can role play, or pretend, their way into literacy, gradually easing into it over time. Matt identifies his practices of "writing the room," for example, as particularly effective for boys:

> I give 'em a clipboard with a hat that says 'Press' on it, and they just go around and fill the page with words off the wall. So, it's a straight undercopy, a five minute activity – go write the room. And they think it's cool. They've got the clipboard...Clipboard and a hat, and away they go...

This activity is role play at its simplest, where a hat or some glasses transform a literacy task into play. According to Sam, role play might also involve "acting out situations of

stories and that sort of thing" or taking "the role of a sports commentator" in order to "enliven [writing] as much as possible."

In working from the pre-supposition that literacy is not interesting to boys, these participants' work clearly reflects their own histories. Their determination of what is fun also draws on their personal histories, notable, for example, in Sam's use of the "sports commentator" role, drawn from an activity he enjoyed in his youth. Goodwyn (2002) identified the love of reading expressed by pre-service teachers in his study as having a potentially distorting effect on the learning opportunities of those who do not enjoy reading. Here, the default position of most of these participants, that male students will not love reading, shapes different priorities in their work.

Tailoring Literacy for Boys

In this segment, I will examine strategies which are intended to enact a literacy curriculum more in line with what participants understand to be the typical needs, boundaries, interests and goals of boys. As identified in section 4.1, participants' theories of boys and their needs are often informed by their personal history of fitting in, or not fitting in, to the values of hegemonic boyhood and by their experiences of conflicts and distinctions between those values and the demands of school settings. To begin, I examine participants' practices that, like Dan's narrative of working with boys, draw on participants' understanding of boys as active, independent, resistant to emotion and the feminine, and naturally disinclined towards school work, an understanding that could be seen as privileging the values of hegemonic boyhood.

Action

  Boys' need for activity was a consideration for many participants. In John's

Language Arts program, he generally privileges "doing" over "sitting", because, as he

sees it, with so much of the literacy curriculum:

> it always comes back to the kid sitting there with a piece of paper and a
> pencil and as soon as I see that, you know, it just strikes a chord with me,
> like how disappointing. Not only is it disappointing to teach that, I think it
> is to do it. Some of it's got to be done, I understand that, but if the lesson
> doesn't involve doing something, just as a male teacher, that's
> disappointing to me. So I see all that other stuff, the sit down paper pencil
> read and write, I see that as being something more in the female camp
> simply because boys seem more doers, physical doers, to me than girls.

Similarly, at the time of the interview, Dave was preparing to teach an action-oriented

photography unit:

> We're going to go with our cameras, and I'm going to teach them
> photography. Well, really not. Photography is just the ends to the means.
> Okay? What we're going to do is we're going to go out, and we're going
> to take pictures, but we're going to write about why, the way it worked,
> and…analyze what they did and find out what they did, if it was right or
> wrong, and why things worked, and why they didn't, and write little
> stories about it. But the actual picture taking, the boys will love doing it,
> they'll enjoy doing it. And it will be relevant to them.

In developing these kinds of activities, participants are responding to the generalization

that Cameron views as existing since "time immemorial": "sports and males… go

together, and paper and males don't." This notion is also reflected in participants'

boyhood stories, where "doing stuff" emerged as a central factor in the activities that did

engage them in Language Arts classrooms.

Masculinizing Literacy

  A second way that participants attempted to tailor literacy for boys was through

practices that masculinized literacy. These practices included using what participants

understood to be masculine content, reframing texts or tasks that might be viewed as feminine by boys, and interacting with boys in ways that demonstrated that the teacher appreciated their interests and writing styles.

Official Gender Neutrality

Participants' work to masculinize literacy takes place in a context that officially values gender neutral and gender balanced policies as a form of gender equity. Teachers sometimes felt that their content choices were constrained by curriculum, and by board and school pressure to use sanctioned texts. At times these texts were perceived as dull, in part because of the attention paid to ensuring that they are inclusive and non-offensive. George calls new anthologies "politically correct, the right thing to do, let's not use your head for a minute, type of thing." Ed says that textbook stories tend to be "substanceless… it just kind of ambles on, and it's an experience, but it's not a story. [Students] don't get excited or interested."

But participants did acknowledge the importance of gender balance in text and activity selection as an equity issue in schools. Even if they felt that specific books or kinds of texts would be highly appealing for either boys or girls, they generally chose literature based on its balanced appeal for both groups. Sometimes that meant missing out on literature that would be appealing for either girls or boys because the teacher felt he wouldn't be able to "sell it" to the other group. As Mark said,

> [A]ny kind of girl content stuff,…I don't even throw it out on the table. And vice versa, you know, when you get this, like boy adventure into, you know, into the forest, and the wilderness, and you know, so, I don't even throw that into the mix….I really try to pick books that…have pertinent themes for both.

Because of issues of fairness, gendered materials were generally less likely to be an evident part of assigned reading and activities. Although they view a non-gendered approach to literacy as necessary, they do view literature in a gendered way, in that they view certain texts and topics to be more appealing to boys or to girls and they try to balance selections carefully in their classrooms.

Providing Free Reading Literature and Selecting Texts

Participants' ideas about choosing books that boys like for free reading suggested that personal history could influence definitions of "what boys like." While Dan, as we saw in section 4.1, viewed sports as the basic medium for boys, Ed, who was not at all athletic as a boy, is not so sure. He feels that materials that convey events that he feels should be universally known, such as military history, are a better fit, and explains that:

> I think it's too, definitive, like, and you don't have too many people, like, some will like hockey and they don't give a rat's ass for basketball, or whatever, and it becomes well, I don't care about them... So, it's not as if, oh yeah, I might want to know about that, because I've heard about it so much. It's like, Second World War, and this battle, and that, well, we talk about it so much, we talk about Dieppe, and all these, and how you should know, and all this...so they all have that common ground.

The influence of personal history could also be more philosophical. Andrew's migration history as a child has made him more aware of boys' diversity. In explaining his championing of boys' diversity, he said that

> I chose to do a lot of things, you know, when I first came to Canada that were my thing I enjoyed, like reading and writing, rather than things I couldn't do, well, traditional boy things like volleyball, basketball, because I couldn't do them....If a kid wants to do something and it's their, that's their bag, let them do it.

This experience also influences how he thinks about choosing literature for boys:

> There are people who will say okay, we're going to read stories about sports, boys love sports. You know, but we've all got friends who are

> boys who don't like sports. If when I was a kid and you would have given me stories about basketball I wouldn't have even bothered looking at it. I just don't like basketball. I don't understand it and being your typical male instead of opening up my mind and exploring this, I'll walk away from it.

Andrew worries about the students "we may miss" through practices based on broad gender generalizations. The apparently straightforward notion of masculinizing literacy by offering more "boy-friendly" literature is nuanced, based on individual understandings of what boys like and what it means to articulate that certain topics are enjoyable to boys.

Reframing Content that Boys Might View as Non-Masculine

Another strategy used in masculinizing content was to reframe content or tasks that boys might reject as too feminine. Andrew provides an example of this practice in his descriptions of a version of *Romeo and Juliet* that he and his teaching partner put on last year. The teachers made sure that they "sold it to [the boys] on you're going to love this, lots of sword fights." Rehearsals were framed around "earning your sword":

> I remember we had one young guy by the name of [Joey] who was working really hard and he was the first boy to earn his plastic sword. And we made a big deal of it.... I brought him on stage and I kind of knighted him, you know how they tap each shoulder. And here you go for next practice you get to use a plastic sword rather than wave your imaginary hand in the air. And from then on that was the thing, am I working hard [Mr. Phillips]? Am I doing this [Mr. Phillips]? Can I earn my, what do I have to do to earn my sword?

Boys responded positively to this framing of the text, which also shaped their understanding of it. When they were asked to write letters from the Capulets to the Montagues, or vice versa:

> None of the boys wrote...a love letter to Juliet, that was one of the choices.... [B]asically, all of the boys, most of the boys was, "Dear Tybalt. I want to fight you....Bring your sword, and we'll have a swordfight." That kind of stuff.

Making the text accessible by framing it as a story about fighting and physical dominance certainly appealed to many of the boys and made the project run smoothly. They were engaged with text, with the performance of text, and with making personal meaning from text over a sustained period.

Sometimes tasks could also be reframed. Mark, for example, feels that journal writing is a problem for boys: "I don't think the masculine part of it buys into that." Instead of journal writing, he prefers to describe it as 'pertinent reflection': "looking at issues, and, pertinent things that are going on there today." This is important because "in terms of masculinity, just to write, [is] very difficult for the masculine part, but if you give, that reflective, that part, they're more apt to have a voice." Based on his belief that "boys are not interested in journal writing [which is not] masculine", Matt's "Friday News" project, a weekly journal in the form of a broadsheet newspaper article, is a similar attempt to reframe personal writing, this time through the use of journalistic role play.

Identification of what components of practice require reframing is often historically informed: what boys are willing to do is not always consistently interpreted. For example, the three participants whose boyhoods were most occupied with competitive sports also uniformly felt that boys perceived journals to be boring and irrelevant, and that, unless reframed, boys would not do them. On the other hand, the participants whose boyhoods were not as focused on competitive sports were typically among the most consistent proponents of journals, even though they were aware of some resistance to them from certain boys in their classes. In these cases, normalized values,

for example related to the value of introspection and the expression of feelings, may also play a role in the participants' understanding of the limits of what boys will do.

Gendered Curriculum Mediation at the Individual Level

Participants recounted intentional uses of their gendered resources most often at the levels of personal interaction and individual mediation of the curriculum for students. Sam provides an example of the spaces around the official curriculum into which gender tends to flow:

> Even when you're doing the readers, a lot of that's there and there's not a whole lot you can do with some of that stuff, you know. You can add your own perspectives and your own experiences and that to make it more interesting for the kids but, a lot of it too is knowing the kids and trying to use some of their experiences and some of the things that they see as important and putting that into the Language Arts.

Many participants described their use of personal stories to enliven the curriculum, and the examples they offered of this practice frequently demonstrated that their stories involved topics that many boys value. Dave provided an example of such a story (included in its entirety as Appendix I) which celebrates hegemonic boyhood through its themes of the camaraderie of boys, independent movement through the world, rival groups, external threats, and even a kind of humourous prank the boys pull on themselves. These kinds of stories that "relate to [the teacher's] life" may also at times mediate the curriculum in ways that are highly gendered.

In describing forms of feedback given to students through conferencing, participants indicated that the gender of the student often shapes the style and content of conversational feedback. Tim provides an example of the ways in which the content of response to writing can be shaped by a gendered understanding of students:

maybe I would respond differently to the boys' writing. Maybe just paying more attention to the things that I know they really like about their writing, whether it's different elements of the action or,...a sort of a chase scene....Like I guess I'd be a little bit more in tune on pointing that out and saying, you know, "I thought this was really cool, you know, that part that you had in there." And then maybe the opposite would be true then for the girls. Maybe even subconscious[ly] I'd be looking more to the things that I know that they are striving to put in their writing, maybe more about relationships with their girlfriends in their class. Or, you know, maybe more the feelings that they're, you know, going after in their stories, I'd probably be a little bit more in tune and saying something maybe a little bit more sensitive about, you know, that was just really wonderful about what this character said to that, you know.

Mark articulated differences in the style in which he responds to boys' and girls' styles of writing:

If I'm addressing the male student, I would joke about my own self, and – because I'm a guy, and would give them that related experience. Whereas I may not do it as, quite that way with the female student. And I would try to be more feminine, like—not feminine, but...I would try to be more educated. You know, like, compared to a boy. So [with a boy], I'd probably crack a joke about it....It all depends on the context, but, I'll listen, and...play around with it a little bit, and then... just kind of make it funny.

In addition to offering different feedback based on perceived differences in boys' and girls' writing preferences, some participants also stated that they offer more accommodating feedback to those boys who are only marginally engaged with literacy. An example of this accommodation came from Sam, who is very adamant that violence is not appropriate in his junior students' writing. However, when it comes to struggling writers, whom he identifies as most often male, he loosens those regulations, and willingly appreciates violent and media-influenced themes, commonly associated in research with boys' preferred writing styles (See Newkirk, 2002). He explains this as an attempt to help struggling boys to write, "in that very underlying simplified where I'm not getting anything, I will praise them for the crashes and the bangs, and the booms sort

of things." Tim describes the same practice in his own teaching, where he might say, for example, "Like a totally rad explosion at that part, you know, like that was great."

These feedback practices reflect the findings of a British study (OFSTED, 2003) of schools where gendered literacy achievement gaps were smallest in schools where teachers demonstrated, among other things, more explicit appreciation for boys' preferences for fast-paced, action-based content or for humorous texts. The study indicated that this appreciation needed to be accompanied by a gradual focus on pointing out to boys where improvement was needed. In addition, however, these kinds of gendered response patterns may also need to be carefully reflected upon, as they could re-inscribe notions about what boys like, what boys do, and what kinds of writing boys will or will not engage in.

