Inclusive Masculinities in a Working-Class Sixth Form in North East England

Abstract

This research examines the construction of masculinity amongst a group of working-class boys aged 16-19 in the North East of England. Drawing on data collected from a six week ethnography with boys in a religious (Christian) sixth form college, this study documents how only a small minority of these boys embodied the orthodox archetype of masculinity which has traditionally been associated with working-class youth. Instead, the great majority of participants adopted attitudes and behaviors which can be categorized as a set of inclusive masculinities: They espoused positive attitudes towards homosexuality, engaged in physical tactility and emotional intimacy, and used homosexually-themed language without the intent to wound or marginalize other boys. These findings pose a considerable challenge to dominant narratives on working-class masculinities; narratives which must now be reconfigured to account for the proliferation of inclusive masculinities amongst working-class youth.

Keywords: class; education; homophobia; inclusivity; men.

Introduction

Research on working-class masculinities in the North East of England has documented how young men esteem an orthodox archetype of masculinity (Nayak and Kehily 1996), connecting this with the processes of deindustrialization that had a profound effect in the region (see Nayak 2006). This contributed to a body of research on working-class masculinities in schools that showed young men's behaviors were predicated upon homophobia, misogyny, and the avoidance of femininity (Francis 1999; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Epstein 1997). The dominant mode of masculinity amongst working-class British youth has consistently been shown to regulate and restrict acceptable masculine behaviors and marginalize those who operate outside of it.

However, a growing body of contemporary literature has challenged this dominant narrative of working-class masculinity, evidencing the proliferation of inclusive masculinities amongst British teenagers (e.g. Anderson 2009; Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2012; Magrath 2015; Roberts 2013). Documenting how a decline in cultural homophobia has resulted in a change in the attitudes and behaviors of teenage boys, McCormack's (2014) study extended these findings to working-class youth; showing how the attitudes and behaviors of working-class boys were changing in positive ways.

In this ethnographic study, we examine the social dynamics of masculinities in a sixth form college[1] in a small town in the North East of England. We document that the majority of the working-class boys adopted attitudes and behaviors which can be categorized as a set of inclusive masculinities. Although evidence of residual orthodox masculinity was found in this setting, inclusive masculinities were both numerically and socially dominant, contrasting with earlier literature in this area (e.g. Mac an Ghaill 1994; Nayak and Kehily 1996). Considering these findings alongside other research on working-class youth (e.g. Magrath 2015; McCormack 2014; Roberts 2013), we contend that dominant narratives which provide static

notions of working-class masculinity need to be reconfigured in order to account for the decline in cultural homophobia and the impact this has had on the social organization of masculinities among working-class youth.

The policing of working-class masculinity in schools

Research has documented that working-class boys in British school settings must adopt certain intellectual and behavioral characteristics to avoid social marginalization (e.g. Nayak 2006; McDowell 2003; Wight 1994). Savage (2003) describes how a range of middle-class practices have become "regarded as universally 'normal,' 'good' and 'appropriate'" in the UK, and working-class male youth exaggerate other culturally esteemed components of gender and sexuality in order to contest this positioning (see Froyum 2007; Pyke 1996).

Early British research that examined working-class male youth at school showed how social and institutional processes of class marginalized young working-class men in school (Willis 1977). With a more substantive focus on gender, Mac an Ghaill's (1994) ethnographic study explicated how a group of working-class boys – the "macho lads" – were able to maintain a heterosexual identity and thus avoid homophobic abuse by displaying an exaggerated hyper-masculinity. Specifically, these macho lads avoided activities and behaviors socially coded as feminine and gay, with their interests and behaviors limited to "three F's" – football, fucking and fighting. Implicit in this framing was that homophobia was directed towards any boy who did not conform to this orthodox form of masculinity.

Same-sex desire and gay identity were regularly discussed in derogatory ways by working-class boys in the 1980s and 1990s (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Vicars 2006), and contesting anti-gay statements could result in being the subject of homophobic abuse (Nayak and Kehily 1996). Such findings were corroborated in school settings in Australia, where boys who supported gay students and gay rights were also labelled gay (Plummer 1999).

Indeed, the stigmatization of gay identities has been shown to be a routine feature of school life, and sexual minority students have reported negative school experiences including high levels of bullying, verbal harassment and social exclusion (Epstein and Johnson 1998; Rivers 2001).

The use of homophobia to police both sexual minority and heterosexual students led to a particularly narrow set of behaviors that were acceptable for working-class male youth. Francis (1999) described these as including "having a laugh,' alcohol consumption, disruptive behavior, objectifying women, and an interest in pastimes and subjects constructed as masculine" (1999: 357). Engagement with school work was seen to damage a boy's standing with his peers (Jackson 2006)—an approach to education that Lyng (2009) calls "antischoolishness," and one that negatively impacts upon working-class boys' career aspirations (Reay 2002, 2006). Walker (2013) highlights that this rejection of work does not always take "laddish" forms, and that marginalized working-class men disengage from work for a number of gendered reasons. Indeed, while these findings undoubtedly hide complex personal identifications and experiences of being a man (McDowell 2001), they nonetheless speak to the broader issue that masculinity has proven damaging for many working-class boys and men (Way 2011).

