Young Masculinities, Purity and Danger: Disparities in framings of boys and girls in policy discourses of sexualisation

Introduction: 'the boys and the girls'

On the 4th May 2011, Conservative MP Nadine Dorries won a vote on the floor of the House of Commons for a Bill to go for further consideration, which proposed the compulsory teaching of abstinence in sex education to 13-16 year old girls in British schools. Such measures are necessary, she argued, because of the 'sexualisation of young girls', which leads them to invite inappropriate male attention through their fashion-choices and deportment (HC 4 May 2011, c679). In a later article in *The Daily Mail* justifying her decision to propose the Bill, Dorries cited in support 'the prodigious amount of academic research which proves that the over-sexualisation of our young puts them in harm's way' of the 'drip, drip effect'. Labour MP Chris Bryant, arguing against Dorries, stated that 'this is the daftest piece of legislation that I have seen brought forward. I agree about many of the problems that she has highlighted, and I will come on to those, but this is not the way to solve any of those problems. For a start, the Bill is just about girls. I said that I am not an expert, but it seems axiomatic to me that if we want to tackle teenage pregnancy, we have to talk to the boys and the girls' (HC 4 May 2011, c682). Yet such talk about 'the boys and the girls' has not occurred in policy or media texts in the years subsequent to this debate. Most saliently, it was largely missing from the debates in the House of Lords which ultimately led to the rejection of an amendment to the Children and Families Bill which would have mandated compulsory sex and relationship education in British state schools.

 A parallel inattention to boys in discourses around sexualisation can also be noted in the academic literature. In their report of the Scottish Executive, Buckingham et al. (2010: 19) noted more generally that in contemporary society 'there is no discussion of the sexualisation of boys, but only of the effects upon them of the sexualisation of girls and women. This is a recurrent absence in the literature, and in the wider public debate in this area, although it is hard to explain.' Garner (2012: 325) has concurred, noting that 'consideration of men and masculinities remains scarce or only thinly sketched across the field.' Recently, Clark (2013) has called for scrutiny of the 'lacuna which [the] sexualisation for boys appears to fall into'. Many theorists have highlighted the

invariable invisibility of masculinity constituted as universal and natural (Beasley 2008; Gardiner 1997; Kimmel 1997;).

One of the reasons why it is 'hard to explain' the lack of attention to boys in discourses in sexualisation is that approached head-on, it appears that the focus on girls has no logic and is merely accidental. One might point to the trickle of research which is beginning to emerge on the increased visibility of the male body in contemporary visual cultures (e.g. Gill, 2009) and to sexuality and masculinity in relation to boys' fashion and embodiment (e.g. Vandenbosch and Eggermont, 2013). However, we wish to propose that the tendency towards a problematisation of girls' fashion and deportment and the invisibility of boys within policy and media discourses on 'sexualisation' is a systemic effect of constructions of gender and sexual subjectivity. In our society, we shall argue, signifiers of feminine purity operate as a form of symbolic capital, a construction which is not attributed to boys and which is integral scaffolding for the depiction of a subject as threatened by sexualisation. To illustrate this explanation for the lack of policy and media concern regarding the 'sexualisation of boys', we shall make use of fashion and dress as useful sites of analysis (notably due to their significant presence within such documented concerns), and after setting out our theoretical position and frame, will examine an apparent exception to the rule: the *Papadopoulos Review* (2010). This review was commissioned in 2009 as part of the then UK Labour government's consultation entitled 'Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls' with the aim to consider how sexualised images and messages affect the development of children and the link between sexualisation and violence. The *Papadopoulos Review* sets out explicitly to attend to the sexualisation of boys, as well as girls, but ends up re-emphasising rather than analysing the gendered and classed discourses of sexualisation. Returning to the *Papadopolous Review* is useful because it indicates a moment at which a problematisation of the sexualisation of boys could have been triggered in the UK (and potentially elsewhere given its publication in the context of other reviews such as the American Psychological Association's (2007) investigation into the sexualisation of girls). This is particularly since attention to both 'the boys and the girls' was specifically part of the remit of the *Papadopoulos Review* – but no trigger to prompt a more even analysis of gender and sexuality in policy concerns regarding sexualisation was pulled. This is, we argue, for specific sociological reasons to do with the ways in which subjects are assessed against the criterion of innocence.

