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A Case Study of the Construction and Negotiation of Adolescent Masculinities in a Coeducational School in Rural Ireland.

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Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctorate in Education (EdD).

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DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education (EdD) is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

John Fitzgerald 31/08/11

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ABSTRACT

John Fitzgerald

A Case Study of the Construction and Negotiation of Adolescent Masculinities in a Coeducational School in Rural Ireland

This in-depth case study explored the ways in which adolescent boys, aged 16 to 18 years, explored their identities in relation to the formation of masculinities within the formal and informal spaces of a second-level school. Specifically, it attempted to uncover what is problematic about teenage boys' understandings of gender identities within the context of a coeducational second-level school environment in rural Ireland. The study draws on young-person-centred interviews with small groups of adolescent boys and girls and individual interviews with male and female teachers. Particular focus is given to the narratives which show how adolescent male identities are constructed, negotiated and policed.

This thesis examined the link between peer relationships and emotion practices of adolescent boys and showed that a high percentage of boys associated tough, stoic self-presentations to manliness and assiduously avoided displays of emotional pain and effectively discouraged such displays in other boys.

The normative presence of heterosexuality in this school is revealed by highlighting how certain male students use homophobia in order to reinforce their dominance over other males who are perceived as subverting normative notions of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity, and for marshalling the boundaries of heterosexuality amongst boys' peer groups. Homophobia and sexism is also revealed through the narratives of some teachers. Displays of power over the feminine were evident through sexism, control of public space by boys and a multiple of micro-practices revealing the construction of a hegemonic and resistant patriarchy in this school.

The thesis concludes by suggesting that the absence of programmes addressing masculinities within second-level education system in Ireland is a matter of concern and is resulting in some boys adhering to the toxic elements of hegemonic masculinity. This can lead to reckless lifestyles, antisocial and destructive behaviours, well-being and mental health issues for boys.

Introduction

1.1 Background

Gender is a central feature of social life and is one of the central organising principles around which our lives revolve. In the social sciences, gender has now taken its place alongside class and race as one of the three central mechanisms by which power and resources are distributed in our society and the three central themes out of which we fashion the meanings of our lives (Kimmel and Messner, 2001). Gender is a complex social structure not a simple one. It involves a range of institutions, from the family to the state, together with their interactions. It involves different levels of personality, a very wide range of types of social interaction, and it produces a complex differentiation of people around the axes of masculinity and femininity (Kessler, *et. al.* 1985).

School children learn about gender and how to do gender because it is central to the way we organise society. As Coltrane (2000) notes, children learn culturally appropriate ways of thinking and being as they follow routine rituals and respond to everyday demands of the world in which they live. To be "considered competent members of society, they must learn how to fit in as appropriately gendered individuals" (Coltrane, 2000, p. 114). This thesis views gender as a constructed phenomenon. It contends that gender does not exist as an artefact, but rather is dynamically constructed and reconstructed in the course of peoples' lived existences. Particular kinds of behaviour, particular ways of being, are culturally dominant. These are the ones that come to be seen as the pattern of masculinity or femininity in general and are often assumed to be the natural characteristics of each sex. Other kinds of behaviour are defined as deviant or inferior and often attract derision, hostility, or even violence (Kessler, *et. al.* 1985).

Gender and more specifically masculinities exist as a social dynamic as well as the negotiation with that dynamic (Kimmel, 1998), and so we may see masculinity as existing outside the individual. In this form, masculinity dwells within the social constructs or institutions of a society. Connell (1987, 1995) suggests that within the

institutions of a society, gender regimes and patterns of organisation exist that reflect gender expectations of that society and sculpt the individual's gender. Connell (1987) referred to schools as masculinising agents and suggests that the gender regimes within schools may cause individuals to construct their masculinity in relationship to the gender expectations of society, but not always in a predictable or consistent pattern.

As peoples responses are dynamic, so too are the gender regimes. They are semi-fluid patterns that may change according to time, economics and other factors (Connell, 1987). Gender relations, then, are historical. The pattern they assume in any society is produced by its particular history and is always in a process of transformation. Even when change is slow to the point of being invisible, the principle should be kept in mind, because it directs attention to the ways in which patterns of gender are constantly being produced in everyday life. It is the premise of this thesis that masculinities can be usefully conceived of as social styles, social roles, or social scripts that do not emanate from our innate physiology, or biochemistry, but rather emerge and develop in the context of our formation as subjects within society, according to the prescriptions and proscriptions of our society's cultures.

We may say that masculinity undergoes construction and reconstruction at every level. This fluidity also suggests that there are multiple layers of masculinity both within the individual and within society. Masculinity also exists as part of one's history. The masculinities of individual men or boys are constructed over time through lived experiences and through the complexities of social negotiation. Masculinities are products of individuals' accumulated interior and exterior history, and are therefore unique to the individual.

There is a repository of time within us which represents the sum total of the gender negotiations we have conducted in the past. As a man moves through time, the gendered issues he faces change (Kimmel, 2000). We engage in social negotiations unique to our 'age group'. Out of these multiple layers of gender, this thesis focuses on the construction, negotiation, performance and policing of masculinities amongst adolescent boys in a rural coeducational second-level school in Ireland.

Connell (1987) argues that the institutions of education, from schools to individual classrooms may serve as agents of gender formation. A large body of work exists that examines how secondary schools serve as social contexts that construct and maintain both gender and gender identities (Kessler *et al.* 1985; Thorpe, 1993; Francis and Skelton, 2001). Researchers such as Giroux and McLaren (1994) have shown how schools act as important arenas of power where masculinities and femininities are acted out on a daily basis, through the dynamic processes of negotiation, refusal and struggle. Much of this work examines the gendered differences between boys and girls, and how the school perpetuates these differences. While much of the research during the later part of the late twentieth century pitted boys against girls, there was a shift away from this type of analysis as scholars began to recognize that gender categories were not homogenous and there are just as many differences within a gender as there are between genders (Thorne, 1993; Griffin and Lees, 1997).

Sociologists like Connell (1987, 1995) have drawn attention to how social, cultural and historical factors have influenced the various ways in which masculinity comes to be defined and embodied by boys and men. Connell asserts that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculinities and femininities. By transferring Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony into the area of gender relations, Connell contributes a valuable insight into how to incorporate power into an analysis of masculinity. Connell (1995) suggests that multiple versions of masculinity constantly struggle for dominance and that some groups actually achieve dominance. Those who do not, typically but not always men of colour, working-class men, gay men, and feminine men, are subject to varying degrees of oppression from the hegemonic group.

Hegemonic masculinity is the most popular aspect of Connell's theory and is "defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the current accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken for guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (Connell, 1995, p. 54). So hegemonic masculinity controls a hierarchy of masculinities and has dominance not just over women but also over subordinated

masculinities, which includes gay masculinity, working-class masculinities and coloured masculinities.

Connell (1996) suggests that boys freely choose between masculinities, but one must remember that institutions such as schools and other factors restrict their choices. Masculinity resides in and is produced by institutions (Connell, 1996, 2000; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Lesko, 2000; Mac an Ghaill, 1994), principally at the level of symbol and structure. The curriculum, division of labour, tracking, disciplinary systems, and other structures, which are elements of the school's 'gender regime' (Browne, 1995; Connell, 1996, 2000; Lesko, 2000) affect gender dynamics in subtle ways.

1.2 The Study's Purpose and Significance

Many researchers have detailed how the gendered power relations within schools contribute to particular versions of masculinity (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Kenway & Willis, 1997; Martino, 1999; Connell, 1995, 2000; Mills, 2001). They have shown that some boys enact masculinity along hegemonic lines as synonymous with power, domination and stoicism. This style of masculinity is associated with displays of aggression, physical domination, violence and the denigration of the feminine. Schools have being described as masculine structures and masculinising institutions which typically enforce an oppositional gender binary which perpetuates narrow and hierarchical understandings of masculinity and femininity (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Kenway & Willis, 1997; Connell, 1995, 2000).

Academic research has highlighted the complex set of influences that contribute to teenage boys' understanding of masculinity. This includes both institutional factors, such as schools, and individual factors. The school as an agent in the making of masculinities has been explored by a number of researchers such as Mac an Ghaill (1994); Connell (1996); Salisbury & Jackson (1996) and all these researchers concur that schools play an active role in forming masculinities. School culture is one of the important processes through which young men develop their identity and masculinity. Swain (2004) argues that the school has become recognized as one of the salient sites where masculinities are constructed and formed.

Student construction of masculinities takes place not only in relation to teachers and the official curriculum, but also in conversations with classmates, activities in the school yard and through their engagement in related extracurricular activities. In essence, schools engage in substantial gender ideology formation and transmission through classroom practices, teachers' attitudes and expectations, and the intense influence of peers. The basic proposition of this thesis is that the masculine character is socially constructed, not biologically given. This thesis is informed by an understanding of masculinities as social practices or relations that are negotiated in fluid and complex ways in the daily lives of boys. It concurs with Connell's (1995) statement that "Gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction but is constructed in interaction" (p. 35).

Few researchers have investigated how adolescent masculinities are negotiated and policed in coeducational schools in Ireland. Consequently, there is a large gap in our knowledge of how teenage boys construct their masculinities within second-level coeducational schools in the Republic of Ireland. Since masculinity is central to male identity, this thesis attempts to understand boys' perceptions of their masculine experience within one school site in order to highlight both the consensus and the multiple perspectives that boys have of their experience.

Informed by perspectives from sociology, men's studies and education, this study explores the ways in which teenage boys, aged 16 to 18 years, in a rural coeducational second-level school in Ireland, negotiate their identities in relation to the formation of masculinities. Specifically, it investigates the ways in which boys engage in the complex endeavour of performing in ways that enable them to cultivate for themselves a recognisable masculine identity within the context of a coeducational second-level school environment. It examines issues of masculinity within the context and contingency of the peer culture that exists in a rural coeducational school. The study draws upon qualitative, young-person-centred interviews with small groups of adolescent boys and girls and individual interviews with male and female teachers in this school.

This thesis attempts to uncover what is problematic about teenage boys' understanding of gender identities within the social setting of a coeducational second-level school. It seeks to provide a more informed perspective on the social practices of masculinity impacting on boys' lives at school. It intends to articulate the policing of masculinities by students and teachers in a coeducational second-level school. It is hoped that this study will reveal the elusive and fluid dynamics of masculinity within the social structure of this coeducational school.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Focus

This thesis views gender through a social constructionist lens that suggests that gender is constructed through ongoing, daily interaction (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and our daily interactions and actions are situated within larger social patterns and institutions.

This study adopts two theoretical paradigms to explore masculinities amongst 16 to 18 year old boys. Using Masculine Gender Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis as core interpretive tools, this study focused on teenage boys' understandings, construction and policing of masculinities. In order to provide a more comprehensive theoretical lens to understand the negotiation of adolescent masculinities in a coeducational school, the study extends to include girls' and teachers' narratives.

As researcher I adapted a constructivist epistemology and adhered to the ontological notion that gender is socially constructed and reproduced through institutional structures, social practice and language and therefore can be seen as fluid, dynamic and amenable to change. I acknowledge that all social interactions are shaped and governed by dominant understandings enmeshed with gendered practices and subjectivities. To this end, the social beliefs, practices, emotional and bodily investments underpinning dominant forms of masculinities which act to govern adolescent boys' behaviours are of key importance to this investigation.

This research, which forms the empirical basis of this thesis, was conducted over one academic year in a second-level Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) school in

a rural part of Ireland. A case study methodological focus formed the basis of this research which entailed data collection through shadowing, informal-observations, and audio-taped, semi-structured group interviews with adolescent boys and girls and individual interviews with male and female teachers.

1.4 Overview of the Thesis

The following overview locates the subsequent chapters as they contribute to the thesis.

Chapter Two delineates the various perspectives on masculinity from the static perspectives of identity within the biologically deterministic sex-role theory to the fluid notion of gender subjectivity. It draws upon a variety of sociological theories of masculinities including hegemonic and feminist perspectives to explain this complex phenomenon. The chapter reaches the conclusion that masculinity is a construction of place, time, association and individual subjectivity.

Within this framework of understanding, masculinities are understood as socially and historically constructed within a system of gender relations, and understood as dynamic, multiple, hierarchical and collectively organised and enacted. As the Irish case is a particular one, the latter part of this chapter critiques the unique cultural influences upon masculinities in Ireland. It explores the role of the Catholic Church and the State in the development of masculinities in the Republic of Ireland.

Chapter Three reviews the literature pertaining to masculinities, gender, sexualities and peer culture within school-age contexts. Central to this review is the exploration of how masculinities are understood, shaped and regulated within the context of the micro-culture of the school. In examining masculinities within broader school infrastructures, the significance of the school as a masculinising agent is discussed. The role of the male peer group in shaping and regulating masculinities is critiqued. This chapter examines issues of masculinity within the context and contingency of peer culture and is framed within Connell's assertion that "peer groups, not individuals, are the bearers of gender definitions" (2000, p. 162). To this end, Connell (2000) positions peer culture as central in the definition,

regulation and maintenance of masculinities and sexualities. The chapter examines how adolescent boys are socialised into masculinities in school and how the various dimensions of their identities interact.

The relationship between masculinities and social class is examined through the conceptual lens of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) conceptual schema of field, capital, habitus and practice. His conceptual schema provides a more nuanced conceptualisation of classed masculinities. His work is used to reveal insights into the multiplicity and fluidity of social class masculinities and gender relations amongst adolescent school boys. Bourdieu's social theory is used to explore some of the nuances and complexities of masculinities and deepen and develop our understanding of this complex subject.

Chapter Four describes the research process, including the study's theoretical and methodological underpinnings and the procedural aspects of data collection, representation and analysis. The study's location within ethnographic and case study principles is explored. The implications of my own positioning within the study and, in particular, the significance of the relationship between researcher and researched is addressed. The procedural aspects of the research process are described, including information about the research site and the participants. The data collection techniques are explained including the methods of interview and informal observation. Finally, this chapter addresses the importance of data validity and the ethical considerations necessary in a case study of this nature.

Chapter Five presents findings from analysis of data on student construction, negotiation and policing of masculinities in this school. In this chapter the narratives from the student interviews were juxtaposed in order to produce a number of themes that represented the complexity of boys' and girls' understandings of adolescent masculinities. Through the medium of four interlocking themes, I attempt to capture the participants' understandings, negotiation, performance and policing of masculinities in a rural second-level coeducational school in Ireland. Through relational interpretation of such issues, I illuminate the boys' understandings, formation and policing of masculinities.

Chapter Six presents findings from eight individual interviews conducted with both male and female teachers on their perception of adolescent masculinities in the school. Focusing on teachers views of the primary constituents of masculinities, this chapter reveals how teachers through their daily deeds and actions contribute to the particular masculine culture of their school. The attitudes and opinions of teachers towards masculinities are considered and the chapter shows how certain teachers, both male and female, support hegemonic masculinity through their views and daily actions.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter of this thesis draws together the study's principal conclusions. It helps to illuminate how some boys in this school define and understand masculinity along essentialist lines, as synonymous with power, domination and non-emotion. It shows how some of the structures and practices ingrained and normalised in this school support the perpetuation and reinforcement of a particular style of restrictive masculinity.