The literature documents that boys frequently resorted to physical violence as a way of asserting their masculinities in this context, often using homophobic language alongside violent acts (Plummer 1999; Vicars 2006). Indeed, physicality has also been central to conforming to esteemed working-class masculinities (Nayak 2006), with Nayak (2003) discussing the strategic use of football fandom as a "curriculum of the body" that enables working-class boys to maintain a sense of affinity with industrialized masculinities. Bodily displays of homophobia and disgust have also been used to convey a "natural" heterosexual masculine identity in school (Nayak and Kehily 1996). Here, disgust was performed through

moving away from other boys, as any physical closeness or tactility was seen as evidence of a stigmatized gay identity. Working-class boys were therefore prohibited from holding hands, softly hugging, caressing or kissing, with physical touch limited to acts of aggression (Anderson 2009). Furthermore, with working-class boys compelled to project a façade of toughness, discussing personal and emotional subjects was negated to prevent a fracture in the hard face of masculinity (Goodey 1997).

While this form of homophobic and aggressive masculinity also occurred among middle-class groups (Renold 2001), the literature suggests it was more pronounced among working-class men. The dominance of middle class norms in schools marginalized working-class youth (Savage 2003), resulting in them placing greater importance to physicality and aggressiveness in their school life (McDowell 2003). While these class inequalities persist (Atkinson, Roberts and Savage 2012), broader social changes related to masculinity have had an impact on working-class young men's experiences of schooling (McCormack 2014; Roberts 2014).

Changing masculinities in schools

A growing body of academic research has documented the emergence of inclusive masculinities in contemporary British society (see Anderson 2009; Roberts 2014), particularly in school settings (McCormack 2012). Primarily, this research has shown that masculinities in British schools may no longer be predicated upon homophobia, misogyny and aggression in the way that the earlier literature suggests (Warwick and Aggleton 2014). In his study of boys at sixth form colleges in the south of England, McCormack (2012) documented how diminishing homophobia had resulted in heterosexual boys enacting radically different gendered behaviors in these settings. Indeed, the majority of students

intellectualized pro-gay attitudes, condemned homophobia, were physically tactile and emotionally open, did not publicly engage in misogyny, and were inclusive of gay peers.

In these settings, pro-gay attitudes were esteemed and the expression of homophobia was stigmatized. Similarly, homophobic language had fallen out of usage and was denounced in these schools (McCormack 2012). Moreover, male students did not exhibit aggressive behaviors at these schools; instead, they embraced "feminine" behaviors, with physical intimacy and emotional openness between boys both frequent and normalized. Gay students socialized within male peer groups, and no lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) students reported being subordinated or ostracized in the schools. While not uncontested (see Roberts 2014), this work is supported by a growing body of literature on changing masculinities among young men in the UK (e.g. Magrath, Roberts and Anderson 2013; Morris and Anderson 2014; Roberts 2013).

While this literature has detailed the increasing inclusivity of heterosexual male youth, it has been critiqued for its focus upon "principally privileged" middle-class white men (McCormack 2014). Consequently, as research has traditionally shown that working-class men maintain elevated rates of homophobia compared to middle-class men (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Froyum 2007), the applicability of these findings to working-class youth has been questioned (Roberts 2014).

In order to address this critique and examine how class intersects with masculinity and decreasing homophobia, McCormack (2014) conducted ethnographic research on 16-18 year old, working-class boys in a sixth form college in the south of England. This study found the majority of these boys embodied inclusive masculinities; however, their inclusive attitudes and behaviors were shown to be less pronounced than those documented among middle-class boys. Utilizing Bourdieu's conceptualization of the symbolic economy of capitals, McCormack (2014) accounted for the differences in these findings from a class

perspective. He argued that the development of inclusivity amongst male youth is related to their engagement in a British youth culture that has come to esteem softer masculinities and more positive attitudes towards homosexuality. However, he contended that class served as a proxy for the level of insulation from the broader cultural discourses around gender and sexuality, and that it acted as a buffer on how boys engage with contemporary youth culture, restricting but not prohibiting the development of inclusivity.

Although class was shown to be a dampening factor on the development of inclusive masculinities, this group of working-class boys still maintained markedly more progressive attitudes and behaviors than documented in earlier research on working-class British youth (Willis 1977; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Nayak and Kehily 1996). Indeed, McCormack (2012) questioned the extent to which such seminal accounts from a more homophobic era speak to contemporary youth; to assume so would mean endorsing a fixed notion of working-class masculinities that remain unaffected by wider cultural changes.

Roberts (2013) offers a related critique of research on men, masculinities and class. He does so by arguing that the tendency to portray working-class masculinities as oppositional to middle-class ones is simplistic and erases the complexity of working-class lives. By focusing on the more damaging behaviors of young men, he argues that the "spectacular and more discussion-worthy enactments of protest masculinity come to overshadow the lives of the large mass of unspectacular, ordinary men" (Roberts 2013: 683). Given these two strands of masculinities research – of recognizing both change and diversity in working-class men's lives – it is necessary to examine how best to understand these changes.