Pushing

As in Dan's narratives of the practices that help unengaged boys in his classroom to succeed, pushing was a practice generally associated with boys in the data, because participants identified boys as more likely to avoid or resist school work. John's narrative further indicates that "pushing" could be more typically used with boys because of distinctive ways of interacting with boys and girls. He says he would "say things to [boys] like, 'Come on. Come on, you could do that.' I might not say that to a girl. I might be more encouraging in probably a more overt positive way." Like Dan, Dave asserts that boys need to be pushed to work at literacy:

> I think boys respect authority, and I think of some of the hoods I went to school with – I mean, these were hoods. Guys were bikers, and everything else. But you know? They all know how to read and write….Because if they didn't, they got strapped. Today what we do is we allow kids to fail. We say to kids, uh, well, if you don't have it done, you'll get zero. Zero. Are you kidding me? I'll trade a zero for not doing homework. Uh, oh, you'll get suspended. Really? Three days at

home, watching TV? Party on. So we allow these kids to go through school, not getting skills....And it's unfortunate, because they're too young to make that decision that's so important in their life.

Participants harboured different notions of the expected outcomes of pushing. Dave sees pushing as a necessity for many boys, but he does not feel that pushing would lead to them learning to like it, just to learn that they had to do it. He connected this attitude to his memories of his own boyhood where he feels, "if the strap wasn't out there, if [doing work] was optional...I don't know if it, just the whole idea of me wanting to achieve would have been there – would have been enough for me." Cameron, on the other hand, viewed pushing more as a component of repositioning boys, and felt that, with a few exceptions, boys could and would become engaged with literacy through their sense of accomplishment. Such distinctions are in line with their historical relationships to literacy, as well, in which Cameron generally remembers childhood literacy positively, while Dave did not.

Participants who propounded the necessity of pushing boys did not practice it in isolation from the range of other practices described here, and very often saw pushing as part of having close bonds with students. As Ed said, he spends a lot of time with the students who need pushing:

> I spend a lot of time with kids. Some a lot more than others. My joke with some of them was that, you know, well, you think we should get married? Cause, we're spending more time together than most married couples do....[T]he kids know that, and they appreciate that. And I have kids that come in, they say, I spent a lot of time with you, sir. And I say, it was fun, wasn't it?

For many participants, the issue appears to be one of balancing pleasure with pushing. As Andrew said, "It's that balance that you have to walk between...getting them to actually do the work and not making, going too far and making them hate reading, hate

writing." These narratives strongly echo Dan's notion that strong bonds of loyalty to a

man who holds high expectations are an important component of helping unengaged

boys.

Connecting Literacy to Employment and Professionalism

Another way that teachers engaged in practices that tailored literacy for boys was

through the use of discourses of employment and professionalism in the classroom. Many

participants' practices revealed attempts to connect literacy with work-related activities

and the "work world" as a way of connecting literacy with boys' real-world aspirations.

These strategies are common in the narratives of participants for whom final, serious

engagement with literacy learning often occurred when the combined pressures of

university requirements and impending permanent entry into the workforce began to

demonstrate the value of literacy more forcefully. According to Smith and Wilhelm

(2002), boys in their study generally saw school as a "means to an end, a credentialing

agency that would allow them to do the real, meaningful and healthy work they saw for

themselves in the future." They rejected "schoolish" forms of literacy "because of its

very schoolishness…its separation from immediate uses and functions, [and] its emphasis

on knowledge that is not valued outside of school" (p. 84). This perspective, clearly

articulated by many participants' literacy histories, serves as a foundation for this aspect

of their work with boys.

Participants used literacy tasks related to many careers in their teaching practice,

including tasks that would be undertaken by sportscasters, journalists, editors, illustrators,

weather reporters, cartoonists, sports commentators, doctors, salespeople, contractors,

waiters, and police officers. Andrew, for example, created a unit around the publishing

industry. By offering students a structure with defined steps, Andrew tried to help his

primary students become more engaged with the writing process:

> And I tried to show our kids, how difficult it is to actually get finished
> product, because, you know, a lot of times, it's they don't see the labour or
> they think, okay, you know, I've wrote it once, it should be done. It must
> be, I thought, it must be frustrating to look at these books, and say, wow!
> Guys are whipping out this stuff, no problem.

Students drafted a story, and then met with their editors (grade eights) to work on them.

> Now you've got a rough draft of your story with a lot of corrections on it.
> Write me up a good copy, please. So they wrote up a good copy, we put
> them in a big envelope, we made a big production out of it, because that's
> important for [primary students]....I licked the envelope and I sealed it,
> and I said, it's gotta be in here by 3:00 so we can get it to the editors.
> Hand delivered it down to the grade eight room....[A] typed version came
> back from the grade eights a week later.

Later they met with their illustrators:

> So we met with the grade six class....[Class], tell the grade 6 what you
> want on this page. So if the paragraph says once there was a boy named
> Johnny and he went to the store, think of what you want on that picture....
> So we did that. So then, we got the rough draft back from the grade sixes.
> [Class,] put a checkmark in the corner if you're happy with it.

The rehearsal of the writing profession through this industry model, complete with the

accoutrements of deadlines, envelopes, and interdepartmental meetings was very

powerful for students. Andrew said that this project was effective because " it was such a

definite, task oriented process" with clearly defined jobs, rather than "this very, you

know, let's peer edit, well, am I done the editing process now?" It was effective because

"it was timelines, and, structures and dates."

Teachers connected literacy with the world of work more explicitly, as well,

particularly in the older grades. Mark, for example, is clear about the connections

between literacy and employment "out in the real world." When students claim that

reading is stupid,

> Right away, I'm, well, what do you mean, it's stupid? ...You're gonna go
> out in the real world, and how are you going to be able to communicate
> with people, if you're unable to read....You have to communicate, and
> you have to work with people So, right away, that's my response. And,
> ...they'll say, Ah, I'm just gonna go workin'. I say, yeah, well, you know
> what? You have to do that there. You know? You need to function. You
> need to communicate. I said, people that are getting hired at the Big Three
> right now? They're all... university education. You know? So, you know,
> you try to – again, I'm a real life connection, so I really try to bring that
> real life situation in, you know.

As George says, having friends working in various professions come to visit, or taking

students to industrial sites and post-secondary institutions, shows students "what is out

there. 'Cause I wanted them to see, you know, that there is life after high school."

Creating a Comfort Zone for Literacy

In examining practices related to tailoring school to meet the needs of boys in

section 4.1, I also considered some men's work to create safe, secure spaces for boys who

felt themselves to occupy the margins of boy life in schools. In Tim's narrative (section

4.1), close connections with a man who provided comfort zones to boys played an

important role in helping some boys to feel they fit in. In literacy work, teachers engaged

in similar practices, such as making literacy less threatening, and ensuring that boys feel

attended to. In contrast to Tim's work with boys at the margins in schools, though,

because of their historical experiences of literacy, many participants considered most

boys to be at the margins when it came to literacy, so the "comfort zones" they offered

were constituted along more general lines.

Fear of looking bad or being made fun of recurs in men's theories of what causes boys to resist certain literacy practices. Sam, for example, said that public speaking is a struggle for boys in his classroom because

> you know their friends might laugh at them, or they're so worried about what their friends are going to think, or say, maybe at recess time, or whatever. There's a lot of influence, a lot of pressure there.... I guess they're afraid of making mistakes in front of their peers. They don't want to look, quote, dumb, that sort of a thing.

Drawing on his own experiences of fear in Language Arts as a student, Dan made explicit the connection between his goal for students to enjoy reading and writing and their fear of failure: "They need to learn to enjoy reading and writing and do it on their own, outside, not just in school and on their own. But be able to, and not be afraid of it. Like I was afraid of it when I was a kid." Dave noted that really able students could sometimes be discouraging for students, because "some of them are so strong, some kids give up really easily. I could never do what he's doing. So they give up."

For many participants, ensuring that literacy activities are not threatening means organizing them into small, manageable steps. Many participants also identified groupwork as helpful in this regard: as Mark said, small groups are less threatening because "you can fly under the radar if you need to." Other participants tended to construct literacy as a place where boys need praise and support to succeed. Andrew, for example, felt that while confrontational pushing may work in sports environments with boys, "in academics, it just doesn't work that way. That's when they shut off, that's when they push away. But if you figuratively put the arm around their shoulders and guide them, it works a lot better." Participants often made contradictory statements about the

need for comfort zones and the need for pushing. It is possible that participants

understand the need for pushing and protection in highly contextualized ways.

Another component of practices to create comfort zones is participants' work to

protect boys whose tastes differ from the male norm from teasing or harassment.

Andrew's narratives offer the most pronounced examples of this kind of consciousness.

He said that:

> [I]f somebody gets teased in the class for their choice...of literature, or
> their story they've wrote...you have that advantage of being the teacher,
> of seeing and knowing everything. I always make sure I pipe in there
> before it spreads, wow. I really like that book. And...because I've read
> everything in my classroom, I have the ability to say, Oh...there's a great
> part coming up on this next page....And then when this next part comes
> up, I say, that's the part I was telling you about, this is a super book. And
> then, hopefully, if the boys in the class are saying, well, you know what,
> it's okay with him, maybe....

Like Tim's work to offer boys who are less interested in sports legitimized activities of a

comparable nature, Andrew's work here attempts to legitimize the tastes and choices of

all boys in his class.

Valuing Boys' Stories

A second way that participants provide a comfort zone for boys in literacy is

through listening to their stories. Talking with boys about "guy stuff" is a part of all the

participants' day to day practice. Boys are likely to come to them or to other male

teachers if they want to talk, rather than to female teachers. George relates this in part to

the ways in which female teachers respond to boys' talk and topics:

> where boys tend to be the macho, male type of thing. And that's frowned
> upon by a lot of women teachers. Like, you know, these guys that talk
> about sports things over the weekend, you know, like, 'Michigan State,
> Michigan State game on the weekend,' they'll be like, [gravely male
> voice] 'Oh, yeah...' You know, [the female teachers are] rolling their
> eyes, and they're walking away, and there's sort of a connection that [the]

guys will have, and the girls won't and they'll say things, and say, you know, typical guy thing.

Although this at first appears to be simply an extension of meeting boys' social needs, these practices may have important, though perhaps unintended, consequences in literacy classrooms. The kinds of expert response that a man might make to boys' stories might foster in a boy a greater willingness to talk about his experiences. The ways that boys' and girls' stories and talk are valued in and out of classroom contexts informs their sense of whether or not their stories are worth telling, a premise frequently articulated in literature on writing pedagogy (see for example, Atwell (1988), Calkins (1994) and Graves (1983)). Students who experience teachers dismissing their interests in the hallway might resist a sudden interest in students' stories in the classroom, might read that as insincere and manipulative. These are possibilities worth noting here, though requiring further research of a different nature.

Helping Boys to Re-Envision Themselves in Literacy Classrooms

The third pattern found in participants' stories of their work involved their efforts, as Alloway et al. (2002) put it, to extend boys' repertoires for representing themselves and for relating to others in the school setting, represented through Matt and Cameron's narratives in section 4.2. Based on their personal histories, many participants attempted to help boys to develop this broader repertoire, articulated in their narratives through the notion of a "balanced masculinity." Comparable aims also inform their literacy practices.

Continuous Growth: Managing Comparison in the Language Arts Classroom

As examined in section 4.3, as children, participants experienced competition and comparison in Language Arts in ways that suggested to some of them that they were not really successful, or even eligible, participants in the Language Arts classroom. Some

experienced competition with other boys, while others felt that their work was unfavourably compared with girls' work. Even participants who were successful in Language Arts sometimes felt that such competition singled them out in ways that were not entirely comfortable. Participants' literacy practices often avoided competition and comparison in ways comparable to Matt and Cameron, detailed in section 4.2, and reflected their awareness of the problems of comparison and competition in boys' self-identification as non-literate. As John said, "real simple example, the "I am finished." Shouting it out really loud. And doing that as a way to show off...even demeaning some of the kids that are struggling with the concept. I don't like that at all." A detailed examination of the strategy of continuous growth used in literacy, in which boys are encouraged to focus on their personal development rather than peer comparison, and of "unengraining", a way of offering students a new start based on trust and willingness to value growth, is provided in section 4.2.

Modeling

As demonstrated in Matt and Cameron's narratives (section 4.2), modelling the crossing of boundaries plays a central role in participants' understanding of their work to increase the flexibility of boys' boundaries. In participants' literacy work, this involves modeling reading and writing. Mark says that when it comes to reading and writing, "it's important, especially as a male teacher, to model. And know that it's okay, [if] Mr. [Corbett] is doing it." This practice is important so that literacy "has value, rather than, okay, here it is, and, okay, yeah, do it. And if you're modeling, I think [boys are] definitely more apt to buy in, and buy in quicker than if, you know, than they would if you didn't."

For some participants, modelling pleasurable engagement with literacy is more performance than reality, and it is possible that this may affect how modelling occurs and is received. Tim, who has always loved to read, says that

> that's what makes me believe, because I'm a male, and because then the boys see me reading and see me get very passionate about reading. And if I…get excited about a poem that we're reading and like, look at what this author is saying and…they're talking about, whatever. Like I think that really does affect the boys when they see, like "Wow, like, you know, my teacher, he's doing it so it must be cool because he's doing it." So, that's why I think having a good relationship with the kids is important too. Because when it comes to that, if they like me, they know that, I know that they're going to like the things that I like too.

The genuine enthusiasm he displays here is qualitatively different Mark's more consciously chosen performance of reading for boys.