Through the lens of Masculine Gender Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis the major themes that emerged from the study are analysed and critiqued. The boys' masculine discourses are defined and critiqued in relation to how they are constructed, embodied and legitimated during their time in school. The language and bodily practices of masculinities are explored in relation to how boys define and style a particular form of masculinity. The regulation and maintenance of masculine power hierarchies both within boys' peer groups and within classrooms is addressed and critiqued.

This chapter explores the relationship between masculinities and power. It examines the role of boys who are seen to fall short on the masculine hierarchy relative to the dominant masculine boys and it critiques why they are perceived as inferior. This subordination is invariably achieved through heterosexist practices, and by association the boys who don't measure up, are denigrated as weak and inferior, or as homosexual. I also evaluate why some boys develop heterosexist attitudes characterised by a strong need to distance themselves from weakness in order to escape this association with femininity and homosexuality. I explain why

some boys reject all things female and explicitly deny any sign of femininity in themselves for fear of being perceived as inferior or homosexual.

The chapter finally turns to interpreting the gender structure of football and its role in defining a desired masculinity is considered. The opportunities which sport presents to young boys to enhance and progress their masculinities are analysed. The chapter sums up how adolescent boys understand, practice and police masculinities within the context of a second-level coeducational school. The final chapter draws the thesis to a close by locating the findings within the broader educational arena.

2

Perspectives on Masculinity

There is a range of ways of conceptualizing masculinity. Historically, there have been three general models that have governed social scientific research on men and masculinity. Biological models have focused on the ways in which innate biological differences between males and females programmed different social behaviours. Anthropological models have examined masculinity cross-culturally, stressing the variations in the behaviours and attributes associated with being a man. Sociological models have stressed how socialisation of boys and girls included accommodation to a "sex role" specific to one's biological sex. This school of thought explains gender difference by differential socialisation – the 'nurture' side of the equation. Men and women are different because they are taught to be different. We become different through this process of socialisation.

2.1 Sex-Role Theory

Some psychologists view masculinity as a generalised construct applying certain characteristics specific to individuals to men generally. Terman and Mills (1936) identified a duality of masculine and feminine characteristics. For example, males' aggressiveness, strength, and competitiveness were balanced by females' compliance, nurturance, and co-operativeness. Bem (1974) investigated the socialisation processes surrounding these perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Men's behaviour was categorised into "gender personalities," a classic example being Brannon's (1976) "no sissy stuff," "the big wheel," "the sturdy oak," and "give 'em hell"- definable qualities characterising how men behaved. Men's attitudes were catalogued as, for example, rational and linear, tough minded and analytical, and individualized and subjective (Collins, 1974). Realisation that masculinities are socially constructed goes back to early psycho-analysis, and in the social sciences first took the shape of a social-psychological concept, the 'male sex role' (Connell, 2006).

Sex-role theory facilitated significant feminist advances in education by providing a theoretical platform for exposing rampant sexism and gender stereotyping in schools, and in texts (Brannon, 1976), through patterns of authority, in classroom interaction (Sears & Feldman, 1974), in curriculum, and through academic streaming (Sadker *et al.*, 1989). Through socialisation, sex-role theorists argue, that males and females are conditioned into appropriate roles of behaviour. Polarised norms and expectations between genders are central to this definition of masculinity.

Critics of sex-role theory like Imms (2000) argue that it limits our understanding of masculinity by implying that men lead pre-determined lives with little free agency. Men were "more like actors on a stage, playing out pre-scripted parts. To be a man was to play a certain role. Masculinity represented a set of lines and stage direction which males have to learn to perform" (Edley & Wetherell, 1996, p. 100). Sex-role theory displayed inadequacies in presenting masculinity as a set of cultural practices influenced by and influencing the social environment (Hearn, 1996). It has been argued by Connell (1987) that sex-role theory is inadequate for understanding diversity in masculinities, and for understanding the power and economic dimension in gender. Sociologists suggest that such theory is inadequate to fully understand the complexities of gender as a social institution and have identified several problems with sex-role theory. In sum, the traditional notion of sex-role socialisation has been found to be of limited value in understanding gender differences.

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

The form of masculinity which is culturally dominant in any given setting is called hegemonic masculinity. Gramsci (1971) suggests that an ideology is hegemonic when three characteristics are present. First, those social arrangements that are in the best interest of the dominant group are presented and perceived as being in everyone's best interest. Hence, subordinates frequently and un-consciously accept dominant group interests as their own. Second, the ideology becomes part of everyday thought and is taken for granted as the way things are and should be. Third, by ignoring the very real contradictions in the interests of the dominant and subordinate groups, a hegemonic ideology creates social cohesion and co-operation

where otherwise there would be conflict. Thus, these pervasive ideologies obscure the true nature of interpersonal power dynamics.

Hegemonic signifies a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance, as other forms of masculinity persist alongside. Hegemonic masculinity makes its claim and asserts its authority through many cultural and institutional practices, particularly the global image media and the state. This form of masculinity has the highest status and exercises the greatest influence in a society (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 2006). Hegemonic masculinity allows certain groups of men to occupy and maintain particular positions of dominance sometimes over other men and always over at least some women. The hegemonic form need not be the most common form of masculinity. This is common in school peer groups, for instance, where a small number of highly influential boys are admired by many others who cannot reproduce their performance (Connell, 1996). Hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It is an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. Because men compose an elite group relative to women, we would expect to find that certain dominant ideologies promote and secure their power. The hierarchy is an expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups of men.

Hegemonic masculinity is the standard-bearer of what it means to be a 'real' man or boy and many males draw inspiration from its cultural library of resources. Nonetheless, few men can live up to its rigorous standards. Many may try and many may not, but either way, according to Connell (1995), they benefit from the "patriarchal dividend; the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women...without the tensions or risks of being the front line troops of patriarchy" (p. 79). He argues that in the politics of gender, they are compliant with hegemonic forms of masculinity even if they fail to live up to and draw moral inspiration from its imperatives.

Steedman (1995) stresses that hegemonic masculinity is not just heterosexual, it is also white and middle-class. Messner (1992) notes that white heterosexual middle and upper-class men who occupy order-giving positions in the institutions they

control, particularly economic, political, and military institutions, produce a hegemonic masculinity that is glorified throughout the culture. On the other hand, the masculinities produced predominantly by working-class men, men of colour, and homosexual men either outside of these institutions or in subservient positions within them are subordinated and denigrated (Connell, 1995). As institutionalized within European and American middle-class culture, hegemonic masculinity tends to emphasise physical toughness, emotional stoicism, projected self-sufficiency, and heterosexual dominance over women.

In relation to working-class masculinities, the hyper-masculinity found in certain lower-status male local pubs, on factory shop floors, in pool halls and urban gangs can be understood as both a response to ascendant masculinity and its unintentional boaster. With their masculine identity and self-esteem undermined by their subordinate order-taken position in relation to higher-status males (which potentially delegates them to the role of "wimps"), men on the shop floor reconstruct their position as embodying true masculinity (Collinson, 1992). They use the physical endurance and tolerance of discomfort required of their manual labour as signifying true masculinity, an alternative to the hegemonic form associated with managers. They rely on this "compensatory" masculinity to symbolically turn the tables against managers, whom they ridicule as conforming "yes-men" and "wimps" engaged in effeminate paper-pushing kinds of labour (Collinson, 1992). Research by Willis (1977) shows that the masculinity performed by the working-class "lads" eventually serves to ensure that they gain credentials for working-class jobs only, because the middle-class has established the criteria for middle-class jobs based on a different masculinity. Certain masculinities always "win out" and gain dominance.

Connell (1995) observes that the interplay of gender with other structures such as class and race creates further relationships between masculinities. In other words, there are masculinities associated with the dominant and subordinate or marginal races or classes. He further notes that these marginalised masculinities, which are associated with subordinate social groupings, may draw inspiration and legitimacy from hegemonic forms but only yield structural power to the extent that they are authorised by the dominant class/race. While marginal masculinities may not be marginal within their own sphere, they are unlikely to exert power beyond it without

some sort of sponsorship by and only within the tolerance limits of the dominant hegemonic masculinity.

The limitations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity have been noted by Hearn (2007) who observes that it does little to account for the variety of dominant masculinities that exist under the umbrella term and how they are interconnected. Connell, (1995) suggests hegemonic masculinity is the one form of masculinity that is culturally exalted over others, but this disregards the complexities of various dominant masculinities that exist, according to Hearn (2007). Secondly, while power is certainly important in terms of understanding relations between groups of men as well as between men and women (i.e., patriarchy), hegemony is limiting as it assumes that groups act (at a structural level) to either achieve or maintain a dominant position over others that is to their own advantage, perpetuated through social institutions (Coles, 2009).

As a theoretical concept, hegemonic masculinity is used by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), to describe male power at a structural level with no real understanding of how power is organised in terms of complicity and resistance at the individual level (Whitehead, 2002). It has been argued by Watson (2000) that there is a distinct need to take masculinity away from the structural and consider masculinities as collective human projects that are individually lived out. Masculinity does not mean the same thing to all men. It is varied in how it is understood, experienced, and lived out in daily practice (Pease, 2001).

2.3 Feminist Theories of Masculinity

In a society where being a man involves the subordination of women, patriarchy will be perpetuated. Connell (1995) suggests the majority of men benefit from the patriarchal dividend, in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. The men also gain a material dividend (where property is challenged through the male line). He sees heterosexuality and domination as a key element in hegemonic masculinity, but suggests only a minority of men will practise masculinity in this form (i.e. actively subordinating women). The majority of men are most comfortable when it appears that the patriarchal dividend "is given to them by an external force,

by nature or convention, or even by women themselves, rather than by an active social subordination of women going on here and now (p. 215). Kenway and Fitzclarence (2006) suggest that the sorts of femininities which unwittingly underwrite hegemonic masculinity involve compliance and service, subservience and self-sacrifice and constant accommodating to the needs and desires of males.

It is commonly accepted in literature that masculinities cannot be fully understood without attending to their relationship to femininities within the broader scope of the gender order. Feminism is concerned about the violence that men and boys subject girls and women to, and focuses on the ways that masculinity, power, potency and sexuality can come together and result in sexual and other forms of abuse and assault of females by males. Most feminists want boys and men to change so that they cause less trouble for girls and women and themselves, so the sexes can live alongside each other in a safe, secure, stable, respectful, harmonious way and in relationships of mutual life-enhancing respect (Kenway, 1996). Feminists have a strong interest in reconstructing masculinity in ways which will enhance their lives in all respects.

Many feminists conceptualize gender as an emergent property of situated interaction rather than a role or attribute (West and Zimmerman, 1987). They suggest that deeply held and typically un-conscious beliefs about men's and women's essential natures shape how gender is accomplished in everyday interactions. Because these beliefs are moulded by existing macrostructure power relations, the culturally appropriate ways of producing gender favour men's interests over women. In this manner, gendered power relations are reproduced.

Primarily concerned with the manifest inequalities for women in society, feminists have analysed the gendered construction hierarchy in two ways. Liberal feminism identified masculinity as the enactment of gender roles that limited girls' and women's access to all aspects of society and culture, and it used sex-role theory to argue that sexism and gender stereotyping were rampant in schools (Imms, 2000). The aim was to achieve women's equality with men by legislating equality-of-opportunity strategies, applying androgyny theory (Bem, 1974), making all aspects of education equally available to both sexes, and promoting gender-neutral schooling.

Radical feminism identified masculinity as the enactment of patriarchal, hegemonic values central to men's very 'being,' values that intentionally excluded women from power. It directly attacked masculinity as a patriarchy, questioned how it institutionalised and maintained hegemony, and focused on dismantling the power structures that maintained this patriarchy (Imms, 2000). For liberal feminists, sex-role theory was understood within a social-constructionist approach. Women and men were the same, gendered differences being engineered through social practices. Radical feminism's essentialist belief was that women have distinct qualities unavailable to men (Chodorow, 1998). It identified and critiqued society as a masculine enterprise, dominated by a masculine ethic of rationality. Men dominated the "public," the world of rationality, competitiveness, positivism, and linear thinking, while women occupied the "private," the world of mothering, emotion, expressiveness and imagination.

Imms (2000) argues that by critiquing masculinity as hegemonic, feminism assumed that men are universally privileged, giving little consideration to the problematic nature of masculinity as a concept or its multi-layered structure. He suggests that one legacy of this viewpoint has been the perpetuation of a monolithic definition of masculinity – an image of a homogeneous and privileged entity. In response to Imms (2000) views, Lingard and Douglas (1999) have illustrated that some of the debates about masculinity have been characterized by a strong backlash against feminism. Post structural feminists have drawn attention to the social processes prevalent in a masculinized society by which men marginalize women. This has led to critical examination of men's activities that, even if they are at odds with concepts and theories of masculinity, in fact cements power structures in society (Segal, 1997).

Pro-feminism as a social movement has two dominant characteristics: it recognizes power as the central function of masculinity and masculinity as a complex social hierarchy. Pro-feminism has its roots in sociology, in seeking to elaborate a cultural (rather than sex-role or psychoanalytical) construction of gender theory, and in feminism in acknowledging the centrality of patriarchy and power in gender issues (Imms, 2000). Pro-feminist authors such as Hearn (1996), Connell (1987, 1995), and

Mac an Ghaill (1994, 1996) have used feminist power theories in constructing theories of masculinity to explain the marginalizing not only of women but also of men on the basis of class, sexuality and race. Their work has helped to build an image of masculinity as a varied and varying complex of values and beliefs underlying men's practices, not a set of characteristics shared by all men.

2.4 Multiple Masculinities

The concept of multiple masculinities suggests that there is no single, universal, or historical version of masculinity to which all cultures subscribe or aspire. Rather, ideals of masculinity are historically and contextually dependent, making a nearly infinite number of masculinities possible. Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently. Furthermore, more than one kind of masculinity can be found within a given cultural setting. Within any workplace, neighbourhood or peer group, there are likely to be different understandings of masculinity and different ways of 'doing' masculinity (Connell, 2006). In the urban middle class, for instance, there is a version of masculinity organized around dominance (e.g., emphasizing "leadership" in management) and another version organised around expertise (e.g., "professional" and technical knowledge) (Hearn and Collinson, 1994). In other words, individuals and social groups create and adapt versions of masculinity for their own uses within their own cultural frames. Such analyses has encouraged some feminists and pro-feminists to question a universal interpretation of masculinity (Martino, 1995), to recognize that no definitive sets of male and female values exist, and to acknowledge that it may be necessary to reconsider the most fundamental questions: who are the losers and who are the winners? (Soerenson, 1992).