Understanding the changing context in the UK

In order to understand the social and historical context of research on men and masculinities, it is important to recognize that the seminal research on the topic (e.g. Epstein 1997; Mac an Ghaill 1994; Nayak and Kehily 1996) occurred during an exceptionally homophobic time in British history. The 1980s and early 1990s saw a spike in attitudinal homophobia, which was a result of a combination of factors (Loftus 2001). These included the rise of moralistic right-wing politics, the politicization of evangelical religion and the AIDS crisis (Anderson 2014). It was during this period where homophobia was particularly high that men went to great lengths to avoid being perceived as gay (e.g. Epstein 1997; Mac an Ghaill 1994).

However, there has been a significant decrease in cultural homophobia in Britain over the last fifteen years. The *British Social Attitudes* Survey shows that 64% of people thought homosexuality was always wrong in 1987, but this had dropped to 24% in 2006. Asking different questions in 2012, the most recent survey found that only 29% of adults think same-sex relationships are wrong—a number that is even lower among youth, given the presence of a generational cohort effect in the data (Clements and Field 2014). In an extensive review of survey data, Clements and Field (2014, p. 21) demonstrate that there have been significant improvements across a range of issues for LGB people in the UK, arguing that "more liberal attitudes toward gay rights can…be seen as part of the progressive diversification, individualization and globalization of sexual behavior" (see also Keleher and Smith 2012, for discussion of the US context). This is supported by various legal changes toward sexual equality in the UK (Weeks 2007), with the introduction of same-sex marriage in 2014 the most recent example. This change in social attitudes is attributable to a range of factors, including the success of the gay rights movement, improving media coverage of LGB issues and the expansion of the internet that enhances gay visibility and facilitates online connections that were not possible prior to the internet (Anderson 2014).

Anderson (2009) theorized the impact of declining homophobia on the regulation of masculinities through inclusive masculinity theory. Homohysteria is the central concept, explaining in which contexts homophobia polices gendered behaviors. Defined as men's fear of being perceived as gay by other people, three factors are necessary in the production of homohysteria within a given culture: the awareness that homosexuality exists as a sexual identity, the conflation of gender and sexuality and a cultural zeitgeist of homophobia (McCormack and Anderson 2014). When these conditions are met, a homohysteric culture exists where it is believed that anyone might be gay and men fear association with femininity and homosexuality. Consequently, men are concerned with proving their heterosexuality and therefore police their gendered behaviors in order to avoid being perceived as gay (Anderson 2009).

However, as homophobia declines, it has two effects on men's behaviors: the behaviors that men can enact without being stigmatized increases and multiple archetypes of masculinity are esteemed. This is based on the premise that when homophobia declines, so does homohysteria and thus the potency of homophobia to regulate masculinities—because men are no longer concerned if others perceive them as gay. Consequently, men can enact an expanded range of gendered behaviors without social regulation, resulting in increased physical tactility and emotional openness. As the regulation of masculinity changes, men adopt more inclusive attitudes towards those who not embody orthodox masculinity.

Inclusive masculinity theory thus provides a framework for understanding the construction of masculinities in cultures where male hierarchies are not maintained through an oppressive hegemony because homohysteria has decreased and men no longer fear being perceived by others as gay (Anderson 2009). The inclusion it speaks to is primarily related to men embracing emotional intimacy, tactility and gay men, and does not claim that all forms of oppressive hierarchies among men have been dispelled.

Methods

Procedures

This research employed ethnographic methods to examine the construction of working-class masculinities at a sixth form college in a small town in the North East of England. The ethnography consisted of six weeks of intense participant observation, resulting in over 100 hours of naturalistic data collection, alongside fifteen semi-structured interviews. These were conducted at the end of the research process, with students strategically selected based on prior observations, their embodied masculinities and their friendship networks.

The first author collected the data in this research. He adopted the role of "participant as observer" (David and Sutton 2011, 158). Primarily, this entailed engaging in the core activities of the participants, though not as a full member. Thus, although students were aware of his presence as a researcher, he immersed himself in their environment by attending college at the same times as them, and socializing with them in the common room. While some data was collected in lessons, most time was spent interacting with students in the common room. This location was normally free from teachers, and thus provided an area to interact with participants away from institutional regulation. Importantly, the composition of male students in the common room altered regularly, with pupils coming and going on an hourly basis according to their schedules of lessons and free periods. This ensured engagement with a diverse range of boys that was representative of the entirety of the college.

Observational data was also collected at the various sporting and recreational clubs run by the college. The taking of field notes was left until leaving the research site in order to minimize the visibility of the research process (Spradley 1970). However, scratch notes of key phrases and incidents were made on the first author's mobile phone whilst at the college so as to serve as a reminder of events for notation later (Bryman 2012).

Whilst participant observation provided data on the behaviors of male students, fifteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to gain an insight into participants' attitudes. Interviewees were strategically selected using a purposive sampling method that assured a wide variety of boys were represented in the interview sample (David and Sutton 2011). This included interviewing boys from different social groups, ensuring a mix of those who identified as both orthodox and inclusive. The first author also selected certain participants because of the rapport he had with them, identifying them as key informants (see Mac an Ghaill 1994). An interview code covered issues surrounding hobbies and interests, friendship, popularity, attitudes towards homosexuality and the use of homosexually themed language. On average, interviews lasted 25 minutes—we attribute this relatively short time due to the boys already being known to the interviewer so preliminary questions were not required. The first author had already had multiple conversations with each interviewee, meaning that there was good rapport with participants. It is our perception that participants felt able to discuss their experiences safely and did so in a way which yielded rich and important data. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically coded in order to extract core themes that could be distinguished both between and within transcripts (Bryman 2012).