Perhaps the effects of modelling enjoyment of literature as a man are more target specific. Cameron, whose "strengths from [his] own personal history [were] reading, writing, and speaking" and who feels that literacy "permeates every part of [his] program" may gradually demonstrate to boys that literacy and being male are completely compatible. On the other hand, Dan's modelling focuses on boys who identify with him as a man for whom literacy has been a struggle: "I try and be as open and honest with the kids as possible. They…know that I'm not the best English teacher in the world and I tell them, we're doing this together. You know, let's do this together." Each of these can be a powerful transformative tool communicating to specific students. While modelling is always intended to offer boys a bridge into literacy, its performance is highly idiosyncratic, dependent on perception of audience and personal history.

A specific and unusual instance of modelling greater flexibility in self-representation emerged from Ed's narratives. Ed often tells fictional accounts of his

personal history, weaving an eccentric web of fictive resources with which students

engage on a number of levels. An example of these stories (included in full in Appendix

J) recounts his explanation of a photograph of a man lying on a picnic table apparently

asleep that was displayed in his classroom for years. Although it is actually a picture of

him, asleep on a camping trip, he claims that it is a picture of his "dead dad" who lay

down for a nap one day at a park while the family went for a hike. When they returned,

according to the story, Dad was "stone cold" and they just left him there. In another

recurring story, Ed claims that he lives at the YMCA, and keeps his clothes in his

expensive car, a story that he and a friend substantiated one year with video footage of

his "departure" from the YMCA one morning.

This practice has important literacy implications. For example, instead of

focusing students on the idea of personal reflection and the examination of inner truths,

Ed's journal practices begin from his network of fabricated personal stories:

> My responses all, obviously were prompts....I'd talk about other stupid
> things you know, all about my fishing on tuna boats, and what I did you
> know, and I live at the Y, and all this stuff. So, the legend kind of grew
> out of these....And I said, now, remember, this book is just between you
> and me. So, whatever I say in it, I don't want you to [tell anybody. Of]
> course, ...you know damn well they couldn't wait.

This extended technique of story telling and identity fabrication offers students more

ways of positioning themselves in responding to the self-expressive requirements of the

journal genre, as well as an option for guarding their privacy without avoiding literate

activity, if they choose to use it. As Newkirk (2002) argues, in children's writing, "Real-

life experience seemed to [students] not so much something to represent as it was

something to transcend. Fiction allowed them to claim power and privileges they could

never claim in real life" (p. 88). Ed's storytelling articulates and models this sometimes

transgressive power of the story as "a free utopian space where [students] could act out,

claiming power or skill that they didn't possess 'in real life'" (Newkirk, 2002, p. 88).

Independence, Autonomy and Reality in Literacy Classrooms

As in their own histories, many participants identified greater choice of topic and

activity as an important strategy in working with boys. Sam, for whom having more

choice was an important factor in his university level engagement with literacy, said,

"[K]ids having choices on the material they read is a plus. I think it's a very positive

thing. I never had, I don't recall having a choice of what I read in school, be it

elementary or high school." It is especially important for boys who are struggling with

Language Arts:

> For those boys, I wouldn't have them write about a specific topic, if the
> rest of the class was doing that, I would just come up to them, and just say
> you just write about your weekend sort of a thing, or you just write about,
> you know.... [T]hey could kinda write about what they wanted to.

Choice was sometimes seen as a component of giving students more

independence to manage their own work, as in John's centre-based program where "they

loved that independence. What they felt was independence, right? Where they could

come in just, okay, I'm off. I don't have to say anything to Mr. [Parker], I just go do it."

Dan explicitly connected the issue of choice with the idea that boys want autonomy and

resist being told what to do because they "don't want to write about what the teacher's

interested in or what the Board wants them to write about. They want to write about their

own things." Andrew emphasized the importance of explicitly demonstrating to students

that they could also express negative opinions in class as an aspect of encouraging their

development of independence: "It's important to know that you're entitled to have your

own opinion, and you can express it freely without someone jumping all over you." This

emphasis on freedom of expression reflects a positive difference he experienced between

his literacy classes in his country of origin and in Canada.

Participants' literacy practices also reflected the notion that children, especially,

feel patronized and infantilized by excessive coddling. John's narratives provided the

clearest depiction of this sense of children's attitudes, because, as he said:

> they don't want things mollycoddled or wrapped up or fantasized
> [because] it forces kids to start playing a role...of being this passive,
> accepting listener. It keeps them in that kid stage. I don't think it provokes
> them to develop or mature or grow beyond where they're at.... Instead of
> saying, let's talk about reality here.

This sentiment was often reflected in participants' views around using more adult

styles of literature with students. Ed, for example, said, "kids are more advanced than

what the adults who are responsible for [them] are giving them credit for." He feels that

students' lack of engagement with literacy activities is often connected to the childishness

of the material they are asked to read and work with:

> You take a look what they're – in media – what they are showing. And
> then you're asking them to read a little book about a dog and a cat, in a
> grade eight classroom. It just doesn't go. You know? And that's what I
> mean. They're more worldly, you know, and they're aware. Let's face it.
> A lot of my kids were already sexually active, you know? ...And here
> you're asking about little namby-pamby things that kids in grade seven or
> eight. That's not reality to them.

Many participants tended to view children's taste as more complex and mature, arguing

that they are ready for more "reality" than schools give them credit for. They

consequently offered students access to more adult literature, used more adult choices of

songs and music with students, and sought out books that had a more mature look, even if

the content was comparable to other books. In terms of participants' historical practices,

positioning students as more adult and having more agency as readers and writers

connects with the participants' stories of literacy engagement as occurring at the threshold of adulthood. For some participants, their practices in recommending books also echo their own collegial relations with the male mentors who drew them into reading as boys.

These practices have the potential to offer boys alternative subject positions and relations with teachers, ones that signal a shift away from childhood maternal relations. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) identify this pattern of maternal interactions as a problematic aspect of literacy for boys. As one of the participants in that study stated, the practices of literacy in the early years do not "enhance a child's sense of masculinity. It is just like being good for Mummy" (p. 206). By offering an alternative pattern of relationships through this discourse of pragmatic realism, the participants are attempting to create environments where students can see themselves as literate without having to see themselves as passively submitting or as dependent children. As Gilbert and Gilbert note "taking up an acceptable schoolboy position requires a balancing act of considerable skill, for the world of the classroom is not the world of the playground and of boys' cultures" (p. 207). The alternative discourse described by these male teachers with students may offer some boys greater options in finding this balance.

Critical Engagement

Like Cameron, several participants actively and explicitly worked with students to engage with stereotypes, with structures of dominance in schools, and with the cultural forces that inform their ways of being male. However, the data showed very little emphasis on direct discussion of the issue of how gender informs reading and writing practices, or on providing students with the tools to question the implications of the

gender boundaries that they conform to in literacy. Beyond conversations around how not

reading might affect one's job prospects or enjoyment, the kinds of critical literacy tools

suggested by Davies (1997) were applied more in other areas than in literacy. Andrew,

for example, used film and popular culture images in helping students to interrogate their

notions of scientists in science classes:

> First science class of the year, I say boys and girls close your eyes and put
> your head down on your desk. Now in your mind think of a scientist.
> When you've got a picture of a scientist raise your hand, and I wait till all
> of the hands are up. I say okay, now, for your scientist is it a boy or a girl?
> 99 percent of them it's a male. Is your scientist young or old? 99 percent
> of them he's old. Does he have white crazy frizzy hair? Yep....And that's
> the image most of us have. Especially, you know, TV perpetuates this sort
> of thing. Whenever you see a doctor on TV they, an elderly man... white
> hair, glasses and a lab coat. This is the people we so called trust. Because
> it's an elderly white male. So then we start talking about you know well,
> you could be Jane Goodall working in the middle of Africa working with
> apes, you can be working under water, and I say you can even be kid and
> be a scientist.

Explicit work around gender boundaries tended to focus more on the physical, as in Phys.

Ed. class or at times, as above, on areas where girls have historically been excluded.

Men's work to help boys to re-position themselves around literacy tended to focus more

on practices that fostered an environment more conducive to change and on offering boys

a wider range of possible ways of being in literacy classrooms, rather than on examining

the social factors that shape boys' options and choices. A small number of participants

did engage with the issue of making boys more conscious of the constructs of masculinity

that shape their options, but in more general ways.

Teachers Who Struggle with Literacy

Teachers who continue to struggle with literacy as adults represent a unique

subgroup, in that they also have to manage the issue of teaching something that they

either do not like, or do not feel they are good at. Participants in this situation sometimes identified teaching Language Arts as a source of anxiety, or, at least, viewed it as having been a source of anxiety for them early in their teaching careers. While considering potential careers, Mark, for example, discounted the possibility of ever becoming a teacher for a number of years. He thought, "Yeah, I should go be a teacher. But I always questioned that, my weakness in the languages. How could I be a teacher with that weakness?" Matt is very conscious of the issue of his writing skills as a teacher and is particularly concerned with the issue of errors in messages going home to parents. He often looks up spellings in his classroom, both as modelling and because he needs to

Participants also identified a lack of knowledge of Language Arts as a disadvantage in evaluating students' work. One participant, for example, limits the amount of writing his students do in part because of his slow reading rate, which makes marking written assignments arduous. By contrast, Cameron, who is a strong reader and writer, described in some detail the pleasure he takes in reading students' work and the detailed responses his fluent writing style enables him to produce. John worries about the quality of his responses and whether he has a subtle enough grasp of what constitutes good writing to help his students.

Participants' lack of memory of Language Arts classes is also a factor in their planning, particularly in the early years of their careers. For John, who has this lack of memory of Language Arts even though he is quite confident of his language skills, "the absence of, you know, a memory of some good early literacy, you know, mak[es] it difficult for me to even develop a program and [I] really hav[e] to dig deep to find something on that. There's just nothing there, you know, there's a void there." He feels

that in his first year of teaching, he played it safe, focusing more heavily on basic grammatical concepts because he was uncertain about how to evaluate and develop students' writing. Participants emphasized the important role that mentors played in their early years as Language Arts teachers, and their heavy reliance on others' programs at that time because of their lack of confidence and knowledge in Language Arts.

But the experience of struggling with literacy can also have positive benefits in teaching. Participants viewed knowledge of struggle as an analytical tool in understanding what students are experiencing, and also in terms of how to respond to students' problems. Their personal experiences of struggling are part of how they understand what children experience and how they parse children's resistance to specific practices. Dan, for example, does not view children's reluctance to read aloud as resistance, because he was "exactly the same way....No problem. Move on." When asked whether being a man influenced how he helps boys who are having trouble with Language Arts, Matt replied:

> I don't think, necessarily, just a man, but because I had problems with it,
> so, you can understand it. I've had teachers in the past that would explain
> something, and you know, "I don't get that." And she'll go, "Why don't
> you get it?" And you're like well, I don't get it. And if they didn't have a
> problem – I've seen some people who are just so good at something, they
> never had a problem with it, they don't understand why you're having a
> problem. So, I've had a few problems with it, so... and similar problems
> to what they're having, so I can help them with the problem.

Like Matt, Dave feels that unsuccessful schooling can be an important source of expertise for teachers, one that many teachers today do not have:

> If you look at it, what's the requirement to be in teachers' college? Have
> an A average, okay? So, you know these kids going through school, who
> have never, ever experienced a problem in school. The only problem they
> ever experienced in school is something they're read about in a book. So
> they don't have empathy for kids who have it, have a difficulty, so they

can't sit down and say, geez, I remember when I had this problem....And I look at some of the most effective teachers I've ever worked for – worked with – and they are people who struggled in school.

Teachers also used personal stories of struggle as a resource in convincing boys that with effort they could be successful at literacy. Dan, for example, will tell students "probably once a week,...how important it is to read, and my story about...when my brain took off from reading." He tells stories that demonstrate to students that it is not too late to change, to work harder, or to try again:

> I would read out loud and we would do stories and other books and stuff. And so, every single year, I would get a boy or two that couldn't read and I would sit down and say, "Listen, you hear me reading? I don't read that bad, eh?" And they were like, no sir, you're really good." And I'll say, "Well, I was worse than you when I was your age. So, get some reading going or something, you know, read on your own."

Mark uses his personal history to underline how important it is to start now, and not wait till later:

> I've told my students that...I was never a good writer, and I had to work at it, and...now I'm at the point where I can write and I understand writing. I can teach it to you. I don't have, necessarily a style, and I'm not the greatest writer, but you know what? If you get it to a point where you can get that sound structure, you can then start to develop your own voice and your own style...but you have to get to that point. Yeah, and see, I'm never gonna develop it, 'cause I'm older, and I learned older. Whereas you're younger, and you can develop that poise and style, and be prepared when you get to where I am.

Although a lack of skills in Language Arts could be a disadvantage in terms of the kinds of options a teacher may have for planning and responding to work, teachers also employed their lived struggles with literacy as a tool in attempting to help boys to see that it is possible to reposition themselves with regard to literacy.

Discussion

This section has examined the ways in which participants' strategies in working with boys in literacy classrooms are informed by and draw on their own histories as boys and men in schools. While participants could not be said to be explicitly teaching to boys or, necessarily, privileging boys' needs, in many ways their practices reflect this unpronounced focus on what they understand to be typical of boys in schools. In examining teachers' narratives of their literacy pedagogy, I employed the more general patterns of practice delineated in earlier sections of the analysis. First, the ways in which participants tailored classrooms to suit what they perceived to be boys' needs, and second, the ways in which participants attempted to broaden the range of ways that boys could define themselves and the kinds of practices boys would engage with in the classroom.