Innocence and Class

A starting point for reflecting on implicit gender and class bias in the construction of innocent and sexual subjectivities is Foucault's genealogy of the family (Lenoir and Duschinsky, 2012). In *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, Foucault ([1976] 1978: 122) implied that 'the 'conventional' family' was a middle-class ideal that was then imposed as a norm in the nineteenth-century

upon the urban proletariat. His *Collège de France* lectures deepen this account by documenting how this norm operated differently between the middle and working classes, presenting the reader with Foucault as an incisive theorist of class. Foucault ([1975] 2003: 271) draws a distinction between "two processes of formation, two ways of organising the cellular family around the dangers of sexuality", one in the bourgeois family, the other appearing in the working-class family. Medical control first takes particular aim at the bourgeoisie, 'for the sake of a general protection of society and race', while judicial control is aimed more particularly at the working classes ([1975] 2003: 272; [1976] 1978: 122). Whereas in the bourgeois family Foucault identifies that the central concern is the desire of the child, which must be monitored to avoid perversion, in the working-class family it is adult sexuality which is constructed as dangerous. The curious implication is that two types of incest must be acknowledged as operating within nineteenth-century discourses on sexuality, depending on whether we are considering the bourgeois or working-class family. These two types of incest have two corresponding types of treatment: in the case of the bourgeois family, 'the child's sexuality is dangerous and calls for the coagulation of the family; in the other case, adult sexuality is thought to be dangerous and calls instead for the optimal distribution of the family' ([1975] 2003: 271).

For the bourgeois family, danger was perceived to lie in the abnormal personality which may result from problems or precociousness in the emergence of a child's sexuality, requiring the intervention from the medical field, and more precisely, the intervention of psychoanalysis 'which appears as the technique of dealing with infantile incest and all its disturbing effects in the family space'. For the working-class family, however, what was considered dangerous was the 'incestuous appetite of parents or older children, sexualisation around a possible incest coming from above, from the older members of the family', resulting in social, judicial and police intervention ([1975] 2003: 272). The peasant who enters the city as a new member of the proletariat finds himself without institutional supports or systems of stabilising obligations. Foucault claims that in the nineteenth century, as 'the European proletariat was being formed, conditions of work and housing, movements of the labour force, and the use of child labour, all made family relationships increasingly fragile and disabled the family structure', leading to 'bands of children' unsupervised by adults and an increase in 'foundlings, and infanticides, etcetera'. Foucault argues that 'faced with this immediate consequence of the constitution of the proletariat, very early on, around 1820-1825, there was major effort to reconstitute the family; employers, philanthropists, and public authorities used every possible means to reconstitute the family, to force workers to live in couples, to marry, have children and to recognise their children. The employers even made financial sacrifices in order to achieve this refamilialisation of working class life' ([1974] 2006: 83). The ideal of the family would serve as a means of stabilising workers, through 'mechanisms like the saving banks, housing policy, and so on' (1975] 2003: 270). Within this family, a strict rule would be the segregation of the sexes

and the generations, apart from the heterosexual married couple in the conjugal bed. On the basis of this class analysis of the family, Foucault makes one further point, arguing against the universality of the psychoanalytic theory of incest: 'there have been two modes of... the familialisation of sexuality, two family spaces of sexuality and sexual prohibition. No theory can validly pass over this duality' (1975] 2003: 273).

We would like to place this genealogy of representations of innocent and sexual subjectivities together with an observation by one of the participants in Buckingham and Bragg's (2003: 103) research on young people, sexuality and the media. Their 17-year-old informant, Ed, 'offered us an overview of the porn market' and the distinction that existed between 'class' or 'trashy' pornographic models: 'the innocent ones are always the best'. Even in pornographic images, the signifiers of 'innocent' femininity are a signifier of 'class'. Foucault's genealogy and Ed's remarks raise an important question: what then is innocence? Modernity as a historical epoch has connected shifting perspectives on childhood innocence particularly with sexual and bodily inexperience and virginity (Vanska, 2012). Furthermore, Kincaid (1992) has suggested that 'innocence' can be thought of as an absence, primarily of sexuality. This alone is not an adequate account, as it cannot explain the class and gender alignment of innocence discourses (Duschinsky, 2015). By contrast, we regard innocence as not lacking content, but as hiding its content: a normalising training in femininity. Only those forms and processes that will contribute to the embodiment of an ideal adult femininity – socially, ethnically, morally, economically, sexually, culturally – are treated as unmarked characteristics of innocence. The observation of Buckingham and Bragg's participant needs to be placed in the context of the classed context of innocence discourses. Foucault's genealogy discerned the historical roots of this 'duality'; signifiers of innocence play a similar, but updated, role in neoliberal societies as a marker and facilitator of middle-class status for young women:

> Delay in age of marriage and also delay in the birth of a first child on the part of young Western women, are directly connected with their being able to come forward into the labour market...poor white and black young women alike are targeted by government because the higher rate of teenage pregnancy (set against the falling birth rate among older and better educated young women) is almost exclusively concentrated within this group. Middle-class status requires the refusal of teenage mother hood and much effort is invested in ensuring that this norm is adhered to (McRobbie, 2009: 85).

Paechter (2011) has described 'precocious sexuality' as a 'pathology around which moral panics are repeatedly constructed, and in which themes of dirt and pollution feature strongly. These pathologies are varied but cluster around an understanding that there has been a loss of childhood innocence' and

include especially today 'concern about young girls wearing sexualised clothing'. The investment in the fashion and deportment of middle-class young women by the state, their parents and girls themselves, should be understood as the result of the capacity of innocence to serve as a species of 'symbolic capital' – cultural resources that serve to tacitly naturalise relations of power and stratification (Bourdieu, [1979] 1984: 382; [1997] 2000: 240-2). Possession of innocence, signified through clothing choice and deportment, bestows a quality of purity – which represents correspondence between the human subject and their originary essence. As such, defences of innocence – and the covert normalisation it enacts at the intersection of age and gender– are morally valorised as oriented and justified by the very nature of human existence. Though the purity of young women and children is taken to ontologically precede discourses regarding the threat they face by discourses on sexualisation, we would suggest otherwise. The threat of impurity to middle-class girls and the need to combat it are discursively produced through the problematisation of the distance of female subjects from their own essence – and particularly those who are not white or middle-class. The narrative of sexualisation as a corruption of the subject, located most visibly in fashion choices and deportment, can be useful to different discursive actors in presenting strategic explanations as to why in practice young women deviate from an imputed middle-class norm, constructed as their true and proper nature in an image aligned with early childhood (defined by QAA, (2014) subject benchmarks as 0-8years).

Purity and Inviolability

In contemporary Western societies, women gain social protections if they are perceived to be in line with the essence of femininity: either in the form of innocent children or as adults in monogamous, heterosexual relationships. Women risk losing their social protections if they are perceived to diverge in marked ways from this essence, and are marked as impure. Brown identifies the gender politics involved in this division between pure and impure forms of femininity:

> Operating simultaneously to link 'femininity' to the privileged races and classes, protection codes are also markers and vehicles of such divisions among women, distinguishing those women constructed as violable and hence protectable from those women who are their violation, logically unviolable because marked sexually available, marked as sexuality. Protection codes are thus key technologies in regulating privileged women as well as in intensifying the vulnerability and degradation of those on the unprotected side of the constructed divide between light and dark, wives and prostitutes, good girls and bad ones' (1995: 165).

Innocence has long operated as the paradigmatic 'protection code'. Some scholars have argued that this code is breaking down. They argue that it is imposed upon adult women as an erotic and subordinating signifier, and no longer serves as a marker of girlhood as children are forced to deploy signifiers of adult sexuality (e.g. Coy, 2009). Our position is that the protection code has become more complex but has not broken down. Young women are enjoined to display both innocence and sexuality, producing young femininity as a performative tightrope at best and a paradox at worst. Renold and Ringrose (2011), for example, have described the way in which the 'Playboy Bunny' icon may be mobilised by young working class women to mean both innocence and sexiness, though each sign appears to formally exclude the other. Renold and Ringrose attend insightfully to the strong intersection between gender and class, generally occluded and presumed upon by discourses on sexualisation, by treating social practices as strategies for navigating and managing the demands of competing demands and norms. In such an analysis, girls are neither cynically or innocently 'buying into' patriarchy, but mobilising the cultural resources available in the context of material and gendered inequalities in ways that are both normative and disruptive. In a Bourdieusian frame, innocence can be regarded as a *polyvalent* form of symbolic capital for women and girls, able to satisfy competing social imperatives of age and gender norms faced by a subject.