Participants were coded as exhibiting orthodox or inclusive masculinities according to a combination of their attitudes toward homosexuality and their physical and emotional relationships with other males. Central to this understanding is that "inclusive" and "orthodox" serve as umbrella categories for a far broader set of masculinities, but that the terms maintain heuristic utility in understanding the social dynamics of gender related to social stratifications of masculinities between men (Anderson 2009).

This approach to classifying participants' gendered behaviors was based on extant literature on inclusive masculinities (see McCormack and Anderson 2014). As McCormack

(2014) and others (Anderson 2014; Roberts 2013) highlight, masculinities are diverse and complex, with the development of inclusive masculinities gradational, and a range of behaviors on display. The key areas the authors considered in determining categorization were: 1) attitudes toward homosexuality; 2) level of physical tactility; 3) level of emotional intimacy between friends; 4) level of violence or 'hard' physicality (e.g. playfights etc); 5) level of homophobic language. Beyond this classification, thematic codes were developed inductively both during and after data collection. All coding was cross-checked by the other authors—including analysis of interview transcripts, field notes and classifications of boys into embodying orthodox and inclusive masculinities.

Participants

Participants were students who attended "Faith College." Although this mixed-sex educational institution was both a comprehensive school and a college[2], the data for this research was collected solely from college pupils. Approximately 200 students were enrolled at the college and were aged between 16-19 years old, with almost 90% of them having attended the lower school of the same institution. The college was situated within a predominantly working-class rural town in the North East of England. The town is located approximately 25 miles away from the nearest city. Around two-thirds of the pupils enrolled at Faith College resided in the town, and the remaining students lived in neighboring towns and rural areas which had a similar socio-economic demographic.

Although the majority of participants came from working-class backgrounds, a small minority of pupils came from more disadvantaged positions and resided in Neutral Town's social housing estate which was situated directly next to the college. Additionally, a small number of pupils came from middle-class backgrounds. The ethnic profile of students at Faith College was relatively homogenous; 98% were white British and 2% were of other ethnic

origins. Of the 200 pupils enrolled at the college, there was an almost equal split between male and female students. Of the approximately 100 male pupils, most boys self-identified as heterosexual, whilst two students publicly identified as gay.

Students attended the college between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and uniform was compulsory. Although classrooms were shared with lower school students, the common room was exclusively for college students, and had its own cafeteria. Students were able to spend their lunch break off-site, but they were not allowed to leave the college in their free periods. Instead, they were required to either stay in the common room or work in the silent study room located next to it.

Social distance and Reflexivity

The first author adopted an informal approach when interacting with participants (see McCormack 2012). This informal approach entailed making efforts to minimize the social distance between researcher and participants, whilst maximizing the social distance between figures of authority. Aged 21 at the time of data collection, the researcher wore "smart-casual" attire which consisted of a variety of jeans, jumpers, polo shirts and fashionable trainers—in a manner similar to how participants would likely dress outside of college. Most importantly, wearing these clothes enabled the first author to distance himself from the teachers at the college who all wore formal attire.

Adopting an informal approach meant spending time socializing and bonding with students. This was facilitated by the first author's personal background—having the same ethnicity, class, and accent as the majority of students, and only being a few years older. There were few social markers of difference. The first author also shared personal information about his life, experiences and hobbies in an effort to build reciprocal trust with participants (McCormack 2012). He also distanced himself from authority figures within the

school, and did not report minor infringements on rules, such as if students copied homework or other similar behaviors.

This research was approached with a reflexive perspective (Lynch 2000). The first author allocated time away from the college each week to critically reflect on the data collection process. This included questioning the extent to which participants acted differently when the author was present. In order to address this issue, he questioned key informants about his presence in the college at the end of the research, including two students and two members of staff. The two staff members – a cleaner and a cafeteria worker – were selected because they maintained little authority over the boys but were regularly in the common room. All four informants stated that students behaved no differently when the first author was present.

As part of a reflexive approach, it is also important to consider the limitations of being in the field for a relatively short period of time. While there is a tendency for ethnographic research to last for several months (see LeCompte and Goetz 1982), other research supports the contention that six weeks is sufficient time to uncover the key dynamics of a research context (see Anderson 2011; Woods 1986). Indeed, Jeffrey and Troman (2004) highlight the problems with sustained ethnography, and praise use of what they call a "compressed time mode" of ethnography in which the researcher spends an intense amount of time over a short duration (p. 538). They contend this enables the researcher to capture "the dynamics of a context, documenting the visible and less tangible social structures and relations" (p. 538). In our ethnography, this involved the first author attending the school for over 5 hours almost every weekday for the six week data collection period. Thus, while a longer duration in the field may have enabled more analyses (e.g. a focus on attitudes to women), we are confident that the research is rigorous and the findings accurately reflect the dynamics of masculinity at Faith College.