Masculinities do not exist separate from social behaviour, either as bodily states or fixed personalities. Rather, masculinities come into existence as people act. They are accomplished in everyday conduct or organisational life, as patterns of social practice (Connell, 2006). Masculinities are not settled in that they are not simple, homogeneous patterns. Masculinities may have multiple possibilities concealed within them. Masculinities are also dynamic and can change. Particular

masculinities are composed and may be de-composed, contested and replaced. This is the active politics of gender in everyday life (Connell, 2006).

The multiple-masculinities theory has four key characteristics. First, masculinity is a multiple entity. It is not homogenous or reducible to a set of simple characteristics. Second, gender is constructed by individuals as well as societal forces. Individuals do not automatically adopt predetermined gender roles; they are continually active in building, negotiating, and maintaining perceptions of their gender. Third, gender is a relational construct. Boys and men do not construct their version of masculinity apart from the influences of femininity or other men. Fourth, multiple masculinities diversify hegemonic power structures, rendering them more accessible to rehabilitation.

Masculinities research encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives, ranging from the anti-feminist to the feminist, although most have in common a concern with better understanding of the relations between gender and power. The research has moved beyond the conventional homogeneous concept of masculinity that associates privilege and power with maleness in an unproblematic way, and moves towards recognition of the existence of multiple masculinities in different social and spatial contexts.

Many theorists believe that multiple-masculinities theory offers a promising environment for analysing masculinity, and it provides a framework for interpreting the interactions of men with men, men with women, and men with society. Nevertheless, the concept of masculinity as multiple has limitations. First, theorizing does not encompass the range of masculinities that may exist, as masculinities are flexible and continually changing (Imms, 2000). A second limitation is a tendency to treat individual males as having or enacting a single masculinity. For example the categorising of male teachers in Mac an Ghaill, (1994) where hierarchies of masculinities can only provide a limited view of the complex social phenomenon. Imms (2000) suggests that such a hierarchical approach does little to recognize male mobility between masculinities at different times and places in reaction to varying stimuli. In short, multiple masculinity theory currently lacks an account of intra-masculinity mobility.

An increasing number of researchers involved in gender studies denote the individual not as a passive recipient that is imprinted upon or 'socialised' by society, but as a subject imbued with agency and self-knowledge (Davies, 1993). This approach to gender has shifted from roles that males and females learn to an understanding of the forming of gender identities as relational, multiple and diverse. These are the identities that boys and girls actively construct and negotiate through a complex web of social interaction. From viewing gender as relational and multiple, some theories (particularly those located within poststructuralist paradigms) have conceptualised gender not as something singularly possessed or something that "is", but something continually created through a series of performances and repetitive acts that constitute the illusion of a 'proper', 'natural' or 'fixed' gender (Butler, 1993). This does not however deny the notion of hierarchical masculinities or the forces of hegemonic masculinity which legitimate certain ways of 'being' male through the subordination of alternative masculine and feminine subject positions.

2.5 Masculinity as a Socially Constructed, Lived Phenomenon

What then is the relationship between maleness and masculinity? One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman, wrote Simone de Beauvoir (1997). The same is true of men. To be a man is to participate in social life as a man, as a gendered being. Men are not born; they are made (Kimmel and Messner, 2001). The masculinities of individual men are constructed over time through lived experiences and through the complexities of social negotiation. In applying a social constructionist lens to gender, we may then see that masculinity does not emerge from maleness, but that both emerge from a socially constructed context. In seeing masculinity as a social construction, we trouble the automatic link between maleness and masculinity, femaleness and femininity, so we may also say that masculinities are plural, mutable, fluid and negotiated. We may suggest that a man's masculinity may include elements of nurturing, care giving and emotional bonding all of which are traditionally seen as characteristics of femininity. By viewing gender as a construction of place, time and association, we may go beyond listing differences between men and women and begin to articulate the similarities between men and women (Kimmel, 2000).

Gender and more specifically masculinity exist as a social dynamic as well as the negotiation within that dynamic (Kimmel, 1998). So we may see masculinity as existing outside the individual. In this form, masculinity dwells within the social constructs or institutions of a society. Connell (1996) asserts that masculinities "come into existence as people act" (p. 208). Thus agency accompanies the construction of masculinity. Connell (1987, 1995) suggests that within the institutions of a society exist gender regimes or patterns of organization that reflect gender expectations of that society and sculpt the individual's gender. Gender regimes are dynamic. They are semi-fluid patterns that may change according to time, economics and other factors (Connell, 1987; Davis, 1995).

At the broadest level, society holds pictures or archetypes of masculinity, which form a "social imaginary" as to who men are and how they exist (Lesko, 2000). The institutions of a society may function as normative agents masculinizing and feminizing those within the institution (Connell, 1987, 1995).

On an individual level, masculinity may exist as a process of negotiation between the self and environment. As we progress moment by moment through our environment, our gender may be reconstructed as we interact with the people and social structures around us (Kimmel, 1998). For example, a male teacher may model behaviour within the classroom that is stereotypical 'male' and then later express nurturing and caring.

Butler (1993) argues that identities are constructed through performance. Far from being an essential category, gender is conceived as a 'regulated fiction', that requires constant reaffirmation through ordinary and everyday acts, that in themselves relate to powerful discourses about appropriate or socially sanctioned gender roles. Boys therefore are encouraged to act in accordance with rules and regulations set by society and culture so that they can successfully secure a place amongst 'the lads' in the community of their peers. In destabilising the concept of gender, Butler (1993) draws attention to how it requires constant maintenance and re-performance. Rather than being a fixed attribute in a person, gender is regarded as a fluid variable that shifts and changes in different contexts and at different times. It is for these reasons,

that gender is regarded as a performance; what individuals do at particular times and space, rather than a universal 'who you are'.

2.6 Contextual Influences on Masculinity in Ireland

Ireland has often been depicted as a patriarchal society (Mahon, 1994; O'Connor, 1998). The term patriarchal is defined by Hartmann (1981) as "a set of social relations between men and women which have a material base, and which, through hierarchical establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (p. 43). In Ireland, the social subordination of women was, until very recently, seen as "natural", "inevitable", "what women want". It was reflected in women's allocation to the family arena, where their position and status was given rhetorical recognition and validation (O'Connor, 2000).

Connell (1995) suggests that male privileging is maintained not only by individual or group attempts to intimidate, oppress and exclude, but also by women and men's "realistic expectations". The general acceptance of the status quo effectively perpetuates "a structure where different groups are rewarded unequally". He further states that "a gender order where men dominate women cannot avoid constituting men as an interest group concerned with defence, and women as an interest group concerned with change. This is a structural fact, independent of whether men as individuals love or hate women, or believe in equality or abjection" (p. 82).

In all sorts of ways, and in many arenas, women's voices and their concerns are beginning to be heard in Irish society. Yet, the perceived legitimacy of those voices, especially in so far as they articulate women's needs and perspectives is still problematic (O'Connor, 2000). It has been suggested by O'Carroll (1991) that "the alternative vision offered by female knowledge and insight is suspect and a source of fear" (p. 57). Despite the impact of the Women's Movement, Employment Equality Legislation, National Women's Council and the impact of EU membership, institutionally validated male power and male privilege continue to persist (O'Connor, 2000). Male authority is very clearly reflected in men's and women's differential occupancy of positions of authority in the economic system.

Davies (1995) has perceptively noted that by exerting power on behalf of women, men's own self interest is obscured and greatness achieved. "In pursuit of a cause,

the struggle for power is ennobled and becomes worthy" (ibid, p. 32). In essence, the cultural depiction of men as the appropriate authority figures can be seen as part of the process through which male control is maintained (O'Connor, 2000). Bourdieu (2001) argues that the church plays an important part in the reproduction of masculine domination and the masculine vision. He states:

> As for the church, pervaded by the deep-seated anti-feminism and a clergy that was quick to condemn all female offences against decency, especially in matters of attire, and was the authorized reproducer of a pessimistic vision of women and womanhood, it explicitly inculcates (or used to inculcate) a familialist morality, entirely dominated by patriarchal values, with, in particular, the dogma of the radical inferiority of women (p. 92).

Historically, the construction of masculinity and femininity in Ireland was shaped in part by Catholicism, and also by the Irish nationalist ideology, which placed the woman firmly in the home-place and the man in the public realm (Ní Laoire, 2002). Ireland is no different to other Western societies in how the 'good provider' role has been the key defining aspect of masculinity. Femininity was closely associated with domesticity and motherhood. This correlates with Bourdieu's (2001) statement that "Men continue to dominate the public space and the field of power (especially economic power – over production) whereas women remain (predominantly) assigned to the private space (domestic space, the space of reproduction)" (p. 96). O'Connor (2000) suggests that at an ideological level, work and family in Ireland have traditionally been reconciled by allocating family to the woman and paid work to the man, with the women's paid work being seen as a transient adjustment to a difficult economic situation or a reflection of a desire for self fulfilment.

The assumption of the male breadwinner was once so enshrined in Irish society that the 'marriage bar' legally required women, once married (and irrespective of whether or not they had children), to give up their jobs in public service employment, such as teaching and the civil service. This law was only repealed in 1973. Underpinning such social policy is the pivotal position given to women or more accurately, mothers in the Irish Constitution. Articles 41.2.1 and 41.2.2 state:

> In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved.....The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall

> not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home (Bunreacht na hEireann).

Giddens (1992) notes that up until recently, women were the carers, the specialists in love and emotions, while men were the exclusive breadwinners and essentially lost touch with the emotional basis of society. Little research has been carried out on Irish men as carers, be it for children in the family, elderly or infirm spouse, or caring for children and adults with disabilities. One study carried out in the late 1980s explored the attitudes and behaviour of a sample of 513 urban mothers with regard to work and family roles, through in-depth interviews with the women, all of whom had at least one child of school-going age. This study partially explored what fathers do 'at home', in Irish families as it is based on mothers' accounts of what fathers do. Critiquing the study Kiely (1996) concludes that:

> The mothers are clearly the managers. They manage the internal affairs of the family. They take care of the children, do the household tasks and make most of the decisions. The father, on the other hand, appears to do very little around the house except household repairs, play with the children, decide what TV programme to watch, and are unlikely to change this low level of participation unless their wives become sick or go to hospital (p.154).

These types of gender relations, which in themselves support the division between the public and private, play an important role in the social construction of gender divisions and identities (McDowell, 1997). Times have changed and breadwinning is no longer the monopoly of men, a change which has huge implications for the negotiation of power, roles and identities within families. These sociological developments challenge the legitimacy of patriarchal power in the family and threaten men's perception of themselves as breadwinners.

The 'good Irishman' was righteous, gallant and brave, so masculinity involved both morality and manliness (Martin, 1997). This construction of masculinity was part of a strongly heterosexual familist narrative (Conrad, 2001) that served to exclude alternative models of masculinity. It was therefore a highly monologic form of masculinity. Echoes of this were clearly heard in Fianna Fail's ideology of family life from the 1920s to the 1950s. It was epitomised in De Valera's romantic vision of an Ireland of cosy homesteads, frugal living, and the sound of laughing children, self-sufficiency and national independence (Brown, 1995). This powerful ideology was clearly highly gendered.

2.7 Summary

In sum, masculine identities are not static but historically and spatially situated and evolving (Connell, 1995). They arise through an individual's interaction with both the dynamisms and contradictions within and between immediate situations and broader social structures – gender regimes and gender orders. Different cultures construct masculinities in different ways; there is no one "true masculinity". There is diversity within any one culture – different ethnic groups, different classes, but also with any given situation. It is this understanding which allows Connell (1995) to talk about masculinity as a life project involving the making and remaking of identity and meaning. This helps to explain the social and psychic complexity and fragility of masculinity (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 2006).

Some commentators have suggested that a number of boy's and men's emotional and social problems can be seen as connected to the issue of masculinity. Segal (1990) observes that the constant pressure to confirm masculinity in its difference from femininity may also explain why it is only when men are seen at their most masculine – as soldiers in combat, as footballers in action – that they can embrace, weep, display what Western manhood depicts as more feminine feelings and behaviour. Dominant versions of masculinity are seen to lock boys into narrow and restricted ways of being human which have negative effects on their health, their relationships and their perspectives of the value of knowledge and work and therefore their achievements. Further, certain masculine ways of being in the world are said to limit boys' and men's emotional horizons and to tilt them towards aggression, repression, conflict and violence, and towards damaging forms of competition and control.

Gender encompasses the rich complexity of acculturated traits that we call masculinity and femininity. While it may be appropriate to speak of masculinity when discussing these complexities in the abstract or broadest view, it is more accurate to use terms like masculinities and femininities when discussing individuals (Kimmel, 2000). One definition of gender socialising is that it refers to "ongoing, multi-level processes of social expectations, control, and struggle that sustain and subvert gender systems" (Ferree and Hall, 1996, p. 925). This suggests that gender is

a characteristic of societies (Connell, 1996; Ferree and Hall, 1996). A multiple of institutions, such as the school, the family, the workplace and the mass media, all impact on gender formation. Institutions simultaneously shape and are shaped by individual gender agency (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Giddens, 1979) and the process is both dynamic and subject to change. Formal schooling is a major agent in producing and reinforcing cultural expectations for males and females (Finn *et al.* 1980).

In conclusion, this thesis proposes that masculinity is a social construct, constituted by and through the repetition of social, discursive and embodied practices (Butler, 1993, Davies, 1993). The constructivism theory proposes that gender in not innate but rather learned or constructed and that gender constructions and behaviours are the result of intersecting historical, cultural and social factors at particular moments in a culture's life (Buchbinder, 1994). This theory allows for change in such constructions and behaviours, since it sees these as dependent on changing circumstances.

Each individual has his own notions of appropriate male behaviour which he learns from this environment, so that rather than there being one, commonly accepted view of masculinity in any country, there are different perceptions of masculinities. In essence, there is no such thing as masculinity – only masculinities. Masculinity is never unified or homogeneous.

The forming of masculine identities is viewed as relational and multiple. (Renold, 2004). It is advocated in this thesis that masculinity is best conceptualised as a complex, dynamic, fluidic and multiple phenomena. While masculinity is a complex phenomenon, and the possibilities of diversity within versions of it are vast, it is largely the case that the culturally dominant forms are maintained. This point is eloquently illustrated by Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) who argue:

> Becoming a man is a matter of constructing oneself in and being constructed by the available ways of being male in a particular society. It is a matter of negotiating the various discourses of femininity and masculinity available in our culture, those powerful sets of meanings and practices which we must draw on to participate in our culture and to establish who we are (p. 46-47).

The experience of becoming a man is open to a wide number of differing perspectives. Each individual constructs his own understanding of male behaviour, which may or may not accord with the dominant understandings of masculinity. Each man has experiences in life which help him determine how to behave. Depending upon where a man is born, where he is raised, his religious training, his social class, his sexual orientation, and his ethnic group or race, an individual will construct his own unique gender identity that contains characteristics he has acquired from the dominant culture, from his subculture, and from his own unique experiences. Many different notions of masculinity experienced within an individual's social history contribute to that man's gender identity.