If innocence is considered as symbolic capital, to be 'invested' (Renold, 2005: 34) in by young women, this can be conceptualised using the microeconomic theory of intertemporal consumption choice, used to model aggregate decisions to invest their money or spend it between two periods - Time 1 and Time 2 (Loewenstein and Elster, 1992). Actors may be oriented towards 'investing' more time and effort in Time 1 into innocence if this promises to pay dividends in Time 2. Most notably, investment in representations of purity in adolescence, as opposed to interpersonal power or freedom of movement or taste, may facilitate access for young women to the symbolic and material rewards of middle-class life. However such an investment does not make sense for young women whose conditions of life do not suggest to them that they will be rewarded in Time 2 (Walkerdine, et al. 2001); moreover, authorities too will not be as concerned to ensure 'investment' rather than 'spending' in such cases. Those who do not invest in the signs of innocence, as a marker of docile training in unmarked normalcy, can in turn be mobilised as the constitutive outside of proper, inviolable femininity (see e.g. Dobson, 2014; Epstein and Johnson, 1998; Hasinoff, 2014; Ringrose & Renold 2014;). Young women, in this perspective, are mobilising the constitutively both normative and disruptive cultural resources of 'innocence' and/or 'desirability' to mark their performed identities, in the context of embedded material and gendered inequalities. The abject, violable figure of the 'slut' haunts these practices of the self, with discourses such as 'shamelessness' organising practices and identities of pleasure and threat at the boundaries.

So long as a boy has enjoyed a 'normal' upbringing, his departure from childhood's natural innocence over the course of his childhood is not seen as problematic. There are of course examples of public furores around the representation of young boys, an excellent example being the 1990s Calvin Klein advertising campaign explored by Vanska (2011). This, very quickly cancelled, campaign featured a black and white image of 2 young boys in Calvin Klein underwear (a pair of white boxers and white briefs) jumping and playing on a sofa. Concerns were raised about the sexual representation of these boys still within the discursive domain of early childhood. Particular attention was paid to the boy in the white briefs and the potential visibility of the outline of his penis (Vanska, 2011). The public reaction to this imagery clearly demonstrates that anxieties around the sexualisation of childhood do of course transcend girls to the fashion, deportment and representation of boys. This does suggest a change in the way the bodies of boys are seen, understood and assigned meanings (Vanska, 2011). Young boys are, like girls, readily thought of as sexually vulnerable and thus must work within the boundaries that signify innocence. We contend however, that this shifts in relation to boys beyond early childhood. After middle childhood, (generally defined as the period after early childhood and before adolescence) boys have no need to be encouraged to 'invest' in innocence rather than 'spend' on their sexual identity. This is because masculinity is already presumed to contain (hetero)sexual desire at least after middle childhood; its presence thus not a cause for concern. As such, some tensions parallel to the innocence/sexual tightrope for young women can be seen in the tensions for performing and dressing as a desiring (i.e. full) masculine subject whilst also investing in the 'feminised' capital of the primary school classroom – however, these are much less pressing already by secondary school (Skelton, 2002, 2012). So long as they remember to use condoms and are not clearly culpable of using force, adolescent boys' responsibility for (hetero)sexual self-management is finished in terms of the potential for stigma or threat. Thus, in contrast to women, men generally retain their *unmarked relative purity* and a *status of inviolability*, except in cases in which they have been situated as inhuman (Graham, 2006). This makes signifiers of male sexuality in public spaces unmarked and unremarkable, in contrast to what we call the *new sexual visibility* of young women, whose fashion, behaviours and movements are all the more salient and assessable due to the contradictory injunction that to be acceptable they must signify as assertive but not aggressive, successful but not square, sexy but not a slut.