Participants' practices often tended to emerge from discourses typically associated with valued ways of being male in mainstream society, such as pragmatic realism, work and credentialing as priorities in education, high levels of action, and limited engagement with emotional response. Andrew's reframed *Romeo and Juliet* provides a clear example of the process through which men's understanding of what boys will accept can reposition texts and activities. It also points to an underlying theme of achievement orientation, where, in this case, productive literacy practices literally translated into boys earning their swords. However, masculinizing practices were also highly idiosyncratic, based on the teacher's understanding of what boys like as well as, in some cases, concerns regarding the problem of applying monolithic notions of what boys like.

Tailoring literacy to suit boys did not always mean doing more boy things. It also meant respecting boys' tentativeness when it came to literacy practices, and creating bridges for them to enter into literacy. Creating these bridges might involve minimizing the cost and threat of failure, making expectations and tasks very clear, or valuing boys' stories. These practices often required relationships of trust that communicated insight and understanding of boys while still demonstrating to boys that many legitimate alternatives were available to them. Participants' positioning as males in the classroom, and the kinds of gendered credibility discussed in section 4.1, play a role in how teachers build and legitimize these kinds of relationships.

While the teachers reported that these practices have been highly effective in engaging boys in their classrooms, further reflection on these practices raises a number of questions. For example, in enacting a more active curriculum and reframing practices so that they are less likely to be resisted by boys, teachers can run the risk that certain components of literacy, such as expressing emotion, may become less prominent. "Doing stuff" with kids could be privileged over "thinking stuff" or "feeling stuff." Texts can be mediated in masculine ways to increase boys' engagement with them, but this may also affect the way they understand the text, and reposition them for the one instance without really opening up their possible engagement with the more standard reading of that text. Andrew's students' understanding of *Romeo and Juliet* as a play about sword fighting offers considerable food for thought about standard readings of texts and their legitimacy.

Also, practices intended to demonstrate appreciation for boys' interests might simultaneously exclude some boys and girls who do not share those interests. Like Tim's

stories of how, to his disappointment, his comfort zones for boys generally remain all-male, a male teacher with an emphasis on listening to boys' stories might potentially exclude girls and some boys, a premise supported by Skelton's (2001) work on how football talk shaped patterns of practice in an English elementary school. Teachers' practices in this area are very complex, and tailoring classroom environments to meet boys' needs is not an all or nothing proposition: the issue of balance requires personal and ongoing reflection.

The practices participants engaged in also echoed those identified by other studies of boys' literacy in which teachers attempted to expand the repertoire of subject positions boys feel comfortable taking up in Language Arts classrooms (See, for example, OFSTED (2003) and Alloway et al. (2002)). They worked to help boys to develop a wider possible pattern of social relations in school by offering more choice, championing ownership, independence and accountability, and forming what they viewed as more equal relationships with boys. And finally, they worked at creating opportunities for boys to see themselves as successful language learners, and for boys who do not see themselves in this way to re-envision themselves through new practices and opportunities. These practices very often reflected their personal sense of the importance of developing a more balanced ideal of masculinity.

Participants' historical and current experiences of literacy influenced the distinctive ways in which they took up the strategies described in this chapter. For example, modelling literacy as a male was uniformly identified as an important strategy in working with boys. However, participants' narratives reflected differences in who was targeted through modelling (that is, who is intended to see that the teacher as "like"

them), what specifically is modelled (for example, men reading, men responding to the emotional content of texts, men reading "girl books," men struggling but persisting with reading), and the level of complexity and intensity involved in modelling. These differences were influenced by the participant's personal narrative of literacy engagement, his abilities, and his idea of how literacy is important and why.

Literacy history and lived experience as a boy also informed participants' understandings of the barriers of the curriculum and how to overcome them. In the most elemental fashion, participants often 'borrowed' what worked for them as boys, importing these activities and strategies directly into their own practice. These memories of what was effective for them are dependent on their lived histories, the subject positions they occupied in school, in boys' social networks, and in the larger community. Thus, these factors continue to influence their own practices today. For example, participants whose boyhoods reflected the greatest levels of resistance to literacy and the highest levels of engagement with sports were often more likely to identify specific practices such as journals as not workable for boys, while other participants viewed this as an area of resistance that could be worked upon. The effect and purpose of certain strategies, like pushing, could be similarly informed by lived experience.

Men who experienced more success with literacy as boys often more explicitly addressed the diversity in boys' approaches and relationships with literacy, rather than viewing a range of practices as simply unappealing to all boys. Their boyhood experiences tended to demonstrate that these skills differentiated them from other boys, resulting, still, in not reading and writing as the default position, but with a more explicit caveat that this default position did not represent the experiences of all boys. On the other

hand, men who struggled with literacy identified these experiences of struggle as an

important way of understanding learners who are not successful with literacy. In both of

these cases, boyhood experiences in the literacy classroom shape distinctive but

important insights into the needs of specific groups of boys in the work of these teachers.

In the next chapter, I outline the conclusions and implications arising from this study.

Endnotes

[1]This emphasis in the data on examples drawn from girls' sexuality, rather than boys', is difficult to parse, and very little in research investigates the constraints upon discourses of the body as they emerge in educational settings and in teachers' talk. Diorio and Munro (2000) identify major differences in the ways that menstruation and wet dreams are presented in educational settings, so that the topic of menstruation is both publicly sanctioned and associated with maintaining girls and girls' bodies as a site of legitimized social limitation. Epstein & Johnson (1998) and Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) argue that explicit school discourses on sexuality emphasize scientific and reproductive, rather than erotic, aspects of sexual difference. Perhaps references to menstruation, rather than erections or masturbation, as examples of biological experience here are related to what constitutes legitimized sexual discourses in schools. In the talk of these male teachers, the male body remains more or less invisible, while the female body occupies a more marked sexual position.

[2] Age could also play a role in exacerbating such limitations, in that older participants tended to be more critical of the effects of video games and technology on boys' development, while younger participants were more likely to have engaged with these technologies themselves, though still in quite critical ways.

[3] Intersections of race and gender were not the main focus of this study, and participant selection did not reflect a range of ethnicities. The method used in recruiting participants (a network of experts) resulted in a homogeneous participant pool. However, the data clearly indicated that ethnicity did play a role in the ways in which male behaviour was understood by participants, as indicated by this passage.

[4] It is worth noting that most of the teachers from working class backgrounds in this study were university athletes: this may reflect the difficulty of reaching university by other means for young working class men. As Willis (1981), Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Connell (2000) argue, the alternatives for working class boys in secondary schools can be stark. While a limited number of working class boys, in Willis' study described as "earoles', might use school as a pathway to careers, many of them experience school as authoritarian, arbitrary, and clearly intended as a sorting ground for class reproduction, resulting in the production of protest masculinities, as outlined in Chapter 2. As Connell writes, for many of these boys "the authority of the school becomes the antagonist against which one's masculinity is cut" (p. 135). Given the perceived alternatives, sports involvement offers at least the possibility of post-secondary education, as well as membership and the practice of a discipline that maintains one's connection to schools and teachers, albeit in a range of problematic ways (Messner, 1992)

[5] *Trailer Park Boys* is a Canadian situation comedy about a group of young men in a "low-rent, blue collar district on the outskirts of …Halifax" (BBC America, 2006). This show's main characters are "Ricky… and Julian…two guys whose lives were shaped by growing up in the Trailer Park. They might love fast cars, talking dirty and living at the edge of the law, but no matter how much trouble they get in, or how isolated or ostracized they become, they never stop trying to do the right thing." (BBC America, 2006).

[6] I did not ask participants about sexual orientation. However, some participants did share stories about boys in their classrooms that they believed to be homosexual. For more comprehensive analysis and reflection on issues of homosexuality and heteronomativity in schools, please see Martino (2000; 2006) and Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003).

[7] Austen, J. (1813/1980). *Pride and prejudice.* (J. Kinsley, Ed.), Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

[8] The seven *Chronicles of Narnia* (in reading order) were first published in Great Britain as follows:
Lewis, C.S. (1955). *The magician's nephew.* London: The Bodley Head.
Lewis, C.S. (1950). *The lion, the witch and the wardrobe.* London: Geoffrey Bles.
Lewis, C.S. (1954) *The horse and his boy.* London: Geoffrey Bles.
Lewis, C.S. (1951). *Prince Caspian.* London: Geoffrey Bles.
Lewis, C.S. (1952). *The voyage of the Dawn Treader.* London: Geoffrey Bles.
Lewis, C.S. (1953) *The silver chair.* London: Geoffrey Bles.
Lewis, C.S. (1956). *The last battle.* London: The Bodley Head.

[9] *The Hardy Boys* is a popular series of children's books dating back to 1927, written under the pen name Franklin Dixon. It recounts the sleuthing adventures of two brothers.

[10] Lucas, G. (Director) (1977). *Star Wars.* USA: Twentieth Century Fox.

[11] Melville, H. (1851/1998). *Moby Dick, or the whale.* New York: Penguin.

[12] Peck, R. (1972). *A day no pigs would die.* New York: Random House

[13] Cherry, L. (1990). *The great kapok tree.* San Diego: Harcourt.

[14] Geisel, T. (Dr. Seuss) (1971). *The Lorax.* New York: Random House.

[15] McClintock, M. (1959). *Stop that ball!* New York: Random House.

[16] Poltarnees, W. (1994). *Martin and Tommy.* New York: Green Tiger Press.

[17] *Mad Magazine* is an American comedy magazine satirizing popular culture.

[18] Adams, D. (1979). *The hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy.* New York: Random House.

[19] Montgomery, L.M. (1935/1983). *Anne of Green Gables.* New York: Grosset & Dunlap.

[20] Michener, J. (1959) *Hawaii.* New York: Random House.

[21] The *Science Research Associates (SRA) Reading Laboratory Kits* were first published in 1957. These independent leveled reading and reading comprehension activities were widely used in elementary schools in the 1960's and 1970's. (SRA Online. Retrieved July 6, 2006 from www.sraonline.com/index.php/home/globalnav/aboutSRA/historyofsra/937

[22] Morrow, S. (1980). *The official I hate cats book.* Austin (TX): Holt, Rinehart & Winston. AC/DC is the Australian hard rock band who produced the album *Back in Black*.

[23] Tolkien, J.R.R. (1966). *The hobbit, or, there and back again.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

[24] Salinger, J.D. (1951) *The catcher in the rye.* Boston: Little, Brown and Co.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Conclusions</u>

The ways that teachers call people into engagement with the curriculum depend on three factors: who they think the people are, what they think the curriculum is, and what resources they understand to be available to them for accomplishing this work. In this study, participants' narratives of their work with boys in literacy learning demonstrate that in each of these areas, gendered historical experiences and gendered resources play a role.

The first way in which participants' lived, gendered experience informed their practices in mediating curriculum for boys had to do with the ways in which they drew on narratives of their boyhoods to understand the "who" of curriculum enactment. Participants understood most boys to be active, competitive, stoic, less verbal than girls, and, because of these characteristics, problematically positioned in schools. These understandings were based on their lived experience as boys, as well as on information gleaned through what they identified as their superior relations with boys in schools.

Participants' narratives demonstrated that their understandings of boys' needs were often informed by their boyhood experiences of the impact of traditional ways of being male in boys' lives. Participants often felt that boys who emulated ideals of action, competitiveness, toughness and stoicism were simply acting out the 'normal' practices and characteristics of boys. However, these normal practices and characteristics were understood to have negative consequences for boys in schools. Also, participants were aware that these behaviours had negative consequences for boys who did not live up to

those ideals, who might feel socially isolated, anxious, or threatened. Tailoring school environments to reduce conflicts with these 'normal' boyhood qualities, and to mitigate the consequences of those qualities for others, was an important priority for many participants.

While offering sympathetic understanding to boys in general, participants' priorities in tailoring school environments were often informed by their own positioning when they were boys. In other words, participants often tended to focus more on the needs of boys who are now like they were as boys. They therefore often worked to tailor environments and relationships to ease the specific difficulties of those boys as they understood them. This work sometimes reproduced circumstances that helped them to deal with the aspects of hegemonic boyhood that were most problematic to participants when they were in school. Some participants felt, for example, that pushing boys to conform to school requirements through codes of loyalty was central here. Others emphasized providing relationships that were comforting and reassuring.

In spite of their sense that boys are typically inclined to such values and behaviours, participants also often viewed these ideals as an aspect of gender that can be worked upon. Narratives demonstrate that participants' ideas about valued ways of being male have changed as they have matured, and they have adopted what they view as a more balanced notion of ideal ways of being male. Often, these changes reflected a sense that there were long-term costs associated with their previously held values. These changed ideas shaped participants' pedagogy, in that they work to shift boys towards more 'balanced" views of masculinity. Specifically, they attempt to limit boys' engagement with values such as competitiveness, toughness, stoicism, and resistance to

the feminine. Simultaneously, they work to create more flexible classroom settings in which boys feel comfortable engaging with a wider range of ways of representing themselves and interacting with others. To a degree, these notions of balanced masculinity reflect participants' current positioning within discourses of a middle-class version of masculinity.

Childhood positioning within the patterns of hegemonic boyhood shaped different priorities in participants' transformative work. While for some, creating environments that offered more flexibility to boys was most important, those who experienced the effects of this traditional, hegemonic masculinity in more marginalizing ways also tended to emphasize providing the tools to critique gender stereotypes and to speak out against overall inequities to a greater degree. Occupying subject positions that offer less agency may have resulted in a clearer sense that availing oneself of the benefits of a more flexible environment is not an option equally available to all members of a classroom community. Those already placed at the margins may require further support and re-positioning in order to benefit equally.