Ethics

Access was granted to undertake this research by the Headteacher [Principal] of Faith College. Although the Headteacher was aware of the full extent of the research, the focus upon masculinity and homophobia was not made known to students. Instead, the research was framed to pupils as an effort to understand "how young men are experiencing both college and interacting with their peers." Pseudonyms have been employed for all participants and the precise location of the college and its Christian denomination has been withheld.

Before undertaking interviews, consent forms were signed by students and a parent or guardian (if students were under 18). The consent forms provided signees with details of the research project, the questions that would be asked and the interviewee's right to refuse to answer a question and withdraw. Ethics approval was granted from the first author's university.

Results: Inclusive masculinities

In this research, we categorized boys as ascribing to either inclusive or orthodox masculinities (see Anderson 2005). Boys categorized as embodying inclusive masculinities espoused different attitudes and performed radically different gendered behaviors compared to those who adopted an orthodox form of masculinity. Firstly, these boys espoused positive views towards homosexuality, with their attitudes ranging from tolerant to celebratory. The inclusive masculinities were numerically dominant, with approximately 87 being categorized that way.

These participants espoused extensive support for gay rights. George was emphatic in his response about homophobia, saying, "Who am I to judge, saying that? Who is anyone to judge? When people are homophobic it really upsets me." Mitchell held a similar attitude:

"It's about rights. You are who you are, and that should be respected. Homophobia limits those rights for gay people." Likewise, Sam said, "They [gay people] should be free to do whatever they like. It's the right of any human to express themselves as they wish." Chris was equally open-minded in his attitude towards homosexuality, saying, "Someone else's sexuality doesn't affect me in any way, so there's no reason I should be against it."

The positive attitudes towards homosexuality of these boys was also illustrated by the integration of gay students into their peer groups in the same inclusive way that other literature has described in middle-class schools (Barrett 2013). For example, George maintained a close friendship with one openly gay student – Arron – and regularly stayed at his house, whilst Luke, the other openly gay student in the school, was well integrated into numerous peer sub-groups.

The physical tactility between these boys was both frequent and normalized, ranging from simple acts of sitting close to one another and allowing each other to touch, to more expressive acts of kissing on the cheek and hugging one another (see Anderson 2014). Indeed, hugging between these boys occurred in the common room on an almost hourly basis, and one of the most intimate displays of tactility was observed on the birthday of one boy, Simon. On his birthday, he was greeted by six boys at the entrance to the common room who then engaged in a large group hug with him that lasted ten seconds. Following this, approximately ten minutes later, another boy, Kyle, entered the common room and proceeded to kiss Simon on the cheek, hug him, and wish him a happy birthday. Kyle and Simon then shared a seat together for ten minutes, with Kyle's arm placed around Simon's shoulders the whole time.

Homosocial tactile behaviors were not just public displays, however, and occurred in less exuberant ways. For example, during an I.T. lesson, Logan sat with his legs across Ian's lap for a ten-minute period as they worked together on a project. For a short while, Ian

massaged Logan's leg as he had complained about how he was sore from athletics training. Neither of these displays of tactility were coded as gay by the students themselves or other inclusive students; rather, these behaviors were normal and everyday occurrences in the lives of these boys, and were indicative of their friendship with their peers (McCormack 2012). Furthermore, these boys did not publicly defend their heterosexuality by deploying homophobic discourse following these interactions, as previous literature has suggested might happen (Plummer 1999).

The expansion of gendered behaviors amongst these boys was also evidenced by their emotional openness. In one incident, Jayden shared with his friends about how he "really liked" a girl in college, but that she he declined his invitation to go to the cinema together. Jayden stated, "I'm gutted to be honest. I mean, I really care about her. We're good friends, but I wanted to be more than that, and she doesn't. Honest, I'm proper gutted." Rather than ridicule Jayden, his friends Ellis, Pete and Kyle, offered their support and sympathized with him. "I know mate, you'll be gutted," Kyle said, "We're here for you though." They also did not use sexist or misogynistic language when discussing the girl.

Those boys ascribing to a set of inclusive masculinities did not deploy homosexually-themed language to castigate the un-masculine behaviors of boys. However, the first author noted seven occasions when these boys did use terms such as "gay" and "that's so gay." When questioned about this language use, these boys suggested that such phrases were never directed towards other boys and were only used to describe something as "crap." As an example of this, Ian deployed the phrase "oh, that's gay" when his laptop crashed.

Boys adopting inclusive masculinities regularly used social media. Many had Facebook and Twitter accounts, on which they posted information about their lives that conformed to their behaviors in-person. That is, it was not unusual for boys to post pictures of hugging and tactility to Facebook, and these were not policed online. Broader aspects of

youth culture were also present in their lives, as they regularly discussed TV shows, visiting the nearby city for nights out and shopping, and other aspects of youth culture more generally (Robards 2012).

The use of the word "gay" was also not interpreted by these students as homophobic (see McCormack 2011). George stated during his interview, "It's kind of subconscious. I don't mean to hurt anyone by it." Similarly, Ian said, "When I say 'gay,' I don't mean a homosexual person. I think it's developed another definition…but I don't mean for it to be derogatory towards gay people, or anyone else for that matter. No one does." It is important to note that the deployment of such homosexually-themed language was far from an everyday practice (Nayak and Kehily 1996) amongst these boys. In contrast, it was evident that such words were rarely used in this way; as Sam suggested, "I don't really think people come out with gay terms."