The allocation of acceptability and unacceptability, and of sexuality and innocence, as properties of a subject are organised through codes which mark particular classed and notably for here, gendered subjects as particularly visible and assessable (Attwood, 2014). For example, Beasley (2008) draws upon the Australian 'Holden cars' advert to consider how stereotypical representations of both masculinity and femininity (which are also heavily classed) generate different societal reactions, with the former apparently invisible and the latter

cause for public concern (Kizilos, 2006). As Beasley (2008:90) states stereotypes of sexualised femininity are demeaning to women but stereotypic masculinity 'could not possibly demean men'. Men's bodies and fashion can be marked – for example, regarding size (Monaghan, 2005) – but contemporary visual cultures and representation do not mark and question men's (hetero)sexual citizenship in terms that make sexuality a threat to them. In homohysterical (Anderson, 2009) cultures masculinity is perceived as a threatened by homosexual desire but it is not the presence of sex or sexual desire that is problematic rather its direction. Young male adolescents are assumed by themselves and others to be in dramatically less danger from heterosexual sexuality than young female adolescents (see e.g. Farvid and Braun, 2006; Kehily 2001; Korobov & Bamberg 2004;). As Wood (2005) notes, girls who played on the street, actively engaging in public spaces, were treated as having willingly put themselves at sexual risk as a result of not making the choice to play in the 'safe' indoors. By contrast, even sexual relations between female teachers and male students were generally seen by participants in Meyer's (2007) focus groups as morally acceptable and causing no damage to the young person, though some argued that harm might be caused if the age-difference were so great that the male could not be in control.

Indeed, if innocence and purity function as signifiers of approved femininity for the girl-child, in general signifiers of heterosexuality are understood as a form of symbolic capital for young men (Allen, 2013; Pascoe 2007). Sex and sexuality are considered as key sites where individuals 'become' masculine (Allen, 2003) and the imagery of masculine sexuality is one of natural, strong, unbridled and virile sexual knowledge and activity, existing in a constant state of readiness (Jackson, 2006; Phoenix and Frosh, 2001;). For boys and young men then sex is not considered a cause for concern rather a natural state, an assumed signifier of full, adult masculinity itself. The existence of erotic desire for the young male subject thus doesn't prompt the degree of anxiety that it does for the innocent and pure young women. That is unless the direction and object of that desire is constructed as inappropriate. Successful masculine status is tied to both heterosexuality and traditionally homophobia (Francis and Skelton, 2005). Research has identified that boys themselves are often complicit in policing heterosexuality (Connell, 2000) and as such anxieties about being gay or effeminate are central to why boys attempt not to stray far from the masculine ideal and risk being labelled as failed subjects. Barnes (2012) identified school boy humour, notably homophobic banter, as a key part of maintaining the boundaries of acceptable masculinity and as such power in male friendship groups (see also Fair, 2011; Pascoe, 2007;). This traditional theorising of masculinity and homophobia that emerged and then dominated studies of men and masculinity in the late 20th century is constrasted by contemporary evolutions in the field (see for example Arxer, 2011; Elliott, 2016; Ward, 2015). Theories of inclusive masculinity (see Anderson and McCormack, 2016) suggest that contemporary masculinities particularly for young men, are more diverse, less characterised by homophobia and involve increasing physical touch and

emotional openness within male peer relationships. Despite this shift in the centrality of homophobia to the construction of hegemonic masculinity in conversations in the academy the biological essentialism that dominates many of the reports and reviews into sexualisation in minority world nations to date (of which Papadopolous is a central one) assumes heterosexuality as the default sexual subjecthood of citizens (see e.g. Barker and Duchinsky, 2012; Clark, 2013). Young men's sexual subjecthoods become a source of public anxiety or moral outrage not because they are 'sexualised', losing innocence or purity, as is the case for girls, but when their 'natural' sexual desires are 'used' inappropriately (perhaps with force) or are directed at an 'inappropriate' subject or object (by virtue for example of age).

Negotiating Purity and Inviolability in Fashion and Dress

Contemporary fears surrounding the sexualisation of girls as perpetual, potential victims of men's supposedly natural and unstoppable sexual desire often centre on how girls present themselves with clothing, for example padded bras, bikinis or shoes with heels (Rush and La Nauze, 2006). Signifiers of purity, modesty and innocence have long pervaded social and moral debates regarding the clothing and dress of women and girls. Entwistle (2000) highlights the role of Christian doctrines in promoting modesty of dress for women, 'a moral duty born out of Eve's guilt'. Whilst men's fashions could be considered highly erotic, with the rise of fashions for sizeable codpieces in the 16th century for example, it was predominantly women's immodest displays, not the clothing of men, that prompted moral and religious condemnation. This began to shift in the 17th century and beyond with dress and the appearance of men associated with the image of a nation. For example Elizabethan society saw the rise of concerns about the effeminacy of young men's dress with too much interest in 'womanly things' such as clothing and jewellery. Men represented their nation and should be above such a trivial thing as fashion. Thus concerns about male clothing considered the extent to which men embodied current cultural ideals of masculinity, and whether they had been tempted into effeminate ways, rather than the dangers posed to/by them of the sexual elements of dress.