Both within an individual and within the broader culture there are antagonistic and clashing views of appropriate male behaviour. Masculine identity is always fragmentary and multi-faceted (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Within every single man or boy there are multiple masculine identities struggling for dominance.

There is an internal pecking order between the varied forms of masculinity. There is always an internal, men against men, boys against boys, conflict going on between the different interests of ruling hegemonic masculinities and more marginalised masculinities like gay, effeminate/heterosexual boys and some black boys (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996).

Each man's experiences provide a lens through which he views the complex experience of being a man. These lenses constitute a set of eyeglasses that he wears as he travels through life.

3

Schools as a Context for Gender Formation

In relation to boys' education Connell (1996) suggests that "Masculinities and femininities are actively constructed, not simply received. Society, school and peer milieu make boys an offer of a place in the gender order; boys determine how they will take it up" (p. 220). Schools implicitly teach boys about masculinity, about who to be and what to value. Schools are one of the places where boys learn to be male. They are taught this by the gendered sexualised, classed and racialised discourses associated with such things as management, discipline, sport, play, knowledge, assessment and teacher pupil and pupil relations. They learn there are male and female ways of being a student, a friend, a worker, a sports-person, a teacher and a partner. Masculinity resides in and is produced by institutions such as schools, primarily at the level of symbol and structure (Connell, 1996, 2000; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1996; Lesko, 2000). The curriculum, division of labour, tracking disciplinary schemes, and other school structures are all elements of a school's "gender regime" which affect gender relations in subtle ways (Browne, 1995; Connell, 1996, 2000; Lesko, 2000). For instance, in schools, some parts of the curriculum are culturally masculinized and others feminized, in both staffing and cultural meanings. Different groups of boys embrace or reject areas of learning on gendered terms, setting up different pathways through education.

Looking at schools and classrooms as key sites for the formation of beliefs about masculinity has necessitated close attention to everyday practices such as teacher talk, peer culture, curriculum content and school messages. In recent times attention has shifted from a strong focus on the individual to examining the role of social contexts in the process of identity formation. This has resulted in close observation and analysis of subtler social phenomena, often involving biased and unconscious practices (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Connell, 2002) such as the construction of masculinity.

3.1 The Role of Schools in the Production of Gender

Secondary schools are locations where students spend a great deal of time not only learning, but also navigating gendered identities. Secondary school students often struggle with the contradictions and demands of gender as they progress through their teenage years. Sometimes the social obligations and restrictions on how gender is practised by individual students can conflict with the institutional discourses of public schooling (Davison and Frank, 2006). The teenage years are distinctive in the making of masculinities and femininities, since not only does the body change, but body meanings and the image repertoire of bodies become, in contradictory ways "available" (Corrigan, 1991).

Given that schools are social settings where gender identities are constructed, negotiated and officially sanctioned, the overall educational environment offers very influential messages about gender. By the time they enter secondary school young women and men are well aware of gender differences and acutely understand the social rewards and punishments for performing gender in specific ways (Lesko, 1988). Students have a complex psychic and social investment in gender, and schools assist students in this sorting process by supporting those who conform to the hierarchy of gender ideals (Kenway, 1995). Schools provide a key site where different masculinities are produced through performances and draw on different cultural resources that are available in each setting (Connell, 2000).

Masculinity is something that can never be taken for granted; it is something that always has to be proven and affirmed. This builds its own tensions into boys' lives, as they often feel that they have to prove themselves. This shows itself in primary schools, particularly around the ages of nine or ten when there is often a gender division in the classroom and girls often withdraw from any contact with boys (Seidler, 1996). Often it is the boys who easily relate to girls and might be emotionally connected to themselves, who find themselves isolated and stranded in the senior primary school classes. They can become targets for bullying, especially if they do not readily conform to the macho cultures that many of the boys are in.

Gender Policing

When boys feel threatened in their male identities, they often withdraw into traditional macho styles. They can be made to feel that they are not 'man enough' and that they have to forsake the softer and more emotional aspects of themselves. It is at this stage that boys begin to link emotions with the feminine and develop homophobic feelings as a form of self-defence. It is in the senior classes in primary school that boys begin to call each other 'queer' and 'gay', and this becomes a form of policing which works to foreclose different ways of being for boys (Seidler, 1996). As the peer culture grows in strength, it becomes important for boys to be accepted and they often learn to judge themselves according to a dominant masculinity, even if, at some level, they may not go along with it.

Often the transition to secondary school is particularly scary for boys, particularly those who are unsure of how they are supposed to be in this larger context. It comes at an awkward point in boys' development, just as they are beginning to establish more of a sense of themselves in relation to their male identities. Those who adopt a traditional view of masculinity feel they have to prove themselves by putting down others, for it is only in relation to others that they can feel good about themselves (Swain, 2004). Boys often feel that they have to show that they can handle the new situation on their own, and often do not share the insecurities they feel with others. Needing the help of others is a sign of weakness, and the showing of emotions, especially vulnerability, serves to prove that you are just 'not up for it'. So boys learn to be independent and self-sufficient and that, to have emotional needs, just shows that you cannot make it on your own (Seidler, 2007). Some boys withdraw into themselves, and there is a sharp divide between the uncertainties and anxieties they might be feeling in their inner lives and the ways they feel obliged to present themselves in public, where they might be tempted to act out a harder notion of masculinity in order to be accepted as 'one of the lads'.

As boys are finding ways to affirm their masculinities, they also have to deal with the concept of gender equality. Intellectually, some boys in school may affirm the equality of women, but, emotionally, they might find it more difficult to handle. This is because, traditionally, a sense of masculinity is often constructed as a

relationship of superiority in relation to women. Boys, who support gender equality, can feel torn between affirming a traditional masculinity and feeling unsure about themselves as young men.

Normative Assumptions about the Nature of Masculinity

Identity, interaction and institution are the main themes in the production of gender differences and the reproduction of gender equality. One of the institutions that create gender difference and reproduces gender inequality is the school. Kimmel (2000) comments "Not only do gendered individuals negotiate their identities within gendered institutions, but also these institutions produce the very differences we assume are the properties of individuals" (p. 96). In essence, different structured experiences produce the gender differences which we often attribute to people. Kimmel (2000) describes schools as being like "old fashioned factories and what they produce is gendered individuals. Both in the official curriculum – textbooks and the like – and in the parallel, "hidden curriculum" of our informal interactions with both teachers and other students, we become gendered" (p. 151). He concludes that the message which students get from both the content and the form of education is that women and men are different and unequal. Consequently, inequality comes from those differences, and that, therefore, such inequality is justified.

Theorists like Connell (1996) and Mac an Ghaill (1994) argue that schools do not simply reflect or reproduce the gender values of society. Rather, they can be seen to actively promote gender and sexual styles; ways of being boys and girls that help students develop a sense of self and social behaviour towards others. This perspective argues that different schools selectively produce specific expectations about 'proper' masculinity and ways of becoming men.

Existing research has found that the culturally exalted form of masculinity varies from school to school and is informed by the local community (Skelton, 1997; Connolly, 1998). Masculine identities are constantly produced and recreated through social practices associated with schools, and in relationships between groups and individuals. Lynch and Lodge (2002) argue that the school is one of the institutions in which masculinity and patriarchal relations of dominance are practised. School

structures may reward students who embody particular dominant forms of masculinity, such as sporting prowess (Edley and Wetherell, 1997).

In common with several other research studies, this thesis argues that schools are places where multiplicities of masculinities are played out (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connolly, 1998; Martino, 1999). A school will have a hierarchy of masculinities, and will generally have its own dominant or hegemonic form of masculinity, that gains ascendancy over and above others. This form of masculinity becomes culturally exalted and exemplifies what it means to be a real boy (Connell, 1989). The hegemonic masculine form is not necessarily the most common type on view and may be contested, but although it is often underwritten by the threat of violence it generally exerts its influence by being able to define what is the norm, and many boys find they have to fit into, and conform to, its demands (Swain, 2003). While there will be other types of masculinity that do not aspire to emulate the leading form, other modes will be oppressed and subordinated, and positioned outside the legitimate forms of maleness (Swain, 2003). As all masculinities are constructed in contrast to being feminine, those that are positioned at the bottom of the masculine hierarchy will be symbolically assimilated to femininity and tend to have much in common with feminine forms (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998).

School's Gender Regime

The school is an important player in the shaping of modern masculinities. Gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements through which a school functions by the division of labour, authority patterns, and so on. Connell (1996) suggests that the totality of these arrangements is a school's *gender regime*. He postulates that gender regimes consist of four primary components; Power Relations, Division of Labour, Patterns of Emotion and Symbolization.

Power Relations include supervision and authority among teacher and patterns of dominance, harassment, and control over resources among students. Despite the fact that teaching is becoming an increasingly feminised profession in Ireland, women are under-represented in management across all educational sectors (Lynch, 1999). Power relations among students are also visible in schools. Prendergast's (1996)

ethnographic portrayal of a British working-class high school shows, for instance, how control over playground space for informal football games was crucial in maintaining the hegemony of an aggressive, physical masculinity in this school's peer group life.

Division of Labour includes work specializations among teachers, such as concentrations of women in Home Economics, language, and literature teaching, and men in science, mathematics and technological subjects. This also includes informal specialization among students, where a teacher asks for a "big strong lad" to help move a piece of furniture, to the gendered choice of subjects at second-level education.

Patterns of Emotion refer to the "feeling rules" for occupations. In education, these can be associated with the specific roles in a school, for example, the tough principal, the drama teacher, and so forth. Among the most important feeling rules in schools are those concerned with sexuality. There tends to be a lack of recognition of different sexual orientations in Irish schools and a rejection of those who are not heterosexual (Moane, 1995). The heterosexist nature of the second-level education system in Ireland can result in gay and lesbian students experiencing social isolation, rejection and harassment because of their sexual orientation (O'Carroll and Szalacha, 2000). The lack of recognition of different sexual orientations in schools can be partly attributed to the dominance of Roman Catholic teaching and ideology in Irish society on matters of sexuality in general (Inglis, 1998).

Symbolization in school refers to the uniform and dress codes, formal and informal language codes and so forth. A particularly important symbolic structure in education is the gendering of knowledge such as the defining of certain areas of the curriculum as masculine and others as feminine. In some coeducational second-level schools in Ireland there are fields of knowledge and understanding that are dominated by one gender group (Lodge and Lynch, 2004). Research by Lynch and Lodge (2002) found that some second-level schools operated timetables that polarised gender choices and discouraged non-traditional entrants to particular subjects.

It has been argued by Connell (1996) that through these intersecting structures of relationships, schools create institutional definitions of masculinity. Students participate in these masculinities simply by entering the school and living in its structures. The terms on which they participate, however, are negotiable –"whether adjusting to the patterns, rebelling against them, or trying to modify them" (Connell, 1996, p. 214).

A school gender regime, according to Connell (1996) creates three 'masculinity vortices' namely boys' subjects, discipline and sport. The masculinizing practices of boys' subjects, discipline, and sport tend to produce a specific kind of masculinity. The first vortex "boys' subjects" arises in the gender division of labour and symbolization. While most of the academic curriculum is common to boys and girls, there are certain areas where a divergence takes place. For example, boys predominate in subjects such as Engineering and Construction Studies while girls' favours subjects like Home Economics and Art. Academic subjects may also have a strong gender meaning. Physical sciences are culturally defined as masculine and tend to have a concentration of male teachers. Martino's (1994) sophisticated analysis of secondary school classes in Australia shows how the subject English, by contrast, is "feminized" in the eyes of many boys.

The second vortex, discipline, is linked to power relations. Adult control in schools is enforced by a disciplinary system that often becomes a focus of masculinity formation. Teachers may use gender as a means of control, for instance, shaming boys by saying they are "acting like a girl". Punishment is likely to be gendered, for example, boys suffer more suspensions than girls.

The third vortex is sport. Connell (1996) argues that some schools use sport to blend power, symbolization, and emotion in a particularly potent combination. By using heavily masculinized team sports such as rugby, American football and ice hockey, schools use these games for the celebration and reproduction of the dominant codes of gender. The game defines a pattern of aggression and dominating performance as the most admired form of masculinity, and indirectly marginalizes others.

3.2 Embodied Masculinity

Masculinity does not exist as an ontological given, but comes into existence as people act (Connell, 2000); that is, the social and material practices through which, and by which, the boys' masculine identities are generally described in terms of what they do with or to their bodies (Turner, 2000). This concept of embodiment is best understood as a social process (Elias, 1978). Students in schools can be viewed as embodied social agents, for they do not merely have a passive body this is inscribed and acted upon, but they are actively involved in the development of their bodies throughout their school life (Swain, 2003).

Students can be seen being consciously concerned about the maintenance and appearance of their bodies, endeavouring to make it an instrument of their will; they can be seen learning to control their bodies, acquiring and mastering a number of techniques such as walking, running, sitting, catching, hitting, kicking and so forth, and using them in appropriate ways that being a boy demands (Frosh *et al.* 2002). Moreover, they are aware of its significance, both as a personal resource and as a social symbol, which communicates signs and messages about their identity (Swain, 2003). Embodied capital enables access to certain activities and social groups in Irish schools (McSharry, 2009). The body is thus an integral part of identity and of our biographies, for the process of making and becoming a body also involves the project of making the self (Shilling, 2003).

Clothes and the Construction of Identity

The clothes we choose to wear make a highly visible statement of how we wish to present ourselves to the world; who we think we are, and who we would like to be (Turner, 1997). These opportunities are generally curtailed in schools where a school uniform is strictly imposed and enforced. According to Foucault (1997), the uniform is one of the structural techniques used to produce the discipline and submissive, quiescent body generally acceptable to adults. Where school uniform is only loosely applied and enforced, a trajectory is opened to students to use the wearing of fashionable, brand-named clothes and trainers as a constituent in the construction of their masculinity, as a resource to achieve peer group status, and also

to show an outward or public display of resistance to school regulation (Meadmore and Symes, 1996).

The regulation of a dress code in schools can be a constant source of conflict between teachers and students. Adult-student conflict over school standards of dress and behaviour is exceedingly complex and may reflect a mixture of understandings, as well as a dynamic of control and resistance. If students interpret the school as strict and uncaring, they could use clothing and behaviour in ways that purposely oppose its authority. Boys, especially working-class boys, might use certain styles of speech, behaviour, and dress to signal their resistance to middle-class norms, which they experience as oppressive (Hebdige, 1979; Foley, 1990). In this sense, these boys appear to teachers to display what Connell (1995) describes as 'marginalized masculinities' which is interpreted by educators as being overly course and aggressive. Educators attempt to reform these styles and behaviours into mainstream masculine forms.