In summary, then, participants' understandings of boys' natural and socially constructed dispositions shaped two patterns in their work. Firstly, teachers attempted to tailor school settings to suit boys' natures as they understand them. Secondly, they attempted to bring about shifts in boys' attachment to the values of hegemonic boyhood, so that boys could engage more effectively with school settings.

The second factor identified as shaping the way teachers engage people with curriculum has to do with their understanding of the mandated curriculum, in this case, literacy. Most participants' literacy histories inclined them towards understanding the

mandated literacy curriculum as problematic for many boys. Narratives of their boyhood experiences of the literacy curriculum tended to emphasize its tedium, difficulty, irrelevance, lack of valued and identifiable activity, and emphasis on what they viewed as skills more typical of girls. These memories serve as the basis for many of the teachers' understandings of what they need to do to make literacy instruction effective, especially for boys. Furthermore, their boyhood experiences of effective literacy instruction influence the strategies they take up in order to engage students with the mandated curriculum. Experiences of what didn't work in literacy instruction, and what did, were shaped by the kinds of boys they were, and the values they held at that time, factors which consequently continue to influence their practices today. Finally, the circumstances under which they ultimately engaged with literacy often influence their understandings of the kinds of environments and circumstances which might provoke an individual to engage with literacy.

It is important to understand that participants' experiences of literacy were varied. Positioning with regard to literacy was often influenced by other factors, especially class-based patterns including family interventions in literacy, and the effects of social patterns connected to inclusion or exclusion from specific boys' social groupings (for example, those defined through highly competitive sports). For a smaller number of participants, the elementary literacy curriculum though still tedious was not difficult, and success in this area was a source of pride. However, even participants who experienced success in literacy viewed the mandated literacy curriculum as uninviting and problematic for most boys. Their boyhood experiences tended to confirm for them that their success was anomalous, distinct from the typical practices of boys.

Participants' mediation of the literacy curriculum for boys, then, reflects these understandings of the curriculum, and their understanding of the boys with whom they work. In examining their literacy strategies, it became clear that their strategies mediated between their understandings of the 'who' and the 'what' of the literacy learning environment. Beyond an emphasis on hooking boys into literacy, participants first of all engaged in strategies, such as masculinizing literacy, that tailored literacy activities to suit boys' needs. Secondly, they used strategies, such as modeling engagement with literature, intended to re-position boys' ideas about how literacy and masculinity interact and to shift their self-perceptions so that engagement with literacy is more possible for them.

As in the more general patterns of practice around boys, differences in participants' literacy histories also informed more subtle distinctions in their literacy work with boys. While the general practice of modeling reflected men's understanding that boys might reject reading and writing as not in keeping with their ideas of valued ways of being male, for example, a participant's ideas about what he was modeling, and for whom, could be more specifically shaped by his own life history. An individual's more positive experiences of literacy might inform more optimistic attitudes towards whether or not boys would ultimately engage with certain practices such as journaling. In some cases, differences in historical experiences of literacy also shaped somewhat different views of the ultimate goals of literacy, such as a greater emphasis on functional literacy in an individual for whom literacy engagement emerged primarily as he became aware of the importance of literacy for credentialing and employment.

The third factor informing participants' work in engaging boys with the literacy curriculum is their understanding of the resources that they bring to working with boys in schools. This could include their historical and narrative resources, their skills, the kinds of relationships they feel they can build, the level of agency and social capital they have in the school setting, and the limits and expectations that shape the roles they feel are possible for them in schools. Both the resources of individual teachers, and their understanding of the value of these resources, are, of course, unique, but a number of common characteristics were evident.

A key component in participants' understanding of their resources in teaching literacy to boys emerged from the ways that they view themselves to be like those boys, and to view that likeness as an asset. Participants relied on these notions of likeness, for example, in order to motivate boys, to identify activities and texts that boys would enjoy or resist, and to understand why a given boy might be struggling at a given time. As well, likeness was viewed as an asset in that it often shaped the way male students perceived them. According to participants, as men they have more credibility with boys and are therefore more informed about individual boys and more persuasive in working with them. Boys also believe that they share common interests with male teachers, a belief that many participants encouraged, whether or not it was actually true. These ostensibly shared interests underpin styles of interaction where male teachers can more believably demonstrate appreciation for and expert knowledge of boys' interests and stories, and tell boys influential stories about their own experiences. Also, based on this credibility, participants are able to insert themselves into play- and recreation-based

settings that boys engage with (playground and specific extracurricular activities, for example) in influential ways.

Gendered resources also appear to play a role in men's greater authority with both students and parents. Male teachers identified this advantage as important in limiting boys' aggressive and resistant tendencies, and in working to effect productive change in parents' attitudes, particularly with fathers. According to participants, patriarchal authority also played a key role in "pushing" boys to conform, in maintaining bonds of loyalty with boys who were perceived to be in need of regulation, and in male teachers' support of female teachers in their schools.

Participants also shared ways in which being male could limit certain aspects of their practice. For example, they often identified their understanding and relationships with girls as less robust and more unpredictable. Gender arrangements in schools tended to direct them towards certain roles, such as being authority figures, and to avoid others, such as nurturer, in ways that sometimes limited their ability to reach certain students and their ability to model alternative ways of being male. Sometimes, as well, aspects of their practice could be hampered by normalized aspects of being male that were not entirely visible to them, as in the conflict between Matt's desire to encourage boys to be more self-expressive and his normalized understanding of legitimate ways for men to express themselves. Finally, some participants' personal literacy history as boys and men who struggled with literacy could both limit and benefit their practices, in that while an understanding of struggle was viewed as a powerful resource, weaker literacy skills were viewed as a source of anxiety and as limiting the effectiveness of literacy instruction.

To summarize, in working with boys, teachers mediated between their understanding of the nature and needs of boys, as informed by their lived experience, and the nature and barriers inherent in the mandated curriculum, also as informed by their lived experience, using many resources that emerge out of their lived experience. Their level of awareness of issues of dominance, diversity and marginality often influenced the degree to which lived experience might reproduce or trouble existing patterns of gender relations and gender practice for boys in schools and, in particular, boys' literacy practices. Pre-existing patterns of gender arrangements in schools and pre-existing notions of the nature of gender difference could also affect the options available to men as teachers in schools. There are multiple patterns at work here, and the complex interactions between these patterns shape the gendered work of teachers in highly idiosyncratic ways.

Implications

This study began with questions about what difference it might make to be a male literacy teacher, as opposed to a female one, and with the knowledge that many policy initiatives, internationally, have forcefully advocated for the increased hiring of male teachers in response to perceived crises in boys' learning. The findings of this study suggest that if we are to take seriously the possibility that men affect the experiences of boys, and girls in schools, we need to learn more about the diversity of practices and understandings that emerge from men's experiences of being boys, of being boys in literacy classrooms and of being men inside and outside of schools.

Throughout the study, participants shared their experiences of the ways in which they believed that their lived experience provided them with insider knowledge in

working with boys. However, there were limitations to the participants' knowledge of boys, and they were most likely to understand and believe themselves to work effectively with boys who were like them. Such projections of their lived experience may be problematic, then, in that despite the assurance with which generalizations about boys were often made, they did not apply to all boys, and boys with different histories, cultural backgrounds, sexual preferences, or distinctive ways of being boys could be marginalized through this process.

While men's lived experiences as males constitute a significant resource for schools, both male and female teachers may benefit from more critical and nuanced professional development around gender issues in order to develop a more cautious and critical stance towards gendered knowledge. Further, if research in classrooms indicates gendered knowledge does assist male teachers to work more effectively with certain boys as these teachers believe, then categories of identification that may intersect with gender, such as race, ethnicity, or sexuality, should be taken into account in both research examining gendered knowledge in schools, as well as in the development of male teacher recruitment policies.

Men's specific narratives of belonging, their locations within the constellation of masculinities within and outside of schools, their class-based experiences of valued ways of being male, their experiences of threat and of what boys need, shape highly idiosyncratic patterns in men's interactions with boys. In terms of policy around male teacher recruitment, this study's findings clearly indicate the need for much more nuanced models of what it means to be a male teacher or a male influence in schools. As well, such policies need to be grounded in research around the costs and benefits of

enactments of masculinity in schools that avoids simplistically identifying all celebrations of valued ways of being male as counterproductive and misogynistic, but which also critically considers the effects and consequences of patriarchal gender practices.

The issue of how schools might assist specific boys to be at ease in schools requires more than simply relying on men to figure out how to help boys. Participants articulated sincere desire to help boys and shared profound insights into the ways that boys negotiate school settings. They described nuanced strategies that worked for them and for boys as they understood them. They were often hampered, however, by limits in their conceptual models of gender. For example, understanding of behaviors as "hard-wired", supported by professional literature on gender differences, limited some teachers' interrogation of why some boys resist engagement with academic practices such as literacy. Further, the degree of resonance between personal history and pedagogical practice had often not been a conscious element of teachers' understanding of teaching, and talking about the way that gendered history shaped their teaching practice was clearly new to most of them. More opportunities to engage in reflection around gender could assist teachers in more consciously and critically considering the kinds of masculine personae they construct in schools. Participants often appreciated the opportunity to explore this aspect of their practice, and support in thinking about gender issues from a more sociocultural perspective would be of benefit to their reflective practice.

Further research into the forces that encourage men to take up certain roles in schools and discourage them from adopting others, and the effects of these forces on transformative practice, would be of considerable value. Participants' narratives indicate that surveillance of their practices of masculinity do play a key role, but the sources of

surveillance and the kinds of regulation in play seem much more wide ranging than identified in current research. Further examinations, for example, of the ways in which female students, non-hegemonic boys, other teachers, parents, administrators, and the community create pressures to be certain kinds of men, would provide a more robust understanding of the elements shaping men's gendered practices in schools.

Participants clearly felt that they enjoyed greater credibility with parents, easier access to authoritative subject positions in their classrooms, and a level of confidence and trust from certain boys because of what Connell (1995) describes as the "patriarchal dividend." Even in their attempts to shift boys' perceptions of valued ways of being male, they passed back and forth between traditional practices highly valued by many boys, such as engaging them in competition or sharing sports knowledge, and practices that questioned traditional ways of being a male, keeping one foot in each camp, so to speak. One might think of these practices as investing hegemonic masculine capital to increase the value of different ways of being male. Problematically, though, the currency, the economy, is still tied to a hegemonic gold standard. For participants working within that economy, the choice to spend this capital productively can move their transformative agenda forward within limits, but their use of the currency continues to communicate its status as legal tender.

Abjuring these privileges seems difficult, perhaps even impossible, given the gender arrangements of schools and the pressures to present certain ways of being male in schools. At the same time, the effects of exercising patriarchal authority and fostering male camaraderie on equitable gender relations in schools is an issue that both male and female teachers need to become more aware of. Only an extremely fine grained approach

to considering such power relations could hope to clearly parse effective and ineffective reliance on such resources. In any case, the way such practices are experienced by students and other stakeholders requires more detailed study.

Cross-gender perceptions of teachers and students may be an important complicating factor in working with boys, particularly with regard to the ways in which male teachers, for example, may perceive themselves to be acting in alliance with or in the best interests of boys, defending them against what they view as unfair or problematic female reactions to situations, or in alliance with female teachers, defending them against the problematic attitudes of boys and men. Although there is plenty of data suggesting that participants talk to other men about female teachers, there is little in the data to suggest that women and men talk to each other in critical ways about gender. As well, participants' ready admission that they feel less comfortable and confident in working with girls, and their ready assurance that girls will learn no matter what, suggests that further research into cross-gender relationships between teachers and students would be of value. This silence around what is clearly a salient category in the thoughts and practices of people in schools makes effective transformative work around boys more difficult to accomplish for everyone.

A key factor that requires further investigation is the degree to which lack of engagement in literacy constituted the normalized position for many participants in the study. The notion that loving reading or writing is not necessarily natural shapes other assumptions, which have both benefits and drawbacks in a classroom setting. For example, their stories of struggle may be powerful points of identification for struggling students in schools. Simultaneously, they might also confirm students' suspicion that

boys "like them" have never fit into schools, and never will. Subtleties of practice,

modelling, and talk around this area may result in students interpreting the meaning of

these stories in very different ways. Further studies into the ways that historical

experiences of a subject area shape strengths, vulnerabilities, and patterns of practice for

teachers in school could enable teachers to work in these areas more effectively.

A key area of gendered practice highlighted by some teachers' narratives of

pedagogy was the power and function of the personal story in teachers' work, and the

degree to which gendered experience shapes the content, style and purpose of those

stories. Storytelling fulfills a powerful role in identity construction and in the ways that

children negotiate the social environment of the classroom, and this appears to be no less

true for teachers. Teachers used stories of their own lives to mediate between the

curriculum and students, to construct potential entry points and subject positions for

students, often boys, with limited engagement in literacy, to construct their own

classroom personae and to forge relationships with students. Teachers' narratives around

story telling demonstrated that stories could facilitate identification and a sense of

belonging for students in their classrooms.