Cole's (2000) extensive explorations of fashion and clothing in relation to gay men highlight the role of dress as a signifier of masculinity and sexuality. Cole cites advice given to male homosexuals in Britain in the 1940s which suggests avoiding being 'too meticulous in the matter of your own clothes' or having 'any extremes in colour or cut' (2011:216). Indeed prior to gay liberation, gay male dress choice seemingly followed hegemonic male dress codes to avoid identification by mainstream society (Cole, 2014:14). Cole goes on to argue that this desire to appear masculine led to a rise in interest in the body amongst gay men that accounts for the rise of body-building and gym culture in the stereotype of the nineties urban gay male. Based on ethnographic research, Pascoe (2007) draws our attention to the ways in which discourses of male sexuality and

clothing are also highly racialised. For example during her US school based research with young men, she noted that careful attention and care of clothing and appearance among young white men would have resulted in the attachment of the fag label, questioning a subjects sexuality and/or masculinity. However, among young African-American men this was actually a signifier of masculinity and part of their relationship to a certain cultural or racial group.

McCormack's work (2014) usefully highlights the classed negotiations of masculinity amongst teenage boys. Although he argues that there is an increasingly positive attitude towards homosexuality across classes in his research in UK further education, his 2014 work highlights the classed nature of embodied interactions amongst young men. Despite a general expansion of gendered behaviours, including notably homosocial tactility he noted that the limitations placed by class on young men's interactions on social media and in nearby but often little accessed towns and cities. It is argued that this prohibits the emphatic support for LGBT rights and condemnation of homophobia (Anderson 2009; 2011) that was evidenced amongst middle class boys in McCormack's other research (McCormack 2014). Class in this instance results in less social and cultural capital amongst these young men as a result of restricted access to wider cultural discourses that esteem softer masculinities whereby, as one participant highlighted, the wearing of a t shirt with glitter (Anderson, 2014) would be deemed acceptable. Evidenced here is what Savage (2003) describes as the particular universal whereby middle class practices are regarded as good and alternative working class norms or capitals are marginalised (Skeggs, 2009). Thus class functions here as a parameter of privilege (Taylor, 2012) whereby working class young men struggle to accommodate decreasing cultural homophobia and increasing softer masculinities as they dress and perform their own everyday subjectivities. Indeed in McCormack's research the only time that homophobic language was used was in pertaining to a subject's physical appearance. In this case despite increasing acceptance of LGBT identities amongst all of the young men, the appearance, dress and comportment of some of the (working class) boys was still being assessed against, and thus performed in line with, (traditional) signifiers of masculinity that rely on heterosexuality.

Discourses of sexualisation, sexuality, clothing and dress are adopted, rejected, negotiated and reconfigured within classed and racialised frames of reference. Yet, it remains the case that in general signifiers of (hetero)sexuality (however this is performed) are understood as a form of symbolic capital for young men (Allen, 2013; Pascoe 2007). By contrast, girls continue to be assessed by a standard of heteronormative 'innocence', not just during early childhood, as for boys but even as childhood comes to a close (Egan, 2013). For the female adolescent, the norm of retaining a state of purity even into sexual maturity requires a redoubled effort in self-regulation in order to achieve an acceptable performative identity. Sexualisation as the contamination of identity is always but a single step away, or potentially already present for those whose class context makes appeal to innocence as symbolic capital difficult or ineffective.

However, for young men such an assessment is foreclosed, as they are perceived to already have been endowed with sexuality by virtue of their masculinity and for this to be natural rather than a contaminant. As a consequence, to 'sexualise' an adolescent boy is to give him a double-dose of masculine sexuality. And where masculine sexuality is perceived as predatory, sexualisation turns 'the boy' into a sexual predator on innocent girls - as in the *Papadopoulos Review*.