In place of homophobic language, these boys consolidated their heterosexuality through a process McCormack (2012) terms conquestial recuperation. This signifies the way in which boys maintain heterosexuality by boasting of their heterosexual desires, conquests and potency without invoking misogyny. Amongst these boys, the regular discussion of who was in their "top five" was the most compelling example of conquestial recuperation. It entailed the ranking of women who these boys believed to be the most attractive in the world. For example, when discussing the selection of Mila Kunis as Peter's "number one most attractive female," Jack stated, "Oh she's gorgeous her. Top choice. I'd marry her tomorrow." These boys would often continue this game with female students, helping them to develop their "top five" most attractive males. It was done without misogyny or the degrading of women in these discussions—while this is not a systematic investigation of misogyny, it does suggest that it is not a central component of how these boys construct their masculinities.

Residual orthodox masculinity

Of the approximate one-hundred male students in the college, we categorized 13 as embodying an orthodox form of masculinity. These boys expressed a level of negativity towards homosexuality, though this was premised upon their dislike of femininity amongst men for most of them (Floyd 2000). During interviews, numerous students expressed distaste towards what Zack described as "out-there gays," adding he disliked "the ones who prance about like girls just to seek attention." Similarly, Billy stated, "It annoys me when you're acting like a girl when you're a boy. Like if you're a bit feminine, just act normal and talk the same." The attitudes of these boys illustrate how homophobia and misogyny intersect in the construction of their orthodox masculinities, with much of their disdain for homosexuality premised upon the idea that gay men are similar to women (Schwartz and Rutter 1998). Furthermore, in order to sustain their heteromasculine identity, this group of boys distanced themselves from sexual minority students. This was exemplified by the fact that none of these boys were friends with, or even engaged with, either of the two openly gay students in college – Luke and Arron.

These boys remained physically distant from one another and avoided any form of emotional expression. Physical touch was limited to acts of aggression, and these boys engaged in extremely physical 'play-fights.' These play fights would tend to occur at lunch, and would involve wrestling over a chocolate bar or other similar trivial issue. No punches would be thrown, but boys would grapple with all their strength and often bump into nearby furniture while doing so.

The discussion of feelings and other similar emotions was also stigmatized within this peer group. Illustrating this was a discussion between these boys regarding the "emotional crap" that a boy outside their friendship group had posted on a social-networking site. One boy, Reece, said, "I'm almost sick when I read his tweets. It's up there with one of the most

minging accounts on Twitter." Reece was supported in his distaste by Billy who claimed, "He needs to get a fucking grip that lad." Overall, the alignment of these boys to an orthodox form of masculinity limited their gendered expressions, and resulted in these boys projecting a masculine façade of toughness.

This group of boys also deployed homosexually-themed pejoratives such as "poof" towards each other. The way in which these epithets were used was best explained by Jordan: "If a lad acts soppy, I'd call him that…The other day I called Ross a 'poof' cause we were talking about girls and he said he loved someone." Primarily, this language was used by boys to simultaneously consolidate their heterosexual identity and castigate any form of un-masculine behavior in other boys. The use of such words had a negative social effect, resulting in the regulation and restriction of acceptable masculine behaviors amongst these boys.

During interviews, all of these boys claimed that such talk was nothing more than "banter." These boys were adamant that they did not direct such language toward gay students as to do so would be "mean." For example, Zack said, "If anything like that was directed towards a gay person, that's homophobic." Significantly, these words were only directed at, and used in the presence of, other boys embodying an orthodox masculinity. During data collection, these boys did not aim such language at other boys outside of their peer group—they did not try and police boys outside of their friendship groups who exhibited different styles of masculinities. While such language is problematic, particularly given that this language was used in a negative context (see McCormack 2011), the restriction of this language to this sub-group of 13 boys is significant in its change from the prevalence of homophobic language described previously (Nayak and Kehily 1996; Thurlow 2001).

Of the 13 boys who embodied an orthodox masculinity at Faith College, nine were members of the college's rugby team. The competitive team sport of rugby at Faith College

actively encouraged boys to esteem and adopt attitudes and behaviors associated with orthodox masculinity. Central to this practice was the rugby coach who often used overt techniques to police the masculine behaviors of boys within his team (see Adams, Anderson and McCormack 2010). Primarily, this included ridiculing boys for displaying behaviors he considered un-masculine. For instance, during one competitive match, Billy received an injury and had to come off the pitch. Following some deliberation, the coach told Billy, "You'll just have to man-up and get on with it. We're a man down here."

This problematic approach to potential injury was reported by other members of the team. Ian, an inclusive boy who was a member of the rugby team, described how he was constantly told to "man up" both by the coach and some of his teammates. He said, "I smoke you see, so my cardio isn't exactly great…I constantly get heckled at because of it when I can't do exercises." Ian stated that he did not engage in "all that manliness" of the rugby culture, subverting the institutionalized masculinity of the rugby team. Even so, the rugby team was perhaps the last venue in the school in which orthodox masculinity was esteemed above inclusive versions. Yet even here, overt homophobia was condemned.