These stories were often not planned interventions in classroom practice, but

arose out of the day to day context and perceived needs of students, as complex

mediations of both curriculum and social networks for students. The stories fulfilled

multiple roles both as models of literacy and as conduits for ideas about ways that

narrative could be employed for social reasons. Also, the idea that students' stories in

general conversation tended to be differently valued by men and women came up as a

factor that might potentially mediate willingness to engage in literacy activities. The role

of teachers' and students' personal stories in classroom practice, and, specifically how they are valued and understood, is an important practice to understand more fully, one imbued with gender implications, but potentially also important on a more general basis.

Some participants indicated that weakness in literacy hampers their practice. Many of the participants whose Language Arts skills were not strong emphasized the importance of mentors on whose programs they could base their own. At the same time, these teachers' own struggle with literacy is a powerful resource in their work with students: it seems worth considering what teachers who struggled and teachers who thrived in Language Arts settings as children might have to learn from one another through more official kinds of mentoring programs.

The data demonstrated that there is a preferred style of literacy that many men and boys engage in. Therefore, we need to think about how that fits into the curriculum as it exists, and to consider whether our definitions of literacy practice in schools really do reflect the range of literacies that people use and value. If schools, and what we offer to children, do not, as these teachers claim, reflect "reality," then should they? Whose reality? How should that be identified? And, if it is agreed upon that emotional response and personal introspection, for example, are important practices for everyone to engage in, how do we move all students closer towards that goal? What important literacy practices are not reflected in the curriculum, and how might they be?

Finally, it is important to consider the degree to which teachers' practices in literacy classrooms and in general school environments worked simultaneously to make school settings more comfortable for boys and to change the kinds of values that inform many boys' challenging relationships with literacy and with school environments. At

times, these imperatives appeared to be at odds with one another. The goals of engaging

boys, remaining credible to them and creating comfortable environments for them to

learn sometimes make uneasy bedfellows for more transformative aspirations, and the

complex ways in which these demands interact with one another in individual teachers'

practices require much more detailed consideration in research, in the reflective practices

of teachers, and in literature around boys in schools that often inform teachers' practice.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A. Letter of Permission to School Boards

WINDSOR

U N I V E R S I T Y   O F

Beverley Hamilton
2425 Chilver Rd.
Windsor, ON
N8W 2V9

Dr XXX XXX   March 30, 2005
XXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXX

Dear Dr. XXXX:

As a graduate student at the University of Windsor, Faculty of Education, I am requesting permission to conduct a research study with participants from your school division to satisfy the thesis requirements for a Master of Education degree. Please advise me whether you will allow teachers from your board to take part in this study.

The study will explore the perceptions and practices of male teachers working with boys in Language Arts and English classrooms through interviews with male teachers selected from the primary/junior and junior/intermediate teaching divisions. It will examine male teachers' understanding of boys' learning needs, and their teaching practice around boys. The study will attempt to explore the following questions:

How does being male shape these teachers understanding and practice of literacy?

How does being male inform the way these teachers interpret and respond to boys in their Language Arts classrooms?

In what specific ways does being a male teacher shape the way these male teachers teach Language Arts to boys?

In the past 15 years, there has been considerable statistical evidence of a widening gender gap in boys' and girls' scores on literacy assessments. Internationally and at home, media reports and mainstream authors have drawn attention to 'boys' underachievement'. Mainstream writers have argued that the culture of elementary schools is feminized,

resulting in distancing for boys in the school system. A number of researchers have identified gendered patterns in the work of female elementary school teachers in the area of literacy, including emphasis on more feminine types of texts, the privileging of certain kinds of written narrative over others, of personal and emotional response, of character development and psychological narrative, and of reading for pleasure (as opposed to for pragmatic purposes). Researchers speculate that these emphases may place boys at a disadvantage in Language Arts classrooms.

A number of international policy initiatives have responded by focusing on increasing the number of male teachers in elementary classrooms. However, despite the intuitive appeal of male role modelling in classrooms, there is little research exploring male teachers' perceptions of how being male shapes their practice, or how it may affect boys' practices, in Language Arts environments. My study proposes to examine the validity of these assumptions as they apply to the Windsor male teaching context.

This study will involve 10 teachers drawn from Windsor school boards, who will take part in two 1.5 hour semi-structured interviews and keep a reflective journal for four weeks. Interviews will take place away from school premises. Teachers will also be asked to share materials and artifacts from their classroom practice to illustrate their practice and understanding of masculine teaching practice without identifying the students' names. The materials themselves will not form part of the study; rather, they will only serve as a catalyst for discussing the teachers' practices and perceptions. There are no known risks, participation is voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from the study at any time. Written consent will be received from each participant before the their interview, and confidentiality will be ensured.

For teachers, this study may provide insights into the practices of male teachers, which, in an educational system that is predominantly female, may provide a clearer sense of ways in which gendered teaching practice may be complementary. It may also provide insights into practices that are particularly effective in the mediation of boys' literacy. For administrators, it may provide data regarding the perceptions of men in schools and the practice of same- and cross-gender teaching that may assist them in offering more equitable access to the curriculum and offer suggestions for improving the recruitment of male teachers. For researchers, it may contribute to the limited body of literature regarding male teaching practices. For policy makers, the study may provide a more robust understanding of the roles men play in schools, as well as an opportunity to develop a more critical and nuanced approach to the issues of boys' learning in schools.

An application to pursue this research is currently before the Research Ethics Board of the University of Windsor. A copy of the Research Ethics Form submitted to them is enclosed, and their letter of approval will be forwarded to you when it is available.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 977-8428 or my advisor, Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, at 253-3000, ext. 2331. I can also be reached by email at bev.hamilton@sympatico.ca. Thank you very much for considering this proposal.

Sincerely,

Beverley Hamilton

APPENDIX B

B. Letters of Consent and Information for Participants

U N I V E R S I T Y   O F

WINDSOR

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Male Language Arts Teachers' Narratives of Practice: The Teaching of Boys

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Beverley Hamilton, from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor **in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Education.** The researcher can be contacted at 977-8428, or by email at bev.hamilton@sympatico.ca. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact the faculty supervisor, Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, Faculty of Education, 401 Sunset Avenue, 253-3000, ext. 2331.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of male language arts teachers in working with boys. It will examine their understanding of boys' learning needs, their enactment of curriculum, their interpretive practices, performance of teaching, and construction of major concepts of learning and male identity.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
1. You will be asked to take part in a one-month electronic correspondence or reflective journal regarding your day-to-day experience of teaching and your reflections on being a male teacher.

2. You will be asked to participate in two interviews (1.5 hour each) and to share materials and/or mementos from your personal literacy experiences and your classroom and teaching practice that you feel represent how you teach language arts, especially with respect to facilitating literacy for boys.

3. You will be asked to verify the transcript of the interview for accuracy. This process can take place by email if you prefer. At this time, the researcher may also ask follow-up questions regarding data from the transcript.

4. You will be asked to review the researcher's analysis of the interview and to share any opinions or ideas you have about it. This process can take place by email if you prefer.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks associated with this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study offers an opportunity for participants to reflect on their teaching practices around boys in schools in a more structured way, which may facilitate more nuanced and reflective practice. Given

the current emphasis on boys' literacy and the need for more men in schools, this study may offer participants the opportunity to see their own gendered practice more clearly, and to examine the social and personal assumptions that support them. By giving voice to the daily practice of male teachers in a setting in which they are often underrepresented, the study may provide opportunities for individual teachers to articulate, and even reconstruct, their traditional roles in schools as they see the need to.

For teachers, this study may suggest a repertoire of practices that can support boys' learning. For administrators, it may provide data regarding the practice of same- and cross-gender teaching enabling more equitable access to the curriculum. It may also offer suggestions for improving the recruitment of male teachers. For researchers, it may contribute to the limited body of literature regarding male teaching practices. For policy makers, the study may provide a more robust understanding of the roles men play in schools, as well as the opportunity to develop a more critical and nuanced approach to the issues of boys' learning in schools.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participants will not receive any remuneration for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with participants will be kept strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission. Particulars such as names, schools, or other identifying characteristics will not be included in final reporting. Data collected will be held for a maximum of two years and tape records and transcripts will be stored in a secure location. Tapes will then be erased and the documents shredded. Tapes will not be broadcast without the participant's express permission.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You may remove your data from the study until the analysis is complete.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A report of the findings will be mailed to all participants

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data may be used in subsequent studies. You may choose whether you wish your data to be available for use in further studies.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?   ☐ Yes   ☐ No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator   Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916
University of Windsor   E-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca
Windsor, Ontario   N9B 3P4

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study Male Language Arts Teachers' Narratives of Practice: The Teaching of Boys as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Name of Subject

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

UNIVERSITY OF

WINDSOR

LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Male Language Arts Teachers' Narratives of Practice: The Teaching of Boys

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Beverley Hamiltlon], from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor **in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Education.**

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact the researcher at 977-8428, or by email at bev.hamilton@sympatico.ca. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, Faculty of Education, 401 Sunset Avenue, 253-3000, ext. 2331.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of male language arts teachers in working with boys. It will examine their understanding of boys' learning needs, their enactment of curriculum, their interpretive practices, performance of teaching, and construction of major concepts of learning and male identity.

PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:
1. You will be asked to take part in a one-month electronic correspondence or reflective journal regarding your day-to-day experience of teaching and your reflections on being a male teacher.

2. You will be asked to participate in two interviews (1.5 hour each) and to share materials and/or mementos from your personal literacy experiences and your classroom and teaching practice that you feel represent how you teach language arts, especially with respect to facilitating literacy for boys.

3. You will be asked to verify the transcript of the interview for accuracy. This process can take place by email if you prefer. At this time, the researcher may also ask follow-up questions regarding data from the transcript.

4. You will be asked to review the researcher's analysis of the interview and to share any opinions or ideas you have about it. This process can take place by email if you prefer.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no risks associated with this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study offers an opportunity for participants to reflect on their teaching practices around boys in schools in a more structured way, which may facilitate more nuanced and reflective practice. Given the current emphasis on boys' literacy and the need for more men in schools, this study may offer participants the opportunity to see their own gendered practice more clearly, and to examine the social and personal assumptions that support them. By giving voice to the daily practice of male teachers in a setting in which they are often underrepresented, the study may provide opportunities for individual teachers to articulate, and even reconstruct, their traditional roles in schools as they see the need to.

For teachers, this study may suggest a repertoire of practices that can support boys' learning. For administrators, it may provide data regarding the practice of same- and cross-gender teaching enabling more equitable access to the curriculum. It may also offer suggestions for improving the recruitment of male teachers. For researchers, it may contribute to the limited body of literature regarding male teaching practices. For policy makers, the study may provide a more robust understanding of the roles men play in schools, as well as the opportunity to develop a more critical and nuanced approach to the issues of boys' learning in schools.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

The participants will not receive any remuneration for participating in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with participants will be kept strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with their permission. Particulars such as names, schools, or other identifying characteristics will not be included in final reporting. Data collected will be held for a maximum of two years and tape records and transcripts will be stored in a secure location. Tapes will then be erased and the documents shredded. Tapes will not be broadcast without the particpant's express permission.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so. You may remove your data from the study until the analysis is complete.

FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS

A report of the findings will be mailed to all participants.

SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

This data may be used in subsequent studies.
Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?   ☐ Yes
          ☐ No

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact:

Research Ethics Coordinator   Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916
University of Windsor   E-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca
Windsor, Ontario   N9B 3P4

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	Date

APPENDIX C

C. Letter of Information to Principals

(As requested by the Greater Essex County District School Board)

July XX, 2005

Beverley Hamilton
2425 Chilver Rd.
Windsor, ON
N8W 2V9

Dear XXX:

I am writing to inform you that a member or members of your staff have agreed to take part in a study that I am conducting with teachers from your school division to satisfy the thesis requirements for a Master of Education degree.

The study will explore the perceptions and practices of male teachers working with boys in Language Arts and English classrooms through interviews with male teachers selected from the primary/junior and junior/intermediate teaching divisions. This is a study of best practices: participants have been invited to participate based on their reputation as caring, reflective and experienced teachers with a high level of concern for the welfare of their students, as identified through a network of knowledgeable individuals in the Windsor teaching community. It will examine male teachers' understanding of boys' learning needs, and their teaching practice around boys. The study will attempt to explore the following questions:

How does being male shape these teachers understanding and practice of literacy?

How does being male inform the way these teachers interpret and respond to boys in their Language Arts classrooms?

In what specific ways does being a male teacher shape the way these male teachers teach Language Arts to boys?

Interviews will take place away from school premises. Teachers will also be asked to share materials and artifacts from their classroom practice to illustrate their practice and understanding of masculine teaching practice. The materials themselves will not form part of the study; rather, they will only serve as a catalyst for discussing the teachers' practices and perceptions. There are no known risks, participation is voluntary, and subjects may withdraw from the study at any time. Written consent will be received from each participant before the their interview, and confidentiality will be ensured. The teachers involved have agreed to allow me to send you this letter of information.

For teachers, this study may provide insights into the practices of male teachers, which, in an educational system that is predominantly female, may provide a clearer sense of ways in which gendered teaching practice may be complementary. It may also provide insights into practices that are particularly effective in the mediation of boys' literacy. For administrators, it may provide data regarding the perceptions of men in schools and the practice of same- and cross-gender teaching that may assist them in offering more equitable access to the curriculum and offer suggestions for improving the recruitment of male teachers. For researchers, it may contribute to the limited body of literature regarding male teaching practices. For policy makers, the study may provide a more robust understanding of the roles men play in schools, as well as an opportunity to develop a more critical and nuanced approach to the issues of boys' learning in schools.