The 'sexualisation of boys' in the *Papadopoulos Review*

The *Papadopoulos Review* claims that 'femininity' has been subjected to 'hyper-sexualisation and objectification', whereas 'masculinity' has been 'hyper-masculinised' (2010: 3, 10). A 'double standard' for sexuality between men and women is encoded through the 'hyper-' prefixing both terms, which allows discursive constructions of the respective essence of each gender to be covertly produced, precisely via representations of what is being added to this originary state. The *Papadopoulos Review* assumes that boys are already 'masculine' by virtue of being males, and become more so through 'sexualisation'. Other reviews of 'sexualisation of childhood' debates also mirror this construction, Rush and La Nauze (2006) in their very short list of clothing that 'sexualises' boys cite jackets with structured shoulders (or shoulder pads) with the rationale that this item sexualises boys by drawing attention to attributes, such as broad shoulders, associated with adult masculinity. Rather than critically considering the gendered relations of power that organise this differential marking of adult sexual status, the Papadopolous text takes 'femininity' as a pure and vulnerable state, threatened by the intrusion of (hetero)sexuality. For instance, the *Papadopoulos Review* notes that whereas 'wanting to be desired is natural', a hyper-sexualised form of femininity is oriented by a 'dominant desire... to be desired' by men (2010: 31). By contrast, a hyper-masculinised 'male' (as identified in the Papadopoulos Review) consumes pornography which makes them 'sexually callous', (2010: 31-3, 68-9). The assumption being that boys and young men could only possibly identify, when consuming pornographic representations, with having women as objects and never themselves imagining being sexually passive (see Bragg, 2015) or identifying with a more fluid sexuality. In addition, these men will have fewer feelings 'of guilt, repulsion and disgust' (Papadopolous, 2010: 31-3, 68-9). Disgust therefore allows men to distinguish within heterosexual objects between those that are appropriate and those that must be inviolable because of their purity, a division which with Foucault we can see as potentially highly classed. Were it not for this division between pure and impure forms of female subjectivity, the Papadopoulos Review suggests that 'male desire' would be trained on 'girls', since it would be 'acceptable to relate to children in a sexual way' (2010: 36, 38). A presumed assumption of heterosexual desire pervades this analysis and the vital importance of purity to the account of the *Papadopoulos Review* regarding the danger of sexualisation is that it stands as a barrier that holds back innate and

inevitable masculine desire, and thus offers a crucial measure of protection to those (classed and raced) forms of subjectivity that successfully manage to embody it.

A strategic ambiguity also occurs in the age ascribed by the text to this male threat. For instance, the text cites quantitative studies which indicate that, of '9-19 year-olds' – a vast age-range spanning pre-pubescence through to full adulthood – 'almost one in eight had visited pornographic websites showing violent images' (2010: 45). Moreover, the *Papadopoulos Review* asserts that reliable, quantitative studies have shown that 'among offenders, the largest group trading in internet child pornography were aged between 15-19'. However, in making this assertion, the Papadopoulos Review neglects to clarify that 'child pornography' is defined under UK law as an indecent image of an individual under eighteen years of age (2010: 73; cf. Section 45 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003). The distinction between 'peers' and 'adult predators' (2010a: 49) is therefore strategically blurred by the text. The two categories are made to slide into one another, constructing adult predation on young girls as common, and teenage males as animalistic: inherently dangerous, immoral and impure. Something similar occurs in the Rush and La Nauze (2006) report where images of children from store catalogues were analysed and presented as sexualised. One notable example is a picture (p.6) of a boy and girl outside in a garden or park, both are dressed perhaps unremarkably (or ideally?) for the setting, but the interpretation, because the boy is looking over the girl's shoulder is one of male predator and female victim. Such a discursive construction positions heterosexual desire as both normative and sinister, and in turn situates young women as in severe and pervasive sexual danger. The assumption is that boys consuming popular culture and pornography would only identify with and be influenced by (dominant or predatory) the men that they see and in turn, girls only by women (Bragg, 2015). In addition failure to critically evaluate this unquestioning gendered positioning is at risk of impoverishing men's emotional and sexual ontologies (Edwards, 2006). There is a lack of consideration of how such statements and perspectives actually serve to reify the imagery it is intended to critique; whereby boys are once again constructed as perpetually potential predators, resulting in emotion as 'taboo' (Donaldson, 1993). The consequences of this are both to fail to recognise the increasing diversities of contemporary masculinities (as more emotionally and physically open, see McCormack, 2014) and simultaneously to potentially prohibit the discussion of emotion and feeling in both platonic and romantic and sexual relationships.