A limited engagement with broader youth culture was common amongst those boys who ascribed to an orthodox archetype of masculinity. Many of these boys did not use social networking sites and rarely left the local area or visited the nearest major city. Indeed, for many of these boys, playing rugby for a local team provided the only opportunity to venture out of the local area. For example, when asked about how often he left the local area, one boy, Billy stated, "Not much really, I just travel about to play rugby on weekends with the lads." While we have devoted equal space to the inclusive and orthodox masculinities in this paper, the orthodox boys were outnumbered by inclusive boys and their orthodox behaviors were restricted to their own peer groups and they did not try to police the masculinities of more inclusive boys.

An inclusive college

Inclusive masculinities had established social dominance in this setting. The boys who exhibited orthodox masculinities took steps to exclude themselves from this wider, inclusive culture. The common room was where most boys resided in their free time, and inclusive behaviors, such as tactility and expressions of emotion, were commonplace in this setting. Indeed, ten of the boys who embodied orthodox masculinity rarely visited the common room, spending almost all of their free-time and lunch breaks in a classroom situated at the opposite end of the school.

The segregation of these boys was widely noted amongst inclusive students. Simon said, "They stay up there all the time, they hardly ever come down here. Only for food really." When asked why this was the case, another boy, James, replied, "I don't think they like it down here. They're proper 'lads-lads' if you get me." Interviewing the students who resided in the classroom in their free time, the first author questioned them about their disengagement with students in the common room. Ross said, "We keep ourselves to ourselves really. We're a tightly knit group, you see." Jordan was more abrupt in his reply, "Why would I wanna go down there man? Most of them are all up each other's arse." Primarily, the efforts of these boys to distance themselves from the common room was indicative of their attempts to dissociate themselves from the wider, more inclusive culture of the college; an inclusive culture which did not esteem their orthodox masculine attitudes and behaviors.

Most importantly, the dominance of inclusive masculinities within Faith College meant that those boys embodying orthodox masculinity had to police their behaviors on the rare occasions when they did interact with other boys in the common room. This practice was evidenced in two ways. First, as noted above, those boys exhibiting orthodox masculinity did not use homosexually themed pejoratives in the presence of more inclusive boys. During

interviews, this was noted by inclusive students. Chris stated, "Those words ['fag', 'poof'] get used between friends, but I don't think they'd be used like that in a large group in case someone took offence." Similarly, Pete said, "Faggot actually is an insult. If you called someone a faggot, people would be like 'woah'." This demonstrates that the language use of those boys exhibiting orthodox masculinity was stigmatized in the wider culture of Faith College.

The dominance of inclusive masculinities within this setting was also evidenced by the fact that the expression of homophobic values was heavily stigmatized within the wider culture of the college. Although a Christian college, sexuality was listed in the equalities and anti-bullying policies of the institution. Likewise, members of the school administration were explicit in their condemnation of homophobia, demonstrated in their discussions with the authors during gaining access for the research.

These inclusive policies were in alignment with the attitudes and behaviors of students in the college. For example, Ian stated, "If people expressed their views they would be challenged, so really, there's no stigma [toward homosexuality] at all." Likewise, George suggested, "Certain boys might say something to their friends, but not directly and openly in college. No chance…if someone said something to insult a gay guy because he's gay, they'd definitely be confronted about it." Zack, a boy who embodied an orthodox form of masculine expression and stayed in classrooms in his free time, said, "Some people don't agree with it [homosexuality], but nobody has anything to say to gay lads…I wouldn't even think about saying anything to a gay lad myself." This demonstrates that the wider culture of inclusivity within Faith College had been internalized by those boys embodying orthodox masculinity, resulting in these boys policing their own behaviors in light of the broad stigmatization of homophobia within the college. Indeed, a discussion with one student, John, highlighted how it was homophobia, rather than homosexuality, that was stigmatized at Faith College: 'The

head girl's a lesbian. That says it all, really. If people are anti-gay, they don't really seem to be showing it'.

The positive experiences of two openly gay students at Faith College support the assertion that inclusive masculinities dominate in this setting. Arron described the positive experiences when he came out in Year 9 [Eighth grade], saying that negative experiences were limited to "some snide remarks." He added:

> It wasn't bullying or anything and it certainly didn't happen regularly, but people did make comments [in lower school]...I'd definitely say college is a friendly environment. Most guys have an open mind about my sexuality and accept it, they understand.

Another openly gay student, Luke, described his college experience as "positive," stating, "I don't experience any homophobia…from the people I know. They're very positive." Indeed, Luke also considered himself to be a popular boy at Faith College: "I think of myself as having lots of friends. I see myself as someone who can interact with loads of different groups" (c.f. Epstein and Johnson 1998; Plummer 1999).