The study has received approval from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Windsor and from the Greater Essex County District School Board, and the board has asked that I inform principals whose teachers are taking part in the study.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 977-8428 or my advisor, Dr. Nombuso Dlamini, at 253-3000, ext. 2331. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Beverley Hamilton

APPENDIX D

D. Prompts for Electronic Dialogue

Reflective Journal/Electronic Dialogue Instructions

Instructions to participants

Over the next few weeks, I'll be asking you to reflect on your practices at school in order to develop some ground for our discussion about your work as a Language Arts/Literacy Teacher. You can do this writing either in the form of a reflective journal, or as an email dialogue with me. I will be providing three writing prompts, but don't feel limited to that!! If there are things that occur to you that strike you as good examples of what you practice and experience as a male teacher PLEASE include them in your responses. I look forward to hearing from you. I know that you are busy, so please feel free to write as you can, and as much as you can, but don't overburden yourself because of it.

Prompts:

1) In the past weeks (or before that) at school, what kinds of issues came up working with boys in your Language Arts classes? Were these issues different for girls and how? What's working effectively in dealing various boys in your classes? What problems have come up that are proving difficult to solve? Please be specific!

2) What are the most frustrating, irritating parts of being a male teacher? This is your chance to vent!!! Try to collect examples from your work this term, but feel free to share examples from before, as well. If on the whole, you don't ever see being a male teacher as at all problematic, or different from being a female teacher, then write about that....

3) During the past few months of school, were you aware of being a male teacher, as opposed to a teacher at any time at work? Would you say that the way you present masculinity at school is in any way different from the way you present yourself in other settings? In what ways? Does it change, in different situations, within the school setting? Can you give examples?

4) When you have completed the responses, I will respond with a summary of your reflections to date and questions based on your reflections. At this time, you will also receive the memory box invitation (I have included it in case you want to think it over now...)

Memory Box Invitation:
Please pull together items that reflect what you do as a Language Arts teacher and how you've experienced literacy over the years – either yours or your students. It might be:

- activities or work that you or a student has done that you think is really in the spirit of what you think is important for kids to do,

- pictures of your classes or school-related activities that might help jog your memory about experiences with students,
- other artefacts from your teaching or life
- other artefacts from your life as a reader and writer
- books that were or are really important to you
- pictures or artefacts representing your life outside of school
- pictures or artefacts of your life as a man, either in, or outside, of school

that you'd like to share. They may be positive or negative. If you can bring materials that represent your work and thinking at different times in your life, that would be very helpful.

APPENDIX E

E. Day One Interview Protocol

Interview Questions
Please note that participants were provided with a copy of this interview protocol at the time of the interview. On questions involving a list of characteristics or practices, teachers will be invited to speak to the items of the list which they feel are most important. Not all questions will be used in each interview, as participants may provide relevant data elsewhere in the process.

A. Demographic information:

Length of time teaching:
SES of current school:
Subjects taught:
Grades taught:
Age:
Other responsibilities undertaken in school:
School Administration: M F
M/F School configuration:

B. Memory Box:
Can you tell me about what you've brought with you?

C. Masculine and Literate Identity: Teacher biography

1. What do you remember boys doing, mostly, when you were a kid?

    a. What kinds of abilities and actions were highly valued by the boys at your school or in your social group?

    b. What kinds of things were definitely not okay for boys to do?

2. How did you fit into that boy culture?

3. What positive memories do you have from that time?

    a. What about challenging memories?

4. What's changed about being a boy in school now, compared to when you were a student?

5. What were your English classes like when you were at the level you now teach?
    a. Do you remember anything particularly vividly?

6. What kind of role did you play in the classroom language arts classroom (resistant/joker/silent/avoidant/involved/ highly active)?

7. Life history as reader/writer:
   a. How did you start to read/write?
   b. How did you perceive reading/writing as a kid?
   c. Were there any real triumphs or high points in your student life around literacy?
   d. Any really low points?
   e. Was there any difference between what you chose to read, or how you felt about reading, at home, and at school?
   f. Do you identify yourself as a reader and writer now? As an adult, how do you use reading and writing yourself?

8. What specific experiences prompted you to become a teacher?
   a. How did you picture being a teacher then?
   b. Has that changed much since then?

9. Are there any other activities that you take part in outside of school that you want to include as important parts of how you teach and reach boys?

10. What aspects of the way you teach LA do you see as having been shaped by your history as a boy in schools?
    a. What parts of your past literacy experiences do you see as most important to your teaching?

D. Experiences of gender in teachers

1. Tell me about the male teachers you know – what do they have in common?

   a. Are there any male teachers that were particularly important to you?

   b. What have you adopted/admired/ learned from these male teachers?

   c. Are there characteristics you've seen in other male teachers that you've consciously tried to avoid?

2. Describe the roles you play at school and any ways that you see them as connected to your gender.

3. How do your extracurricular activities affect what happens in your classroom?

4. How do people respond when to your being a male elementary teacher?

5. Senior teachers: How has being a male teacher changed over the years you've taught?

6. Do you believe that men and women teach differently?
In light of this question, could you talk about how you...
- Make connections with kids
- Discipline kids
- Inspire kids
- Use humor
- Nurture kids
- Push kids
- Work with parents
- Understand kids' motives, choices, and actions
- Any other specific practices and strategies that you think are relevant?

APPENDIX F

F. Day Two Interview Protocol

A. Boys and Language Arts

1. What are the main things I would see you doing if I observed your Language Arts classroom?

2. Could you describe the main philosophy that underlies the organization and routines involved in your Language Arts program?

3. To you, what are the most important aspects of becoming an excellent reader? How do you go about teaching those things?
   a. How about being an excellent writer?

4. There seems to be a lot of controversy these days around concerns with boys in schools – as a male teacher, what's your take on boys and Language Arts? And if you perceive there is a problem, what do you see as the roots of that problem?
   a. For example, boys' reading and literacy scores, bullying and aggressive behaviour in schools, boys' attrition rates, boys needing separate gender awareness programs, sexualizing of non-sexual interactions...

5. Do you have any goals that related specifically to male students in your class?

6. What parts of Language Arts programs, do you generally see boys getting most involved with? Which parts do you find to be a hard sell?

7. In what ways, if any, does gender play a role in your choice of literature?
   a. How about in your choice of activities?
   b. In your methods of assessment?
   c. Are there other ways that you think gender plays a role in your planning?
   d. Do you think there are any ways that being gender sensitive can be counter-productive in a classroom?

8. In your view, which of these educational practices meet the needs of male students best, and which don't really work for a lot of male students?
   - holistic approaches to language
   - language across the curriculum
   - writing conferences
   - student-centred approaches to learning and development
   - differentiation
   - critical literacy – approaches to looking at the cultural, political and power assumptions in texts

- negotiated approaches to discipline
- journal writing
- studies of character development
- co-operative learning
- What other approaches have you found to be really effective, or necessary, with boys?

9. Do you think that boys should have the option of single-sex Language Arts? Why or why not?
    a. How would you teach differently in a single sex LA class?

10. What kinds of practices have you found to be useful in working with boys having trouble in Language Arts classrooms?

    a. What do they need?

    b. Given as much time and scheduling flexibility as you would need, what kinds of practices would you employ to help them?

    c. Does being a man influence or shape the ways you can help boys who are having trouble?

11. Are there any ways that you consciously employ being male when you're teaching Language Arts, especially to boys?

12. Are there any parts of teaching Language Arts that feel uncomfortable to you?
    a. If so, do you think there are any connections with being male around that?

B. Masculine Identity in Schools: Boys and Teachers

1. Do male students respond to you, as a male teacher, differently from the way that they respond to female teachers? Explain.

2. How do you react to the notion that kids see male teachers as father figures? As authority figures?
    a. If you are a father, how is your practice of teaching different from your practice of fathering?
    b. Does each influence the other? Explain.
    c. (Or...) How does being a single male inform your teaching?
    d. Are there other masculine roles that you feel students sometimes want you to play in their lives?
    e. How about parents?

3. How does being male affect how you figure out what's going on with boys in your classes?
   a. Does being male affect the way you respond to boys' writing?
   b. Does being male affect the way you respond to boys' attitudes towards various language arts activities?
   c. Have you ever had experiences where it seemed that female teachers interpreted kids' actions in ways you thought they wouldn't if they were men?

4. Do you ever find it more challenging to relate to or understand female students' behaviours, compared to boys? Examples?

5. What kinds of boys' behaviours or conversations would run counter to the principles and ideals you try to instil in them?

6. In this interview, we've been talking about what boys like, what boys do – but of course we know that's not all boys. What kinds of experiences have you had with boys whose masculinity, interests, or behaviours differed strongly from other boys in the class?
   a. What do you feel your role is in working with boys whose way of being male is different from the norm?
   b. Are there any connections that you see between this and your work in Language Arts?

7. How would you respond to the statement that interactions with boys and girls in a classroom should be exactly the same?

8. If you were asked to run a PD course for female teachers about masculinity in schools (teachers' AND students' masculinities), what would you include?
   a. What is it, in your experience, that female teachers don't understand, or practice, that they might be able to incorporate in their practice? (possibly blue)

Wrap-up:
Is there anything else you'd like to be sure is included in the data for this study of men's teaching of Language Arts? Anything you'd like to especially draw my attention to?

Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX G

G. Participants' Profiles

As discussed in the methodology section, participants' childhood stories

ultimately fell into three categories. The first category is made up of people for whom

physical ability, strength and size were seen as highly valuable assets in childhood and

youth, but for whom academic success, at least in certain subjects, was often less readily

attainable or valuable. In this study, Matt, Dan, Mark, George and Sam represent this

group. The second group, which includes Tim, Cameron, John and Andrew, represented

here by Tim's profile, were men who were less physically dominant as boys. They

engaged in recreational, but not necessarily competitive sports. These men's boyhood

narratives tend to reflect more emphasis on academic engagement as well as participation

in non-athletic extra-curricular activities. Ed is a more anomalous figures in the data, who

will be taken up in a separate profile.

Matt's Story: A Physically Dominant Boyhood

Matt is a big man, readily identifiable as a former athlete, with a laid back and

self-assured manner. Size, strength and physical ability have played a key role in his

experiences and identity. Physical assets contributed to his success in competitive sports,

his early access to the world of work, social acceptance among both peers and adults, and

an early sense of autonomy and responsibility.

Experiences of the Value of Physical Assets

In early youth, the focus of Matt's sporting life was hockey. Matt's social life

also revolved around competitive activities that were less official, but still generally

physical or sports-related. Physical conflict played a role in the social organization of

friends. Matt's strength, size, ability, and willing engagement meant that he enjoyed a fairly high social status within this landscape.

All members of his family worked at the family business. Because of his size and strength, Matt also worked for farming neighbours. These work activities required high degrees of responsibility. Despite, or perhaps because of these expectations and responsibilities, Matt treasures the memories of working in his shop with the father, where they repaired machinery.

As an adolescent, Matt's strength and size provided ready entry into high school sports. High school sports teams provided Matt with a very active social network. Participation on sports teams also provided Matt with a network of adult role models that Matt sees to this day as models for his own deportment in school settings.

Yet not all of Matt's role models were sports people or even physically strong for that matter. Matt identifies several individuals whom he valued highly even though they were not big, explicitly identifying them as exceptions to the value of strength and size, whom he admired for their collegial approach and willingness to meet students half way.

Matt's Social World

Matt's childhood stories, indicate a division between a world of adult expectation and responsibility and a more private social world of boys. In this world, status was determined by physical conflict, and loyalty required the physical defence of your friends. "Screwing around" is a practice that comes up repeatedly in Matt's stories, specifically as something not to do around Matt's father or other authority figures such as school principals, but as something to definitely do with one's friends or in the presence of lesser authority figures. Screwing around was part of a private world, and to a certain

extent teachers might tolerate and work around it. It involved pulling pranks and engaging in physically testing stunts. Freedom of movement, as described above, emerges repeatedly as a valued memory from Matt's youth. Motorbikes and snowmobiles played a particularly important role in the kinds of freedoms that characterize his childhood.

This private social world was also peopled almost exclusively with boys. Feminine activities, such as figure skating, were considered socially unacceptable (even though his mother made him do it for two years). The only girls included in Matt's narratives are those that he characterised as not "girl-girls". Avoidance of the feminine was also connected with the avoidance of emotion and personal expression. Toughness and terseness were valued qualities. Matt associated being verbal with being feminine. Therefore, boys did not aspire to this quality.

School Experiences

Matt enjoyed the parts of school where you could "do stuff", like science class, social studies class, and math. Even literacy, in specific cases, with specific teachers, was enjoyable. Teachers who did offer more choice, or connections to his own experience, like the English teacher who connected the language of Shakespeare to the jargon of sports teams, were met by Matt with readiness to engage. However, he often found teachers' demands unfair, because they valued forms of expression and characteristics such as neatness that he did not find valuable. As well, he found the topics uninteresting, disconnected from his identity and daily life. Ultimately, Matt entered university as an athlete, and as a university student, volunteered in a reading program at an elementary school on the advice of one of his coaches. Many of his team-mates became teachers.

Tim's Story: Alternatives to Physical Dominance

Tim is a slight man with a thoughtful, calm demeanor and a somewhat reticent approach to conversation. He also represents a subcategory of male teachers whose fathers were teachers.