Disciplining of the Body

Bodies in schools can be seen in two ways, collectively and/or individually, but the system of schooling tries to control and train them (Swain, 2003). All schools contain sites of teacher control and student resistance (Epstein and Johnson, 1998), and there is ongoing tension between the body as an object and as an agent, which in many ways is about the struggle for the control of the boys' bodies. Through institutional practice, schools produce (or attempt to produce) docile bodies through techniques of discipline, surveillance, classification and normalisation (Foucault, 1997). Many boys in school are far from the docile, passive bodies that schools attempt to produce in the classroom. In fact, they are full of energy and action, and, especially in the context of games or practical subjects, the boys' bodies become bodies in motion, literally and metaphorically (Swain, 2003).

Schools attempt to mould students, especially those perceived as lacking or resistant in some way, into embodying what school officials consider proper comportment. Schools exercise this goal through persistent bodily discipline, or regulation of bodily movements and displays. Foucault (1977) argued that modern control is enacted through techniques of surveillance and physical regulation, or "discipline"

aimed at the body. Although Foucault focused his analysis on prisons, he claimed that an array of modern institutions, including schools, use similar disciplinary techniques. Subsequent research in education has pursued this claim and documented that schools attempt to discipline students into embodiments of compliance (Ferguson, 2000; McLaren 1986). Schools use this discipline to rework the behaviour and appearance of students so their bodies display acceptable, normative comportment.

Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary institutions such as schools intend to produce individuals who internalize discipline and regulate themselves. Teachers and educators may interpret certain forms of dress and behaviours as oppositional to school norms and attempt to discipline those involved. This can result in students subject to this discipline perceiving themselves as oppositional. Students targeted for disciplinary reform can internalize the discipline aimed at them, and while for some this may lead to self-regulation and complicity, for others it could produce resistance and disengagement from the school.

Schools include some aspects of this bodily regulation, such as dress codes, in their overt curricula. However, they teach most lessons about appropriate behaviour, such as students should be quieter and more docile for instance, in a "hidden curriculum" (Giroux and Purpel 1983). The hidden curriculum tacitly teaches students unspoken lessons about class and gender and often manifests in how schools regulate their students' bodies. According to Martin (1998) "This curriculum demands the practice of bodily control in congruence with the goals of the school as an institution...In such a curriculum, teachers constantly monitor kids' bodily movements, comportment, and practices" (p. 495).

In this way schools produce students who not only learn specific subject matter but also learn how to embody race, class and gendered realities. School teachers often view the discipline of students' bodies, especially in ways which reflect 'appropriate' masculine and feminine behaviour, as transmitting cultural capital and modelling the type of dress and conduct that could be linked to upward mobility. Clothing styles and manners can function as very important and visible aspects of cultural capital. For instance, to succeed in the white-collar business world one must learn to 'dress for success' and wear appropriate attire to convey the impression of neatness, order

and ambition. Occupational success relates strongly to a particular set of cultural norms regarding clothing style. A similar dynamic occurs within schools. Those students whose dress reflects the cultural styles preferred by those in power tend to be viewed as successful students.

Physical Capital

The social construction of the body is of central importance to the construction of masculinities in young men. Body shape is an important aspect of appearance. Young people's constructions of gender-appropriate body shape and size, and notions of gender-appropriate sport and other physical activities, have important consequences for the gender positions boys and girls are able to access and practice in school and in society in general. The work of Gorely *et al.* (2003) suggests that the extent to which young people are able to see sport specifically and physical activity more broadly, as meaningful and valuable to them is to a large extent circumscribed by gender-appropriate embodiment.

Bourdieu's (1993) notions of the habitus and the exchange of physical capital provides a useful means of conceptualizing issues of embodiment and gender in school physical activity and sport. The concept of physical capital is useful here in identifying the resources available to individuals through their engagements in sport. The value in this concept lies in its exchange value.

Shilling (1993) specifically refers to the conversion of physical capital as "the translation of bodily participation in sports, leisure and other activities into different forms of capital", usually economic, cultural or social (p. 127-128). Capital itself exists within a system of exchange. Capital is a resource that empowers, allowing individuals "the capacity to exercise control over one's own future and that of others" (Calhoun *et al.*, 1995, p. 4). Physical capital provided by engagement in physical activities such as sport has exchange value for boys, particularly in social and cultural terms. In an Irish context, McSharry (2009) has shown how young men in second-level schools can use their physical capital as a means of attracting girls and convert physical to social capital in terms of relationships with others.

For Bourdieu the body is a site of social memory, and his concept of habitus defines the process by which the social is written into the corporeal (McNay, 1999). Habitus

itself invokes the individual "culturally learning, refining, recognizing, recalling and evoking dispositions to act" (Jarvie and Maguire, 1994, p. 186) that are relevant to the practices of their particular field. Through this process the individual becomes "endowed with the habitus" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 72), which is ingrained in routine, everyday actions to the extent that it becomes second nature.

Hickey *et al.* (1998) highlighted the importance of sport as a site for the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1983) suggests that the key competences required by and celebrated by sport, the forceful occupation of space and skilful control over objects, map directly into conventional constructions of hegemonic masculinity. Lynch and Lodge (2002) observed that boys who obtain places on teams in Irish schools and exhibit strength and athleticism in their bodily actions and visual strength and athleticism in the bodily shape were likely to receive accolades from peers and rewards from teachers. Research by McSharry (2009) identified participation in soccer, rugby and Gaelic football as affording prestige and social standing to teenage boys in second-level schools in the greater Dublin area.

Bryson (1990) cites the various codes of football as sports that symbolize hegemonic masculinity, and she observed that not all sports are equally implicated in maintaining the gender order, at least in terms of their exclusivity as a 'male preserve' (Theberge, 1985), even where they involve competition. She identified a range of sports such as badminton, athletics, swimming and golf that do not represent the same masculinist values.

3.3 Gender and Public Space

A number of studies have demonstrated how young people's use of urban public space is often gendered and favours a position of inclusion for boys (Cotterell, 1991; Robinson, 2000). When playing or 'hanging out' boys have been shown to dominate and monopolise public space. Studies by Lieberg (1995) and Cressida (1997) suggest that teenage boys can acquire the social power to claim space and make it in their own image. Exclusion from public places means that for some adolescent girls, their bedroom becomes a more significant site for social interaction with peer-group than public recreational areas (James, 2001). As a consequence, girls are often

placed on the margins of 'boy space' and are left to feel like the 'wrong gender in the wrong place' (Skelton, 2000). These studies support the idea that spatiality and identity are mutually produced and establish inescapable that the experience of places is tied up with gender relations, both directly and indirectly (Curtin and Linehan, 2002). The public spaces where individuals daily enact socially prescribed gender roles can function as performative arenas that actively shape masculinity and femininity and reinforce gender differences.

Many researchers have identified school playgrounds as heavily gender segregated places (Delamont, 1980; Thorne, 1993; Swain, 2000). A study by Swain (2000) of an English junior school noted that the playground (which was often used to play football) was dominated by boys and access was restricted. A few girls were seen on this playground but they were generally marginalised and restricted to walking around the perimeter. The boys controlled this public space. Further evidence of boys' territorial attitude to public space was noted by Askew and Ross (1988) who comment "for the most part, boys dominated the playground space and were engaged in active, physical pursuits, while girls often occupied the peripheries or the 'quiet' playground (where provided) together with the smaller children (p. 21).

3.4 Adolescent Boys and School Achievement

Boys' underachievement in education has become a matter of concern across the western world. One explanation for the underachievement of boys in school is the 'feminisation' of schooling. There are various ways in which this 'feminisation' is perceived to be taking place but the main issue is the predominance of women teachers which has been argued to have led to primary schools 'girls learning styles' over those of boys (Biddulph, 1998: Hoff-Sommers, 2000).

The assumption that raising the proportion of male teachers will provide boys with positive, work-oriented 'role models' is based on notions of gender which have long been challenged; that is, such strategies are underpinned by sex role socialisation theories whereby masculinity and femininity are located solely within male and female bodies respectively (Skelton, 2003). This uni-dimensional, essentialist way of conceiving of gender has been unsatisfactory in explaining and understanding

differences between men and men, and women and women (Connell, 2002). Recent thinking on gender argues for a consideration of the multidimensionality of identify whereby masculinities and femininities are seen as being shaped by social class, sexuality, religion, age, ethnicity and so forth (Connell, 1987; Skeggs, 1997; Whitehead, 2002).

The argument of the underachieving boy as a subject constructed in need of help by many theorists is challenged by Reid (1999). She states:

> His production is a consequence of teachers' failure (especially female teachers, predominant in the primary school, the English faculty or special educational needs provision) to meet his individual needs. His 'masculinity' is problematised by the changing world order post feminism; it is not itself the problem. His crisis is understood in relation to female independence and success. How the subject is constructed thereby affects the questions being asked and actions being taken (p. 42).

Francis (2008) challenges the notion that teachers' classroom behaviour and interaction with pupils may be predicted on the basis of their gender. Her findings from a large study of fifty-one primary school classes, both in London and North East England, of which twenty-five were taught by a male teacher and twenty-six by a female teacher challenges the assumption that men teachers teach or relate to pupils in predictable or uniform ways simply on the basis of their 'maleness'. This study highlighted the extent of diversity in male teachers' practice and in their construction of gendered subject-hood, hence providing evidence to question assumptions that male teachers teach or relate to pupils in particular ways due to their identification as male. It illustrated strongly contrasting pedagogic practices, disciplinary effectiveness, and approaches to pupils and to the teacher role among the three male teachers studied. It illustrates that male teachers ought not to be assumed to employ different pedagogic practices (or subjectivities) to women teachers simply on the basis of their 'sex'.

Her work has illuminated the complex, shifting and nebulous nature of gendered subjectivity. It emphasizes the fluidity and complexity of gender construction. Her analysis shows how masculinity and femininity are not exclusive provinces of 'appropriately' sexed bodies (Halberstam, 1998). One teacher's performance of

subjectivity in his teacher identity included more aspects of what would commonly be seen as feminine than masculine, and therefore arguably constitutes an example of a production of 'male femininity'. This further supports social constructionist and poststructuralist work attempting to disentangle the common conflation between sex and gender (see for example Hawkesworth, 1997: Hood-Williams, 1998).

3.5 Polarization of Gender in the Classroom

It has been suggested by Levy (1972) that the impact of sexual stereotyping in schools results in females learning femininity, instead of masculinity. In other words, they learn to be docile and subservient instead of independent and thoughtful. She notes that there is consistent pressure on girls to be 'feminine' and 'good students' and this promotes characteristics that inhibit achievement and suppress females' full development. Her argument makes visible some of the discrimination that girls face in school and points to differential socialization in coeducational classrooms. In effect, what is reproduced in schools is a gendered society. What students learn in school is shaped by gender relations and by notions of what young men and young women will do in later life. Gender is involved in socialization and in the curriculum at school.

Research by Gilligan (1997) with adolescent girls describes how these assertive, confident and proud young girls lose their voices when they reach adolescence. At the same time, boys become more confident, even beyond their abilities. Boys suddenly find their voices – as girls lose confidence, boys seem to gain it. For some boys it is the inauthentic voice of bravado, of constant posturing, of foolish risk-taking and gratuitous violence (Foster *et al.*, 2001). Some commentators such as Pollock (1998) note that boys learn that they are supposed to be in power and thus begin to act like it. He suggests that boys' voices are strident and full of bravado but also disconnected from their genuine feelings.

A study of three secondary schools of various social class and ethnic compositions in the United Kingdom, examined the construction of gender through classroom observations of teacher and student behaviours and interviews with students (Francis, 2000). It found that gender continues to be constructed in very polarized ways, with stark distinctions between what is considered masculine and what is considered

feminine. The classroom culture was dominated by boys who were active, aggressive, competitive, and interested in heterosexual contests. In general, boys tended to be loud, disruptive and monopolized classroom space. They also used sexual comments to denigrate girls. The boys were not seen by girls as superior and indeed, girls displayed greater confidence in their educational abilities. Displays of academic interest and capacity were more problematic for boys. Girls tended to conduct themselves in oppositional ways to boys, and saw their actions as sensible and selfless, while boys' actions were perceived as silly and selfish.

In Ireland, research by Hannan *et al.* (1996) found that amongst Junior and Leaving Certificate students in Ireland, girls were more likely than boys to have low levels of physical and academic self esteem. These trends persisted even when class background and ability were taken into account. Some observers have found that, despite higher academic achievement than boys in public examinations, girls continue to experience lower levels of self-esteem (Younger *et al.*, 1999).

Research on the gender gap in school achievement illustrates that girls' suppress ambition and boys inflate it. In other words, girls are more likely to undervalue their ability, especially in more traditionally 'masculine' subjects such as maths and science. Francis and Skelton (2001) argue that women are underrepresented in the sciences not by lack of interest or ability but by the ideology of domesticity and the social and political conditions of science. The reverse is true in the humanities and social sciences. Girls tend to outscore boys in English and foreign languages.

Martino (1997) argues that boys regard English as a 'feminine' subject and consequently they tend to under-perform in this area. He found that boys are uninterested in English because what it might say about their masculine pose. Consequently, those who adopt a macho masculinity are more likely to opt out as they find it hard to express themselves in their learning. They will avoid forms of self-expression that have become so important in contemporary pedagogues, and will not express themselves in case they might 'lose face' in front of their mates. Expressing their opinions and feelings can often leave them feeling exposed and vulnerable to the ridicule of their peers. What becomes most important for these boys is keeping face in front of their peers and not showing any signs of weakness.

They feel it is too risky to speak, or at least to speak seriously about oneself. They often withdraw into humour and irony as forms of self-protection.

School Work is Girls' Work

Foster *et al.*, (2001) argue that it is not the school experience that 'feminizes' boys, but rather the ideology of traditional masculinity that keeps boys from wanting to succeed. The notion that school work is girls' work is the main inhibiting factor. It is the ideology of traditional masculinity that inhibits boys' development as well as girls' development (ibid). Daley *et al.*, (1998) showed that boys read less than girls and have a narrower experience with fiction but differences by gender are much smaller than those of social class.

Some studies of boys' academic success in schools suggest that to be seen to be performing well within the classroom can be considered characteristic of femininity, and therefore homosexuality. Research by Warrington *et al.* (2000) indicated that it is generally more acceptable for girls to work hard in school and still be part of the "in crowd" while boys are under pressure to conform to a cool masculine image and more likely to be ridiculed for working assiduously in academic matters. Swain (2005) observed that the tasks that lead to academic success do not compliment the activities in which boys engage to achieve a masculine identity. He described the relationship between achieving a masculine identity and attending to school work as fundamentally incompatible. For many boys, learning and studying are equated with femininity.