Ian's discussion of his sexual identity also demonstrated greater openness toward sexual diversity. Ian self-identified as heterosexual, but also spoke about having previously "got with a few lads" and having come out as gay in Year 9. Ian stated his friends were "totally fine" both with his coming out as gay and his return to a heterosexual identity a year later. Indeed, Ian's sexuality was not publicly questioned by his peers: Throughout the data collection process, the first author asked pupils if any of their male peers were gay or bisexual. The majority of students identified Luke and Arron as the only openly gay students in the college, and nobody identified Ian as gay. None mentioned his past experiences or questioned his sexuality as a result of his experiences. Ian's experience speaks to a greater

acceptance of fluidity in sexual identities among young people, with less attachment to sexual identity labels (McCormack, Wignall and Anderson 2015; Savin-Williams 2005).

Discussion

Homophobia has consistently been shown as a central aspect of the dominant mode of masculinity amongst working-class British youth (Mac an Ghaill 1994; Nayak and Kehily 1996). However, recent research has shown that working-class boys' attitudes are changing (Roberts 2013), even if at a slower rate than middle class contexts (McCormack 2014). Our findings from a working-class college in a rural part of the North East of England found that only a small group of working-class boys still ascribed to an orthodox form of masculine expression. In this setting, inclusive masculinities were both numerically and socially dominant.

The majority of teenage boys at Faith College no longer constructed their heterosexual identities through the practices of homophobia, misogyny and aggression. Instead, these working-class male youth espoused positive attitudes towards homosexuality, and engaged in physical tactility and emotional intimacy. They condemned the use of homophobic language. These boys also consolidated their heterosexuality through conquestial recuperation, which entailed boasting of their heterosexual desires, conquests and potency without invoking misogyny (McCormack and Anderson 2010). Openly gay students had a predominantly positive experience, and did not face the marginalization which has traditionally been associated with homosexual students in working-class educational settings (Mac an Ghaill 1994).

The social dominance of inclusive masculinities within this setting resulted in the creation of a wider culture that was premised upon inclusivity within Faith College; evident in the institutional policies, and the statements of teaching and administrative faculty at the

college. Boys ascribing to an orthodox archetype of masculinity existed as a segregated clique in this setting, and this was exemplified by their efforts to dissociate themselves from the inclusive environment of the common room. Interestingly, the ways in which the inclusive boys explicitly condemned overt homophobia might serve to render the common room less hospitable for those orthodox boys who maintained some homophobic attitudes that would further their segregation. Even so, the orthodox boys were not harassed in the common room—it was just implicitly understood that overt homophobia would be censured.

This study supports earlier theorizing of the differences in masculinity according to social class. In his study of a working-class sixth form, McCormack (2014) identified a correlation between the embodiment of an orthodox form of masculinity and restricted engagement with broader youth culture. He conceptualized use of social media as an example of "symbolic parameters of privilege" (p. 145) that serve to perpetuate working-class youths disengagement from broader cultural and gender norms. Such an association is supported in this study, which found that limited engagement with youth culture was a common variable amongst those boys ascribing to an orthodox form of masculinity. Indeed, only a minority of these boys used social-networking sites, and almost all of them rarely ventured out of the parameters of Neutral Town. Comparatively, those boys who displayed the tenets of inclusive masculinities had a much more extensive engagement with broader culture; they spent time in the nearest city on a regular basis and used social-networking sites, enabling them to participate in broader cultural discourses.

The interactions of those boys who did not ascribe to an orthodox archetype of masculinity can be understood through Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory. Primarily, diminishing homophobia amongst these boys has resulted in an expansion of their gendered behaviors and the esteeming of multiple archetypes of masculinity within Faith College. However, boys who adopted an orthodox archetype of masculinity espoused dislike

of femininity in men and articulated this in ways that conform to notions of homophobia. Thus, McCormack's (2014) theorizing surrounding engagement in broader youth culture holds explanatory power in understanding why these boys did not exhibit the inclusivity of their peers.

Overall, this research demonstrates that Anderson's (2009) inclusive masculinity theory, and McCormack's (2014) findings on working-class youth in the South of England, can be extended to a new demographic – working-class boys in the North East of England. With orthodox masculinity marginalized, inclusive masculinities maintained social dominance in this setting, and this research highlights how the proliferation of inclusive masculinities in British schools is not just a middle-class phenomenon. In light of this evidence, we argue that these narratives of working-class masculinity must now be reconfigured to account for the proliferation of inclusive masculinities amongst working-class youth (see also Magrath 2015; McCormack 2014; Roberts 2013). Failure to do so will only result in the application of a static notion of masculinity to working-class boys, one that remains seemingly unaffected by wider cultural change and erases the lives of many seemingly "unspectacular" working-class men (Roberts 2013).

Recent research has also discussed working-class masculinities as becoming increasingly focused on an embodied stylistic performance (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood 2011) in the absence of the industrial work and manual labor that once characterized working class lives; performances that are a rejection of the broader stigmatization levelled at working-class lives (Skeggs and Loveday 2012). However, following Roberts' (2011, 2014) call for a wider focus on working-class young people's experiences, we contend our study contributes to a growing recognition of the diversity of working-class people's gendered lives. Recognizing diversity in our participants' attitudes, behaviors and masculinities, future

research on masculinities in school settings should not assume elevated homophobia or problematic gendered expressions among working-class young men.

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End Note

1. A “sixth form college” in the UK is the equivalent of a high school in the US.

2. A comprehensive school is similar to a public secondary school in the US. It is common for a school and sixth form college to be on the same site in the UK.