Literacy was highly valued by his family, and he has many memories of reading with his grandmother and his father. He was a strong student in school, especially in literacy, even though in elementary school he enjoyed it more because he was good at it than because he enjoyed the activities or content. He was distinguished for these skills in events such as the Young Author's Conference and public speaking contests. Despite his shyness, he remembers excelling at public speaking, a trait he shares with his father.

In his childhood, Tim spent a lot of time playing on the street, mostly baseball, football, road hockey and tag There were many children in the neighborhood. He characterizes his neighborhood social environment as carefree and accepting. In the school setting, however, Tim felt more social pressure. He describes himself as wanting to belong, but having difficulty fitting in. He experienced a certain amount of teasing. In part, Tim ascribes this feeling to differences in his physical assets and in his self-assurance as he was smaller and intensely shy. Among the boys in his class, size, strength and athletic ability were admired. Although Tim played baseball all his life, he did not really identify with the athletes at his elementary school. He remembers certain popular, more physically developed boys dominating the classroom environment.

One way in which he was identified in the classroom was as "the good drawer" a role that was valued, and that he enjoyed. In upper elementary, he was identified as sufficiently musical to be selected for the band program. Tim excelled as a musician. He

feels that others viewed him as a gifted musician, and that this identity followed him into high school where his social life revolved around the band program. He identifies musical ability as something that distinguished him, the way that sports distinguished other children. His band teacher, along with his father, encouraged him to consider music education as a career. Tim continues to see his father as an influence on his teaching today, though they have certain differences in their views on teaching and education.

Ed's Story: Charismatic Eccentric

Ed is a storyteller with a tendency to narrate through dialogue and a mordant sense of humor. He is also somewhat eccentric: he delights in, and even accentuates, his differences.

Leisure and Social Activities

Ed grew up in a small, isolated community. There were insufficient numbers of children in the community to support multiple sports teams, so the sports culture was limited. Students generally left the community for secondary school, so there were also no high school sports teams. Children's social life generally involved mixed groups of boys and girls, and his own activities focused around non-competitive outdoor activities. Many of his friends were older than him, and he was very popular. He was physically small, but his lack of athleticism was not an impediment because organized sports played no role in the social order. Ed sees being different as a part of his charm: He was a good talker, a good dancer, and had a large collection of popular music which he and his peers used to put on local dances. Ed views himself as having had more varied interests than the other boys in his town, whom he describes as basically farmers
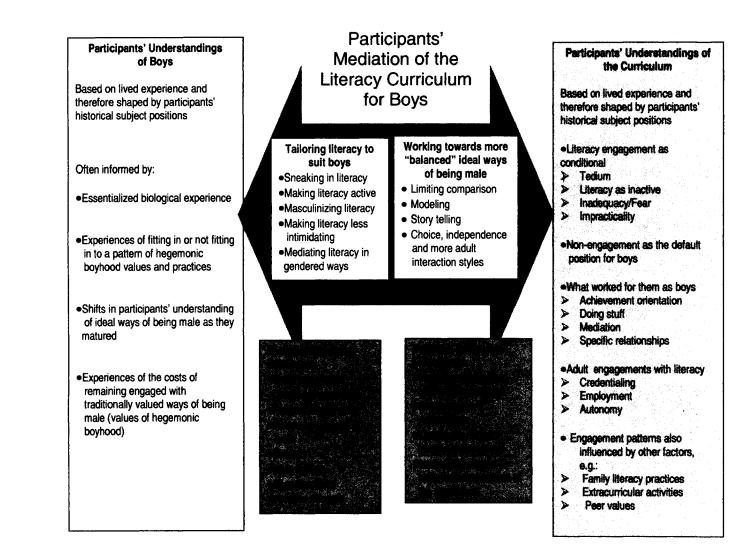
Work Practices

Ed's childhood life revolved around paid work, followed by periods of leisure. His widowed mother was a business owner in the community, which had a fairly busy summer tourist trade, so his responsibilities also included caring for the family home in the summer. This pattern of work was fairly typical of children in his community. Work also afforded Ed the opportunity to connect with adult males in the community, especially one who acted as a mentor to him intellectually.

School Life

Ed was accelerated through several grades in school, but did not see this as in any way a social impediment. He had an intense relationship with his elementary school teacher, who taught multiple grades at once, and he credits her as a powerful influence on his own teaching practice still today. His mother, who had very high expectations, was also an influence in his high levels of academic achievement. He boarded with his aunt and uncle in order to attend high school in a nearby town, where, despite his and his classmates' anxieties before arriving, he found that despite being younger than most of his classmates, he was often well ahead of his peers in school.

When asked how he became a teacher, Ed was the only participant who mentioned playing school as having partly influenced his choice, a component commonly found in female stories of becoming a teacher (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). He is uncertain whether that had anything to do with his decision. He got his teaching degree as a fallback, but found that the work came easily to him.

APPENDIX H

H. Conceptual Overview

Participants' Understandings of Boys

Based on lived experience and therefore shaped by participants' historical subject positions

Often informed by:

●Essentialized biological experience

●Experiences of fitting in or not fitting in to a pattern of hegemonic boyhood values and practices

●Shifts in participants' understanding of ideal ways of being male as they matured

●Experiences of the costs of remaining engaged with traditionally valued ways of being male (values of hegemonic boyhood)

Participants' Mediation of the Literacy Curriculum for Boys

Tailoring literacy to suit boys
●Sneaking in literacy
●Making literacy active
●Masculinizing literacy
●Making literacy less intimidating
●Mediating literacy in gendered ways

Working towards more "balanced" ideal ways of being male
● Limiting comparison
● Modeling
● Story telling
● Choice, independence and more adult interaction styles

Participants' Understandings of the Curriculum

Based on lived experience and therefore shaped by participants' historical subject positions

●Literacy engagement as conditional
➢ Tedium
➢ Literacy as inactive
➢ Inadequacy/Fear
➢ Impracticality

●Non-engagement as the default position for boys

●What worked for them as boys
➢ Achievement orientation
➢ Doing stuff
➢ Mediation
➢ Specific relationships

●Adult engagements with literacy
➢ Credentialing
➢ Employment
➢ Autonomy

● Engagement patterns also influenced by other factors, e.g.:
➢ Family literacy practices
➢ Extracurricular activities
➢ Peer values

APPENDIX I

I. Dave's Story

There's one I use each year about, uh, when I was a kid, like, we had a little street gang I told you about, and we would do silly things all the time. And it was, near our house. [A local company], years ago, had a place near us….And there was an old deserted house there, two storeys, bedrooms all over the place, it was actually servants' quarters. But it was all – smashed windows and stuff like that, and so we always thought it was kind of haunted, and at the time we thought there was gypsies out there. We were told there was gypsies. And it probably was, picking – cause there was an orchard, picking things. And we always thought they would kidnap us.

And so, so, one night we all decided to go to this house. And uh, to go to this house, like, what I'm doing, I'm setting up a story, a suspense story for kids' creative writing? And we'd go to this house. And this one night, we were going to go there, we were going to hang out in the place. It was dark. And we, as we got to the, close to the house, we were all kind of frightened. Cause, you know, gypsies were nearby, and I didn't want them to catch us. So, we sort of snuck in the back door, and there was broken glass, and we were walking around, we're whispering, and cause we didn't want anyone to hear us. And so, then, uh, we decided to go up the stairs, and there was a big long stairway, and there was a stairway coming up one side, and a stairway coming down the other side. So, we walked up the stairs, and we got to the top of the stairs, and uh, we were looking out the windows trying to see these gypsies, and, uh, when we were up there we heard a noise.

And, uh, unbeknownst to us, at the same time, there was another little street gang of kids [laughter] was nearby, and they were coming to do the same thing. So of course, we heard them, and so we all went, we got really quiet and we hid in the corner of the house. Cause we were afraid the gypsies were in the house, and we thought these gypsies were coming to get us. And some of them guys were crying, "Eeugh, the gypsies are gonna get us!" So, "Be quiet, be quiet, be quiet!"

So, we're hearing this noise, we hear people talking downstairs, and these kids downstairs were sneaking around, thinking the same thing as us, and we're upstairs. So, of course, we don't know who they are and they don't know who we are. So this went on for about ten minutes or so, and we're dead quiet, and then all of a sudden we start hearing the steps coming up the stairs. And we thought, "Oh my God, they're coming up, they know we're up here. What are we going to do? And there's sort of panic, and we had younger brothers and sisters with us, and you know, what are we going to do?" So all of a sudden, we, one of the guys just says, "I'm leaving!" And we burst out and we went running down the stairs, and we went charging down the stairs, and we're running through the fields, and we're dropping things, and we ran home, and we gathered around, and we all sitting in one house. "Thank God we all made it home," and we thought, "Thank God we're safe!" and we thought nothing of it.

That was in grade eight. The following year I went to grade nine, and in grade nine I was sitting in the cafeteria one day, and I was sitting with a bunch of guys, and we were all talking about as we were growing up telling things what happened, so I started telling this story about what happened that night. And as I'm telling this story, I look at this guy sitting across from me, this guy named Frank Mather, and Frank's looking at me

like, he knows what I'm talking about. And I said, "What's wrong, Frank?" And he says,

"We were the other group." And I said, "What happened?" And he says, "We heard all

that noise coming charging down the stairs, and we thought it was the gypsies, so we all

took off out the back door."

So, if you could picture it at nighttime, one group of kids running across the fields

this way, and one group of kids running across the fields this way, we were chasing each

other home. Well, the kids just think it's so neat. They're laughing.

APPENDIX J

J. Ed's Story

This [picture] hung up in my class room for years, and the kids said to me, "Well, who is that, sir?" And I says, "Which one?" "That picture on the shelf." I says, "Which picture?" And of course, there was only one. And they said, "That guy." And they said, and they were standing up, getting ready, and I remember this one girl, who came from Bosnia. She was, you know, they came, obviously, for reasons. Family had been killed, and everything. So anyway, she's standing up, she's a lovely girl.

She says, "Sir, I've always wanted to ask you" and she was in grade seven at the time, in science, "I've always wanted to ask you, who was in that picture?" "This picture?" I said, "Well, that's my Dad." "That's your Dad?!" "Yeah." They said, "Well, what's he doin'?!" I says, "He isn't doin' nothing. He's dead"[laugh]. "He's what?!" "He's dead."

And I said "This was at [a local park], and we were down there at a family thing one day, one Sunday afternoon, it was beautiful weather, it was a little crisp, but it, and we were going on [a hiking trail], and he said, 'We're just – you guys go ahead, I'm just gonna lie out here on the picnic table,' and we came back, and he was stone cold." And their eyes were goin'….So, after that, and I said, I says, "You know, if you go down there, you might still see – cause we just left him." "What?!" "Well, that's the way he wanted to go, and you know – we just left him. He's probably still there."

…So, what it got to be around, and, from then on, it was always called "Dead Dad". But the kids would never go near my desk. "I'm not going over there." I'd say, "The scissors are right beside dead –" "I'm not going over there." They wouldn't go

near my desk. So it always kept 'em away. So that was the always the thing that was dead dad.

And, what happened at my old school....what [another teacher] did is, one, did it on my camera, too. I didn't know it. So, in a staff, and this was late September, a staff meeting that we had in November, or something, he says, "I just want you guys to know what [Ed] does at camp." And he brought out this picture, all framed and everything. "Here's what he does best." This hung in the staffroom... for a lot of years. And then when I left there, I just took it with me. But that was one of my wonderful—so that's the dead dad story.

And parents would come in, and say, "Oh, that's – I hear that's your Dad." "Yeah. Yeah." "Is your Momma still alive?" "Oh, she's gone too." And of course, they're all.... So, and of course, it was...a big story. So, and they all kind of, some people actually believed them you know....

Q: So your legend just kind of exists in a collection of outrageous tales, that you string along like this, right? That's how you do it?

A: Yeah. Absolutely. And they love it. See, when I went there, they, you know how kids are, especially that age, are very curious about things, and, and, all that stuff, so. But they would, they'd ask, where you live and all that stuff. And I said, "Well, I live down – I just live at the Y." So they're going home and telling their parents all this stuff. Oh yeah! And then I, .. "But sir?" "Yeah?" "How can you live at the Y?" "I don't know, I just do. I used to have a house, but that's another story." I says, "I'm not the one living in it any more." And all this stuff, so. So it went on, and on, and they said, "Well, sir, you're driving [an expensive car]!" I says, "Yes, but it's because I drive that car that I

have to live at the Y." Yeah. And that made sense. And they said, "Well, why don't you just get rid of the [car] and get a nice place?" I said, "Well I can't. I keep all my clothes in the [car]." "Oh yeah! Well, then, of course, you can't get rid of that." You know.

So, it went on, and on. So at graduation one year, when we had our grad video at the end, and the teacher who helped put it together, he says, "Come on." We got in the car at lunch time, took the video camera. He taped me going in and out of the Y with my briefcase, saying hello to the old gussies, going right in, and all that. "He does live at the Y!" [laughter] And, of course, the parents just love it. And so, so, there's been a lot of... stories... you know.

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VITA AUCTORIS

Beverley Hamilton was born August 30, 1966 in Montreal, Canada. She received an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English literature from McGill University, and a Bachelor of Education from the University of Calgary. She has worked as a middle school teacher, instructional technologist, and online instructor for fifteen years. She has presented on immigrants' community and educational experiences and on issues related to male teaching at a number of national and international conferences.