Within existing research on masculinities in school, school rejection is widely understood as something boys do to mark masculinity in a social context where commitment to school is regarded as feminine (Swain, 2005). It is commonly stated that in secondary school, learning and school commitment become increasingly feminized and equated with being "girlish" and being a "sissy", whereas schoolboy masculinity is characterized by toughness, sporty prowess, and resistance to teachers and education (Epstein, 1998; Francis, 1999; Martino, 1999; Renold, 2004; Swain, 2005). It is generally accepted that boys learn to establish their masculinity in opposition to femininity, and this involves rejection of what is regarded as feminine.

There have been many secondary school ethnographies that explored the relationship between school success, schoolwork and the formation of boys' masculinity. Note for example, Kessler *et al.* (1985) sporting 'Bloods' and academic 'Cyrils', Connell (1989) 'Cool guys, swots and wimps', Mac an Ghaill's (1994) 'Macho Lads' and 'Academic Achievers' and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998a) 'Nerds' and 'Scruffs'. This research in boys' schooling cultures has illustrated how many boys equate high academic success and academic study with femininity or something that 'girls do'. Salisbury and Jackson (1996), Epstein, (1998) and Younger and Warrington (1996) argue that boys' constructions of masculinity in secondary school present educational success as 'sissy' and non-masculine, with a consequently negative impact on their learning. Researchers such as Wolpe (1988) have shown how being 'clever' is often interpreted by some boys as an absence of a commitment to dominant forms of masculinity.

As school values and academic work are constructed as feminine or effeminate in secondary school, rejecting school is a way of rejecting femininity and thus serves as a signifier of masculinity (Martino, 1999; Mills, 2001; Reay, 2002). However as Lyng (2009) points out characterizing school commitment as effeminate and suggesting that school commitment in general is incompatible with masculinity and typical of femininity would imply generalizing one sub-culturally specific norm to all boys and thereby overlook social distinctions among boys/masculinities and girls/femininities. She states that school rejection and educational self-exclusion is not in itself a gender specific phenomenon. School rejection is not a general signifier of masculinity. Indeed many boys can commit enthusiastically to school without their masculinity being questioned and adopt an intelligible and acceptable style of masculine behaviour.

Many studies examining the relationship between academic achievement at school and masculinity have illustrated that it is not solely academic success, but boys' attitudes and embodied dispositions to academic study that need to be negotiated (Adler and Adler, 1998; Epstein, 1998; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998a). Research by Renold (2001) has focused attention on how dominant and hegemonic forms of masculinity impact on, intersect and shape boys' dispositions to schooling, schoolwork and academic achievement. Her research of two final year (Year 6)

primary school classes in the East of England showed that many boys learnt that studiousness and academic success conflict with conventional forms of hegemonic masculinity. She also highlighted how the school, as a social and learning environment, produced contradictory masculinities, the performance and fragile nature of which necessitated their routine negotiation on an everyday basis. She showed how an array of strategies and techniques were adopted by the majority of boys to avoid what were perceived as non-masculine/feminine classroom behaviours and practices, and disguise their desire for, or achievement of, academic success. These included: bringing outside behaviours into the classroom; playing down academic success; teasing and bullying studious or high-achieving boys not investing in hegemonic masculinity; de-valuing girls' schoolwork by re-positioning their 'achievements' as 'failures'.

Renold's (2001) study showed how boys used the processes of 'disguise' and 'avoidance' in order to display a seamless, coherent and consistent masculinity while underneath they experience an on-going struggle to negotiate classroom and playground hierarchies. She illustrated the tensions and conflicts which boys experience trying to negotiate high academic achievement and the pressures of hegemonic masculinity.

Protest Masculinities

When boys experience failure in school and devaluation by teachers, it is often their masculinity that is threatened and needs to be protected. Subsequently some male students who fail to live up to the academic standards expected in schools may form deviant groups or gangs. One of the ways for these students to achieve high status within the group is through confrontations with authority, specifically the teachers. This has been described as 'protest masculinity' by Connell (1996). These students openly engage in anti-school behaviour, and by defying existing power structures, they can display their independence from the control of their teachers and the school establishment. They take the discipline system as a challenge, especially in peer networks that make a heavy investment in ideas of toughness and confrontation.

Indiscipline, rule breaking, and protesting become central to the making of masculinity for these boys who usually lack other resources to gain prestige. Connell

(1996) argues that boys engage in these practices, not because they are driven to it by raging hormones, but in order to acquire or defend prestige, to mark difference, and to gain pleasure. This exaggerated masculinity compensates for their subordinate status in the hierarchy of their everyday classroom life. Rule breaking becomes central to the making of masculinity when boys lack other resources for gaining these ends.

Psychological evidence on self-esteem and masculinities links negative classroom behaviour with low self-esteem (Fontana, 1988). Therefore, it could be argued that if students acquired higher self-esteem then a consequence would be increased conformity to classroom rules. However, for students who are members of deviant groups, a tension develops between the conflicting behaviours demanded by school and being a member of a gang. While developing self-esteem might encourage conformity to classroom rules in boys as school students, the opposite (lack of conformity) is expected of boys as members of deviant groups (Skelton, 2001).

3.6 Masculinities and Social Class

Gender relations are not the only power relations that matter in schools. Social class matters. Class interweaves with gender at both the symbolic and structural levels. One of the most enduring perspectives on social inequality in education has been class reproduction theory. This theory, broadly defined, argues that schools tend to reproduce and even exaggerate inequalities of race, class and gender (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Bowles and Gintis 1976; Willis 1977). The works of Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984) emphasize the way in which schools reproduce social divisions based on wealth, privilege and power. His contributions to the sociology of education, framed in the concepts of "habitus", "field", and "capital", centre on uncovering the relations between social and cultural reproduction. According to Bourdieu, the inculcated dispositions students bring with them to school are of vital importance in their interactions with educational institutions, as schools value and reward cultural capital of the dominant culture and devalue that of students from subordinate cultures.

Bourdieu's (1977) theories of social capital offer an invaluable conceptual lens through which cultural differences between classes may be investigated in relation to the development of masculinities. Masculinity is organised on a macro scale around social power, and the education system in Ireland is such that access to social power, in terms of entry to higher education and professional careers, is available only to those who possess the appropriate 'cultural capital' (Drudy and Lynch, 1993). It has been suggested by Segal (1990) that those school boys who are unable to obtain entry to the forms of social power that schooling has to offer, then seek alternative means of publicly demonstrating their masculinity through the use of violence or demonstrating sporting prowess.

Bourdieu (1977) argues that the differences between social classes are not simply material ones of income, wealth, property and other financial resources and assets. The middle class also has greater 'cultural capital' than the working class. By 'cultural capital' Bourdieu (1977) is referring to the possession of particular values, attitudes, lifestyle, social networks, tastes and perceptions. Although one set of cultural values is not in itself 'better' than another, the economic and social power of the middle-class ensures that their culture becomes the dominant one. People who process cultural capital understand and appreciate the cultural norms held by those with societal power and have a greater ability to obtain this power themselves. According to Bourdieu (1977), people tend to have different abilities to understand such norms, or differing amounts of cultural capital, depending on their class position in society. In this context, it is more or less inevitable that those with greater access to 'cultural capital' such as the middle class will be more successful than those who do not have access to it.

In relation to masculinities, the meaning of masculinity in working-class life is different from the meaning in middle-class life, not to mention the very rich and the very poor. Hegemonic masculinity is the form which is culturally dominant in our society and schools. This form of masculinity is favoured by white middle and upper-class men who occupy order-giving positions in the institutions they control (Messner, 1992), while working class masculinities are generally performed by subordinate men.

Bourdieu's exposition of the hidden forces perpetuating inequality is illuminating and helpful when it comes to examining our education system. What is taught in schools matters. Teachers provide an account of how the world works and they qualify and certify students for the job market. The organization and stratification of knowledge in the school, the specific inclusions and exclusions of knowledge, tend to be taken for granted by those in the school, but must be understood as historically, ideologically and politically based choices (Gaskell, 1992). While an institution such as a school may appear to act in a neutral fashion, in reality, it passes on academic, economic and social privilege in unequal measures to students of different class backgrounds and genders. Schools define what constitutes appropriate knowledge and appropriate masculinities and these reflect middle-class values.

3.7 Applying Bourdieu's Tools of Thought in Education

Bourdieu (1997) has shown how differences in economic capital alone cannot be held solely accountably for societal inequalities. He suggests that the uneven distribution of cultural and symbolic capital is as important a determinant of social and economic well-being and power as straightforward material wealth. Furthermore, Bourdieu (1997) has argued that an uneven distribution of cultural capital naturalizes the uneven distribution of economic capital by making it appear as though it were the rightful property of the educated, cultured, qualified man, thus ensuring and masking the continued reproduction of this inequality. Bourdieu (1997) identifies the education system as the central apparatus of the reproduction of inequality, both in its official set-up and curriculum which gives rise to an unequal allocation of credentialised cultural capital, and in its hidden curriculum, which validates and rewards the ways of being and knowing of the dominant culture.

The importance of his contribution lies in his insistence that "it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (1997, p. 46). Bourdieu (1997) argues that economic determinism, with its sole focus on the relations of production within a society, conceives of and constructs relations of exchange – that is, social, cultural and symbolic relations – as disinterested, private and entirely distinct from those material relations. Pure

economics, he further argues, protects, insulates and depoliticizes the social and cultural practices and institutions of the bourgeoisie by positioning them outside mainstream society, as if they were incidental to, rather than complicit in, the structured hierarchy of that society.

Bourdieu (1997) points to the education system as the most important player in the unequal distribution of cultural capital, both through its unfairly weighted official curriculum which tests middle class knowledge, and through its equally powerful hidden curriculum which legitimizes the imposition of the 'cultural arbitrary', that is, the values and meanings of the dominant culture. Schools contain the instruments of the concealment of this strategy through their carefully cultivated appearance of neutrality and disinterestedness, evident in the facade of equal opportunity and meritocracy (Moran, 2003).

Cultural Capital and Social Class

The meritocratic ethos of the education system disguises the fact that cultural capital is unevenly distributed even before the individual first attends school, so that the pupil who comes from a family possessing large amounts of cultural capital will possess the know-how to succeed in the official curriculum, and the equally important know-how to succeed in the hidden curriculum. In *Distinction* (1984), Bourdieu argues that the cultural codes learned in the home, and powerfully reinforced and extended in the school, consolidate into a form of cultural capital which legitimates social difference by effectively shifting it onto another plane where the social and economic roots of that inequality are unrecognizable. In this way, the unfair advantage of an individual from an upper social class over an individual from a lower social class comes to be understood as a natural function of the superior built-in tastes and knowledge of the upper class individual.

Central to Bourdieu's understanding of the naturalisation of the advantage of the upper classes is his concept of *habitus*, which he explains as a set of relatively fixed, roughly class-bound ideas which give rise to individual dispositions to regard ones own position in the world as the natural and inevitable consequence of the way that world is presumed to work, and which leads those individuals to reproduce those

social conditions they have been subconsciously conditioned to expect. In accordance with this, Bourdieu has pointed out that individuals internalize the respective advantages or disadvantages tied to their social class as expectations of future academic success and choose their education according to these built-in notions. As Moran (2003) succinctly puts it

> The self-selection of individuals according to their habitus, the unequal distribution of cultural capital according to class and the insidious workings and symbolic violence of the hidden curriculum of the education system all combine to provide an almost impenetrable justification and acceptance of the resultant unequal social order (p. 4).

In relation to masculinities, Bourdieu's theories enhance our understanding of the power dynamics and the struggle therein for the ascendency of individual interest where a hierarchy exists between working-class masculinities and hegemonic masculinities which are associated with the middle-classes. Hegemonic masculinity is the standard bearer for success in society. Thus it may be seen that the masculinities or habitus of the working-class is distanced from the requirements of success in society and are generally considered to be of lower status. This leads to a number of difficulties for men with working-class masculinities in that prospective employers, typically not of working-class origins and generally with hegemonic masculinities, will tend not to employ working class men. In practical terms, if a job applicant with a working class masculinity, accent and style responds to the difficulty of obtaining employment in a traditionally middle class sector by further emphasizing his working class masculinity and way of speaking and bodily hexis, rather than embrace middle class hegemonic masculinity and style, how can this do anything but reduce his chances of getting the job? Yet it seems as if the working class man with his working class masculinity has no other resource to use to destabilize the middle class hegemonic masculinity norms other than to reassert his working class masculinity and values.

Hierarchy of Knowledge

Schools create differences amongst students by offering them different types of knowledge. Some students take French and some take Woodwork. Some take Physics and some take Metalwork. Some get high-status knowledge that prepares

them for high-status jobs; some get low-status knowledge that prepares them for low-status jobs. Hence, we have, in the organisation of schooling, a process of social reproduction and production of social inequality. Different subjects and different courses will set students on different paths towards the labour market. In general, academic subjects will prepare students for college or university while technical subjects orient students towards blue collar and factory work.

Boys with working class masculinities will tend to "self select", that is, they will either drop out of the education system because they perceive book learning as feminine or, they will adjust their expectations accordingly, and may opt for vocational training which does not require a high degree of literate proficiency. These more practical, scientific or technical subjects are often characterized as requiring only a dull, learned, careful ability, while literacy based subjects are presumed to require a bright, talented, natural ability, which cannot be simply learned the way scientific skills are. Vocational classrooms tend to reproduce the class and sex segregation of the work-place, separating the males from the females and the more privileged students from the less privileged as they prepare students for different kinds of jobs in different sectors of the labour market.

It has been suggested by Dewey (1966) that the distinction between academic and vocational education has its root in social inequality. He is critical of the way these dualisms are constructed, and the pernicious implications they have for education. He added that "While the distinction is often thought to be intrinsic and absolute, it is really historical and social" (p. 260). Bourdieu (1984) argues that social classifications are translated into academic distinctions, which, through their appearance of technical neutrality, justify existing class divisions. That is, the socio-economic origin of this class compilation is masked and working class students are generally over-represented in the technical subjects, from which the acquired capital is less easily exchanged for cultural or economic capital. Bourdieu's characterization of the education system is generally applicable to the education system in Ireland, in that, it must operate in accordance with a meritocratic ethos, places a significant weight on linguistically predicated subjects and draws marked distinctions between academic and vocational subject-areas.

3.8 Working-class Masculinities

Some boys may experience challenges around traditional expectations of masculinity, especially boys with working class masculinities, which can directly affect school performance. Mac an Ghaill (1994) suggests that the school is strategically significant in shaping young men and masculinities. Strong pressures operate both within and outside the school to ensure young males adhere to traditional roles and expectations. Lodge and Flynn (2001) have shown how schools in Ireland offer particular interpretations of what it means to be male or female. According to Willis (1977) working class male students actively resist the schooling process because it is not connected to real, masculine, work. In his study of working-class British lads, he noted that these young men chose working-class jobs because they valued manual labour over mental work. They wanted a break from regular schooling and saw practical job skills as more worthwhile than irrelevant academic information.