The *Papadopoulos Review* also makes gendered claims about young people, sexuality and morality in arguing for sexualisation as caused by and contributing to 'pornification of society' (2010: 11). It proposes that the statistical correlation found in a study by Carroll et al. (2008) evidences a 'clear link' between 'acceptance of pornography' and 'risky sexual attitudes and behaviours, substance abuse and non-marital cohabitation values' (2010: 69). Such appeals to psychological findings serve as a strategy of legitimation within the text. They

ground, in the objectivity of a scientific register, assertions about the true nature of men and women, in contrast to what are taken as their debased present forms of subjectivity and behaviour. Depictions of hyper-sexualised femininity in the *Papadopoulos Review* construct an image of individuals deviating from the pure and 'natural' feminine state of wanting to be desired by men and 'having a family and raising children'. Depictions of hyper-masculinised males in the *Papadopoulos Review* construct an image of animalistic male sexual desire – normally held in check by guilt and disgust, but now directed towards violent and risky behaviours and inappropriate (hetero)sexual objects, 'outside' of 'stable' monogamous, ideally married, relationships (2010: 46, 69). For instance, the *Papadopoulos Review* quotes an article by Dines (2008), a prominent feminist anti-pornography campaigner, which uses anecdotal evidence to suggest that male use of online adult pornography leads to the desire for more and more deviant sexual objects, such that consumers 'moved seamlessly from adult women to children' (2010: 47, citing Dines, 2008: 140). Without the floodgates provided by representations of purity, which designate appropriate and inappropriate objects of desire, unbound and dangerous masculine sexuality will spill out with a 'seamless' lack of discrimination.

Conclusion

In contemporary media and policy discourses, working-class girls are treated as already sexualised: they are judged as distant from the true essence of femininity, and this distance is identified within discourses on sexualisation with the display of sexual signifiers. Middle-class girls are treated as always at risk of sexualisation, of departing from the precarious image of middle-class heteronormative respectability that waits until adult monogamy for the display of signifiers of adult sexuality. By contrast, after middle childhood, boys are not generally seen as threatened by sexualisation, as masculinity is always already presumed to contain a substantial dose of heterosexual desire. Sexualisation is re-interpreted as hyper masculinisation and positions boys as potential predators and/or with immoral desires for inappropriate subjects. This paper has responded to calls from authors such as Garner (2012) to consider explicitly the sexualisation of boys. We have shown that the negotiation of clothing, dress and embodiment within this problematisation has been shot through with classed, racialised and gendered dynamics.

Our argument, has been that 'the sexualisation of boys' is a problematisation which has a substantial barrier to its activation and widespread acceptance, leaving the practices of young men underscrutinised and the practices of young women overscrutinised. This is despite the fact that constructions of men as always and ever-sexual have a significant impact on gendered practices (Kim, et al. 2007), not least sexual violence. In addition, such lack of any sustained focus serves to leave hyper masculinisation (see

Papadopolous, 2010) as the only term through which sexualisation and boys can be examined in policy terms or in media attention. Assumptions of the predatory and uncontrollable nature of the (hetero)sexuality of boys and men remain unquestioned. Heterosexuality is assumed and slippages of age present paedophilia as an inevitable 'next step' when so-called hyper masculinity reigns. Fashion and dress for girls and for boys operate as both protection and threat in terms of sexualisation. In discussions of the appropriateness of clothing or its advertisement for young women their assumed status as object is positioned against that of a powerful, predatory young men who cannot help himself under such cultural conditions. It is an un-interrogated assumption that men will only identify with the dominant, predator portrayed in fashion, perfume adverts or pornography (and women in turn with the passive victim) (Bragg, 2015).

The issue lies in the way 'sexualisation' has been framed as an inappropriate supplement of sexuality, added to a young person's identity and actions. This is only an emotive concern when the object being 'sexualised' is assessed in terms of their innocence as proximity with a natural essence – an assessment that is not made of contemporary, unmarked masculinity. Policy and media discourses are less concerned with the hyper-masculine male than the sexualised female because the former is something treated as deriving from, if intensifying, the 'natural' whereas the latter is viewed as the destruction of the subjects' imputed 'innocent' essence. This double standard means that women are either natural or unnatural, pure or impure; whereas men are not subject to this assessment after middle childhood. So long as they are not assessed in this way, we would suggest, boys will not be problematised as threatened by sexualisation.

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