Boys are more likely than girls to develop externalising disorders such as behavioural and conduct difficulties (Rutter, Giller and Hagell, 1998). Young girls' distress tends to be internalised and displayed in less obvious and thus more 'socially acceptable' ways (Cleary, 1997). The explanation for boy's greater tendency for overtly deviant behaviour, which is problematic in schools, may be explained in terms of a greater propensity amongst males to externalise rather than verbalise problems from an early age. Boys who exhibit behavioural difficulties are more likely to come to the attention of school and specialist services and are less likely to have successful school careers. Young boys are more likely to develop behavioural difficulties in schools which can result in an early exit from the educational system (Fergusson and Horwood, 1998).

Those who fail in the system may take up a range of alternative responses including adopting an 'exaggerated masculinity' (Connell, 1989, p.67). Reliance on peer approval is usually strengthened as a source of identity affirmation in these circumstances. This concept of an 'exaggerated masculinity' resonates with studies of men who 'failed' in the Irish education system (Owens, 2000; Corridan, 2002). Interviews with young Dublin men with learning difficulties revealed experiences of

exclusion and powerlessness during their schooldays. In Corridan's (2002) study these men recounted concealing their feelings of alienation and displaying a strong masculine persona. Ignored and viewed as no-hopers within the system they expressed indifference to punishment, reworking their difficulties in an attempt to control the situation, as 'going wild' or being a 'messer'. The emotional isolation which resulted from this ensured that their learning problems were not resolved and persisted into adulthood.

Masculine Identity and the Labour Market

Consequently, there may be an antagonism between educational achievement and the achievement of traditional and valued masculinities. These factors make it more likely that boys and young men from working class backgrounds will disengage or drop out of the school system altogether. This phenomenon is related to working class adherence to traditional masculine expectations and pathways.

The decline of traditional male work areas alongside the rise of job sector accessibility to both men and women has transformed the labour market in Ireland and elsewhere. One of the big changes has been the growth of the service industry which has accounted for a vast percentage of new employment opportunities but these jobs tend to be taken by women and are seen by some men as 'women's jobs'. The well-charted routes for traditional masculine jobs are declining but yet young working class men still seek to follow these pathways. According to Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) and McGivney (1999) the dilemma of working class men is that their sense of identity is bound up with traditional masculine labour and they find it difficult to engage in different forms of employment.

Paid employment has traditionally been central to a man's identity, conferring status, success and material reward. However, due to the downturn in the economy, we are now looking at a situation where the traditional routes to adulthood, to being a man, have effectively been cut. Without paid work, young men are struggling to find alternative sources of self-esteem. It appears that one effect of the economic crises in disadvantaged areas has been that young men have often re-asserted their identities

in highly destructive and criminal ways such as getting involved in the informal economy of the drugs market.

In summary, Bourdieu's theory of social capital was presented as a useful analytical tool to explain cultural differences between social classes in terms of masculinities. His theory helps to illustrate how the Irish education system contributes to the reproduction of class divisions by buttressing and rewarding the cultural capital and masculinity styles of the middle classes and devaluing that of the working classes.

3.9 Male Peer Groups

One of the most important features of a school setting is the informal life of the student peer group, which has a fundamental influence on the construction of masculine identities (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 2000). It provides boys with a series of collective meanings of what it is to be a boy, and there are constant pressures on individuals to perform and behave to the expected group norms. The construction of masculinity is, primary, a collective enterprise, and it is the peer group, rather than individual boys, that is the bearer of gender definitions (Connell, 2000; Lesko, 2000). This is presumably the explanation for the familiar observation by parents and teachers, that boys who create trouble in a group by aggression, disruption, and harassment, can be co-operative and peaceable on their own (Connell, 1996). Peer groups offer their members peer friendship, pleasure and pride, identity development, excitement, status resources and goals (Kenway and Fitzclarence, 2006).

One of the most important dimensions of school life for boys is the need to gain popularity and status (Adler and Adler, 1998). The search to achieve status is also the search to achieve an acceptable form of masculinity (Swain, 2003). A boy's notion of status comes from having a certain position within the peer group hierarchy, which becomes relevant when it is seen in relation to others. It is not something that is given, but is the outcome of intricate and intense manoeuvring that has to be earned and sustained through performance.

A boy's position in a peer group is determined by the array of social, cultural, physical, intellectual and economic resources that he is able to draw upon as he attempts to establish friendships and relationships in the course of everyday interactions. Some resources may be an embodied form of physicality (sporty, tough, etc), others may be intellectual (academic capability and achievement), economic, social, emotional and linguistic (interpersonal, including humour), or cultural (in touch with the latest fashions, music, television programmes, computer expertise, etc). (Swain, 2003).

Harris (1998) contended that the influence of male peers on gender performance among boys is more intense than parental influences. Research by Cameron (1997) found that interaction amongst male peers is often characterised by impersonal topics and the exchange of general information, such as joking, trading insults and sports statistics. Redman (1996) suggests that as students move into high school, peer cultures encourage the demonstration of heterosexual skills by boys, and the active policing by peers of boys who are not perceived to occupy appropriate forms of masculinity. Segal (1997) observes that heterosexual policing is not just the persecution of homosexuals; it is also the forced repression of the 'feminine' in all men. In general, male peer groups are involved in the continuous rebuff of feminine and homosexual attributes or behaviours (Martino, 1999). Boys define their masculinity within a set of cultural and social practices which involve a rejection and denigration of what they consider feminine attributes or behaviours. In essence, homophobia is not primarily an instrument for oppressing a sexual minority; it is, rather, a powerful tool for regulating the entire spectrum of male relations.

Homophobic Peer-talk

School is often not a safe place to explore sexual identities, and boys who suspect that they are homosexual can have a difficult time sharing their feelings with their friends. In the early years of secondary school, it is so important to be accepted by your friends that boys do not want to say anything, or do anything, that risks rejection. Usually, boys who recognise their attraction for the same sex will keep these feelings to themselves, for there is so much homophobic feelings in schools and 'gay' is generally used as a term of abuse.

Peer-talk in particular is peppered with homophobic put-downs (Lyman, 1987). Homophobia is not a marginal matter, but an integral part of the way heterosexual masculinity is constructed. As Herek (1987) suggests 'hard case' masculinity not only defines itself positively through assertiveness, virility, toughness, independence, etc, but also negatively by defining itself in opposition to what it is not – feminine or homosexual. Pollack (2000) described a boy code, which restricts emotional expression among boys. Boys consider being called a 'girl', 'sissy', or 'fag' highly insulting. Therefore, many boys conform to the expectations of their peers by engaging in behaviours and expressing attitudes that are contradictory to what they deem appropriate and desirable in order to avoid these characterisations. Many researchers have noted that there is a close link between misogyny and homophobia. Research by Chambers *et al.*, (2004) has shown that two main forms of heterosexual regulation of sexual morality and identity are the homophobic bullying of boys by boys and the misogynistic bullying of girls by boys, most of which is accompanied by verbal remarks. Boys who attempt to develop alternative masculinities (less aggressive and more caring identities) face social and emotional costs.

Research shows that it is predominantly boys in school who use homophobic and sexist pejoratives in their daily interactions, using them as a way to assert dominance over women and girls and other boys who do not conform to the rules of hegemonic masculinity (Chambers *et al.*, 2004). Boys who are not good at sport are often labelled as 'gay' or a 'girl' (Sykes, 2004). This labelling process plays an important role in school-ground politics and in the construction of gender and sexualised identities within them. The word 'gay' is used by boys in a pejorative way to describe anything that is not cool or distasteful, including each other.

The hegemonic form of masculinity in schools is one that is inherently heterosexual, and its performance is constantly monitored by those who partake in it. Hegemonic heterosexuality requires constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealisations, but this effort goes hand-in-hand with an anxiety that its idealisations can never finally or fully be accomplished.

3.10 The Role of Verbal Sparring in the Making of Masculinities

Within male peer groups a common style of interaction that working class students engage in is the elaborate use of ritualised verbal and physical insults. This involves young men using language and physicality in competitive ways where the 'game' becomes the arena for competing masculinities (Kehily and Nayak, 2006). A link between verbal sparring and masculinities has been identified by Hewitt (1986). He commented that the "ability to hold your own in a slanging match can be especially important once a boy moves into adolescence, and to do so the language has to be right" (p. 158). The ability to absorb 'very personal' comments with seeming indifference, and to respond sharply, are the weapons required for successful verbal jousting.

These rituals show the techniques working class students may utilise to make each other vulnerable, while emphasising the power of dominant versions of masculinity to produce anxieties within the structures of a competitive 'game'. Kehily and Nayak (2006) refer to these ritualised verbal insulting games as 'blowing competitions'. The term 'blowing competition' is a metaphor that provides insight into the ways masculine egos are either inflated or ruptured during these contests. 'Blowing competitions' have the effect of creating clear-cut masculine identities, crystallising who is tough or soft through the public exposition of power and vulnerability (Kehily and Nayak, 2006).

Verbal sparring involves being able to take a lot of ridicule and not get upset about it. You aren't cool unless you can take it without getting upset. The image of crying in front of the other boys would be an admission of vulnerability, which would violate the ideals of 'strength' and 'being cool'. It has been pointed out by Salisbury and Jackson (1996) that school days for many boys are characterized by avoidance; specifically, avoiding showing emotion or any sign of 'weakness'. Lyman (1987) suggests that being cool is an important male value in other settings as well, such as sports or work, as verbal sparring teaches young men how to keep control of their emotions.

Mother Insults

One of the main types of verbal sparring is mother insults and this tends to occur in corridors, public spaces and classrooms when teachers are not looking. This is a form of verbal duelling that involves the trading of insults and making disgusting references about the opponent's mother's sexuality. Male students verbally attack each others' mothers in an attempt to mobilise a sexist discourse of power against other males. Kehily and Nayak (2006) suggest that:

> The discursive shift is a way of accessing a privileged version of male sexual power to humiliate an opponent. The invocation of a boy's mother into the discourse of the male peer group taps into the contradictory 'private' emotions of material affection and the public disavowal of the 'feminine' (p.134).

At the root of this contradiction may lie the impossibility of locating one's mother through the virgin/whore dichotomy used to define all women (Griffin, 1982). These contradictory feelings may contribute to the potency of mother insults, exacerbated when males are located as moral guardians of the sexual reputations of mothers, girlfriends and sisters. Mothers are invoked in insults to prove young men's associative links with femininity and expose their vulnerabilities (Kehily and Nayak, 2006). In effect, mother insults produce heterosexual hierarchies between 'real' boys and those susceptible to 'feminine' sensibilities and capable of crying.

Research by Kehily and Nayak, (2006) within two secondary coeducational schools in predominantly working-class areas of the West Midlands in the United Kingdom, found that while mother insults were regularly employed in verbal slagging matches in school, male students often drew upon these familiar codes to generate humour amongst friends outside school. They concluded that the meanings of these insults were transformed in the contexts of friendship groups, and away from the intensity of classroom cultures, indicating that it was not the language per se that was immediately regarded as offensive.

Within the male friendship group the telling of jokes and relating of insults is structured through the context of peers and situation. Hence the importance of

context suggests that mother insults, as invoked for the public appraisal of masculinities, may take on different meanings. Kehily and Nayak (2006) suggest that mother insults are highly misogynistic and are often explicitly sexual in whatever contexts they occurred. They conclude that "the misogynistic practice of mother insults is both a means of speaking the unspeakable and a way of contesting the boundaries of masculine competency within the peer group" (p. 136).

Middle-class norms are central to the definition of what is acceptable in schools and mother insults upset middle-class adult sensibilities and tend to violate social norms. According to Labov (1972), middle-class norms act as a reference point through which the language of young men can be defined as abusive. Hence, mother insults are also treasured by young working-class boys for their vulgarity elements as they invert the rules and norms of adult middle-class society for shock value.

3.11 Using Humour to Police Masculinities and Achieve Domination

Through humour and laughter one seeks to influence one's own and others' actions and perceptions (Woods, 1983). In this sense humour is power. Kehily and Nayak (2006) observe that the repetition of humorous stories promotes group solidarity and shared male identity through 'othering' teachers, girls, women and those who fail to cultivate a hyper-masculinity. Therefore it could be claimed that this type of humorous storytelling reinforces solidarity among males and subjugates females (Woods, 1979). Male bias and sexism is true of a great deal of humour (Delamont, 1980) and it contributes towards sexual inequalities in a wider dimension. Lyman (1987) regards such masculine jocularity as part of a 'theatre of domination', pointing out that sexist jokes function to augment male bonding. Certainly sex and aggression figure prominently among teenage humour. As Freud, (1960) points out nearly all jokes have an aggressive content, in fact, shared aggression towards an outsider is one of the primary ways by which a group may overcome internal tension and assert its solidarity.

Walkerdine (1990) in her work has commented on the ways in which male sexual power is consistently utilised by males against women and girls in school arenas. Teenage girls and subordinate males can be seen as targets for comic displays which

frequently blur the boundaries between humour and harassment. Humour can be used as a vehicle to create and consolidate sex/gender hierarchies within pupil groups in coeducational schools. Jones (1985) highlighted how sexist humour and practice is part of everyday life in a mixed secondary school. Kehily and Nayak (2006) found that many girls responded to the daily routines of male banter in ambiguous ways. Sometimes the girls enjoyed the humour at the storyteller's expense suggesting that young women may use humour subversively as a form of resistance to sexist practices (Skeggs, 1991). However, humour can have an oppressive effect on female teachers and students.

It has been suggested by Kehily and Nayak (2006) that "putting down the sexual practices of a peer, or laughing at his sexual inexperience may hide broader insecurities about relationships and the masculine pressure to perform" (p. 141). They also note that humour permits the forbidden to be expressed and allows the storyteller to displace sexual anxieties on to others through laughter, while relieving the self of embarrassment. Woods (1983) notes that humour achieves distance not only between 'I' and 'me' but also 'self' and 'other' and 'self' and 'role'. He also comments that humour is power "It protects and invigorates the self in the constant interplay between determined and determining forces. It provides strength that enables the individual to adapt to situations, and on occasions to change them" (p. 112). Lynam (1987) suggests that young men use joking relationships to negotiate the tension they feel between sexual interest in girls and the fear of commitment to them. Young men feel a sense of dependence in their relationships with women and use hostile joking to negotiate their fear of the 'loss of control' implied by intimacy.

Chodorow (1978) argues that men feel ambivalent about intimate relations with women, seeking to replicate the fusion of intimacy and sexuality that they had experience in their primal relationships to their mothers, but at the same time fearing engulfment by women in heterosexual relationships, like the engulfment of their infant selves by their mothers. Chodorow (1978) suggests that the sense of masculine identity is constructed by an early repression of the son's erotic bond with his mother and with this repression the son's capacity for intimacy and commitment is devalued as feminine behaviour.

Since adolescence is a time of critical identity formation and the most salient identity, arguably, is that of gender, boys and girls experience the full impact of gender cultures. It is not surprising that these matters receive prominence in most adolescent humour. Much teenage humour, Woods (1983) argues performs three functions. Firstly it emphasises the teenager's normality as a person, as a proper boy or girl; secondly, dispensing humour can be status-enhancing in that it can show possession of 'advanced' knowledge. Thirdly, teenage humour can help to promote group solidarity. In fact, much adolescent humour can become part of a subterranean teenage culture (Fine, 1977).

3.12 Summary

There is a rapidly growing volume of literature about masculinity and the genre within that which attends to masculinity and schooling. Schools constitute a significant part in the construction of gendered identities. The process of identity formation in schools emerges from the interplay of expectations (roles that students are supposed to play in the future), attitudes (feelings towards them), and behaviours (practices in the classroom). Socialisation in schools, which depends substantially on the hidden curriculum, is a critical dimension of schooling through which educational settings may introduce changes in social perceptions, or, conversely, continue to reproduce traditional values and attitudes. Schools implicitly teach boys about being male and becoming men and boys learn their lessons about masculinities through the filters of a wide array of practices, ranging from principals' and teachers' attitudes and expectations, textbook messages, peer interactions, and classroom dynamics.

It is commonly accepted that masculinities cannot be fully understood without attending to their relationship to femininities. This chapter briefly focused on the ways that masculinity, power, potency, and sexuality can come together and result in sexual or other forms of abuse of females by males and of males by males.

It has been shown that schools teach boys many lessons which transgress the formal elements of overt curricula and instruct boys how to speak, what to wear, how to move their bodies, and ultimately, how to inhabit different social class and gender

positions. Masculinity is linked to the acquisition of status within the school peer group and embodied masculinity is a major signifier of masculinity. This chapter showed how bodies are used to classify boys in the formal school culture and in the informal peer groups. It illustrated some how boys use the physicality of the body as the main resource to construct their masculinity and to gain and establish peer group status (Swain, 2003).

The fragile and fluid nature of masculinities in the context of dynamic power politics within male peer groups was also explored and this chapter showed the uncertainty of settlements about what constitutes a 'desirable' masculinity in a given person, time and space. Such settlements are challenged both intentionally and unintentionally by an array of life forces. This means that many types of masculinity are constantly on the offensive and the defensive and in need of regular maintenance, renewal, repair and adjustment (Kenway, 1995).

The links between academic achievement and masculinities were emphasised and the ways boys from different social backgrounds embody different versions of masculinity highlighted. Renold (2001) has shown that many boys learn that studiousness and academic success conflict with conventional forms of hegemonic masculinity and this can impact on their depositions to schooling, schoolwork and academic achievement. Connell (1989) has spoken of one type of masculinity, which he called "protest masculinity" which is formed by opposing the school authority. For some boys the challenge to school authority becomes a test of their personal worth.

In sum, schools teach boys about masculinity, about who to be and what to value. They are taught this by the gendered and sexualised, classed discourses associated by such things as management, discipline, sport, play, knowledge, assessment and teacher pupil and pupil relationships (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Boys also learn that there are different ways of being a male, some more valued and prestigious and powerful than others, and one way of being and feeling powerful as a male is to demonstrate power over other males and females.

4
Methodology

4.1 Rationale

As young boys move through adolescence, second-level school becomes an important site for the construction of masculinities. Skelton (2001) points out that schooling plays a prominent role in the construction of identity for young boys. It is within second-level school that we see the development of small local communities of practice within which identities are constructed in relation to school (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). While teenage boys' identities are constructed within communities of practice in relation to schooling, schooling itself continues to be implicated in the construction of these communities and thereby of identity.

Within second-level schools, individual personnel, rules, routines and expectations, and the use of resources and space all have a considerable impact on the way adolescent boys develop their masculinities. It has been argued by Kessler *et al.* (1985) that each school has its own gender regime which creates different options and opportunities to perform different types of masculinity. This is the context in which boys get information about how they are supposed to be and how they are supposed to act as a boy (Swain, 2006).

Much of the literature in the area of adolescent masculinities is concerned with investigating the ways in which boys fashion their masculinities in schools. Many of these studies concentrate on observations and interviews with adolescent boys and sometimes ignore the experiences of teachers with regard to these issues. Responding to this lack of data, this study will encompass both the views and opinions of both male and female students and teachers within a coeducational second-level school in rural Ireland. As very little research has been carried out in this particular area in Ireland, this places the research within contemporary debates about the changing nature of the social construction of adolescent masculinities in schools.

This chapter describes the methodological framework and practice from within the perspective that gender identity is socially constructed and our identities are a fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviours that we construct from the values, images, and prescriptions we find in the world around us (Kimmel, 2000). It is my view that we shape, modify and create our identities through our encounters with other people and within social institutions, such as schools. Our gender identities are voluntary in the sense that we choose to become who we are, but are also coerced in the sense that we may be pressured, forced and sanctioned into submission to some rules. As Kimmel (2000) suggests "we neither make up the rules as we go along, nor do we glide perfectly and effortlessly into pre-assigned roles (p. 87). For this reason, this research investigates from the perspective of boys in senior cycle in a second-level coeducational school their own views and their agency with respect to their identity formation, and the processes in the school context which influence its formation. The views of girls and teachers are also interwoven into this research so as to provide a more comprehensive lens to investigate this complex phenomenon.

4.2 Research Question

This research was an exploratory investigation of senior second-level school students' understandings of masculinities, and their perceptions of the influence of schooling on masculinity in a coeducational setting. It primarily focuses on boys' understandings of masculinities but broadens to also include perspectives from female students and both male and female teachers in the school. The research explored teenage boys and girls and teachers views on the experience of, and understandings of the construction and negotiation of adolescent masculinity in a coeducational setting. While much has been written about masculinities in recent years, there is a need to explore masculinities within Irish second-level coeducational schools. The emphasis in this exploratory study was on critiquing detailed and rich statements about masculinity in the students' own words, adding to Irish data on the views of teenage boys about masculinity construction.

Drawing on student and teacher narratives, this qualitative investigation focuses on addressing the following questions:

- How are masculinities constructed, negotiated and performed by students in the formal and informal spaces of a coeducational second-level school?
- How do teenage boys at the upper end of a second-level coeducational school in rural Ireland understand and explore masculinity construction?
- How do teenage boys (aged 16-18) understand the influence of teachers and school experiences on their understanding of masculinity?
- How are masculinities policed by students and teachers in a rural second-level coeducational school?

4.3 Context for Research and Researcher

This research was conducted within the paradigm of participant research within the practitioner's own school. Reimer and Bruce (1994) claim that school-based researchers have distinct advantages and bring invaluable expertise to research studies because of their familiarity with school culture. Wagner (1993) suggests that participant researchers have the opportunity to generate knowledge that brings action, inquiry and understanding. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) propose that inquiry enables teachers to extend their knowledge of their professional context while Avery (1990) states that school-based researchers are motivated by a desire to assist students and to teach more effectively. Murray and Lawrence (2000) claim that practitioner based enquiry is an opportunity to increase understanding of the professional behaviour of educators and it offers a way to inform and promote change in schools.

The research focuses on senior students from a coeducational second-level school in Ireland. This type of school was chosen for the following reasons. First, there is a need for research on the construction of masculinities in coeducational schools in Ireland. The review of the literature demonstrated that there is very little research in this area in Ireland. Second, this type of school is where I teach and is therefore the professional context of the researcher. I am a middle-aged, heterosexual, male teacher who has taught Engineering and related practical subjects in this school for the past twenty five years. The school is representative of many second-level

schools in rural Ireland in that it is of average size (nationally) and draws it students from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds.

Research tradition teaches the researcher not to impose personal values, judgments and emotions into his/her work. However it is important to acknowledge and recognise the subjective experience of the researcher. Lofland and Lofland (1995) argue that all human perception is shaped by the language, personal history, and ethics of the researcher, and that the researcher selects certain things thereby ignoring other things. The researcher comes to the research with beliefs that affect what is seen and how he or she interprets events. Because of my own identity and history as a heterosexual male, and because this cannot, or ought it to, be switched off, it will affect (also in the sense of give meaning to) what I see and conclude (Hegelund, 2005). I might be completely blind to certain aspects of masculinities that for another researcher would be evident, and vice versa. I might very well not see what another researcher would, thereby unconsciously omitting otherwise revealing data. However, being aware of the possibilities of prejudice and bias helps to address this important element of the research (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Ellsworth (1989) states that a fundamental belief in qualitative research is that the researcher must acknowledge his or her own subjectivity and recognize that his or her understanding of the world is always partial. I am acutely aware that I came to this research with beliefs that affect what is seen by me and how I interpret events. I am viewing masculinities through the perspective of a middle-aged, middle-class, heterosexual male teacher who works in the school and I am conscious of the constraints that my perception may have on my research. I acknowledge the fragility of the position of the researcher because of the emphasis upon constructivism and the notions that I as researcher interpret and define social realities through the eyes of the research participants. However, as Hegelund (2005) notes, if the researcher is competent, he or she will give his or her own interpretation, his or her own perspective to the ethnography, and this is why there is not need to worry.

Because "the researcher is the main research tool" in qualitative research (Holloway, 1997, p. 136), it is important to examine my respective research position in relation to this study. Holt and Sparkes (2001) suggest that subjectivities constitute a rich

insight into the analytical choices that researchers make in understanding and representing the social world being investigated, and therefore, should be embraced as a valuable analytical tool. As a researcher working in this school, I am cognisant of the local uses and meanings of the "informal banter" amongst the participants which gives me a reference from which to interpret the intentions of their discursive actions and practices. My insider knowledge facilitates my ability to recognize what discourses are being mobilized or enacted in a given context.

4.4 Research Setting for Case Study School

The research, which forms the empirical basis of this thesis, was undertaken as a case study. Transition Year, Fifth Year and Sixth Year students plus teachers were chosen as key informants. The school selected for this case study is a coeducational second-level school situated on the outskirts of a small town in the east of Ireland. The data collected was used to examine some of the ways in which boys learn to establish their masculinities at this local site with its constantly shifting parameters of social practices, routines and human interaction. Skelton (1996) argues that not all schools operate within identical constraints; therefore a study like this is useful for drawing attention to specific practices and strategies that might be employed in maintaining particular forms of masculinity in the daily lives of boys.

The local Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) undertakes the management of the school. The school has a student population of four hundred and fifty students, who range in age from twelve to eighteen years. Although the school has a large catchment area, the local primary school provides about one-third of the total cohort of students entering the school each year. As the school is the only second-level school within a sixteen kilometre (ten miles) radius, it attracts students from various socio-economic backgrounds and with a wide range of academic abilities. Students are predominately from rural backgrounds. Although the school is non-denominational, the vast majority of the student and teaching population is Roman Catholic.

There is a good gender balance amongst the student population in the school with approximately fifty percent of each gender in attendance. The school does not

operate a streaming policy, and classes are divided on mixed-ability grounds with even numbers of boys and girls in most classes. There are no restrictions on subject choice in First Year. On entry to the school all students sample, what in the past may have been considered gender specific subjects, like Metalwork, Home Economics, Woodwork, Art, Music and Technical Graphics. They do this for a six-week period after which they select two subjects which they study to Junior Certificate level (for 3 years). Despite efforts by the school authorities to address gender inequalities within the take-up of these subjects, students tend to select subjects on traditional gender lines. There has been a slight increase in the gender balance in Woodwork (78% male, 22% female), Art (67% female, 33% male) and Technical Graphics (71% male, 29% female), but subjects such as Home Economics (95% female, 5% male) and Metalwork (93% male, 7% female) have remained stereotypically predominately gendered.

Practical subjects are strongly labelled as masculine or feminine, both by the students themselves and by some teachers in this school. Perhaps this is because practical subjects have their origins in a working-class, gender-segregated curriculum. It is also the case that practical classrooms can be experienced by boys and girls as strongly gendered spaces, even when the numbers of each are equal (Paechter, 2007). Feminised-labelled subjects like Home Economics are, in particular, problematic for boys who, in taking them, have to acknowledge and accept their own femininities which may be less than acceptable to their male peers, and leave them open to the risk of marginalisation. The way in which these subjects are perceived, and the patterns of take-up in particular, mean that there are implications in the construction of socially-classed masculinities and femininities in this school.

There are thirty teachers in the school of whom twenty-three are female and seven are male. Along with the Principal there is a Deputy Principal, six Assistant Principals, nine special duties teachers, a Home-school liaison co-ordinator, guidance counsellor, resource teachers and learning support teachers. The Principal is supported by a senior management team consisting of four female teachers and two male teachers. Teachers also have responsibilities as Year Heads and as Class Tutors which helps to create a pleasant well-disciplined atmosphere in the school. There is a

good mixture of young and mature teachers on the staff. Thirteen teachers are aged between twenty and thirty years (10 female and 3 male); one male and three females between the ages of thirty and forty; three females between the ages of forty and fifty and finally three males and seven females over the age of fifty. The Principal is a woman in her forties while the Deputy Principal is a man in his fifties, which is currently untypical of co-educational principalship in Ireland.

The school is located in a small town with a population of approximately one thousand people in a rural scenic area. The housing boom during the Celtic Tiger years did not impact much upon the town. This was mainly due to the strict planning guidelines pertaining to this scenic area and the lack of adequate sewerage treatment facilities in the town. The last housing estate was built in the town before the Celtic Tiger era. A limited number of one-off dwelling houses were constructed during the past decade. However, in terms of house building, the area has not followed the national pattern of rapid house building during the Celtic Tiger years due to the special circumstances which have prevailed in the area. Consequently, not many new families have moved into the area and the social composition of the native population has changed very little over the last ten years.

The school qualified for DEIS status at the time of the research. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) is a Department of Education and Science initiate which consists of a range of national programmes designed to address educational disadvantage in the public school system. This school qualified for a Home School Community Liaison teacher plus a School Completion Programme administrator and extra funding for Breakfast Club, textbooks, computers and other school based equipment.

The town itself has a higher number of local authority houses than most towns of its size in rural Ireland. Approximately forty percent of all housing stock in the town is local authority housing. The rich hinterland of the town is comprised mostly of private houses, many of which are owned by middle-class families and farmers interspersed with a small number of rural council built houses.

The ethnic mix of the student population was predominantly Irish. Only four students attending the school were of non-Irish descent and the school had no students from the Traveller Community. The social class background of the student population is a mix of working class and middle class plus individuals from farming backgrounds. About one quarter of the students attending the school are medical card holders. While some of the students come from disadvantaged backgrounds and avail of the Breakfast Club in the school, many others are seen arriving in large SUV's (4x4s) each morning at the school gate. Apart from the students who live locally and walk to school, and those who avail of private transport, the majority of the students travel to school on a bus. A small number of students drive to school in their own cars.

The sports played in the school are traditionally Irish games such as Gaelic Football and Camogie. Soccer is also very popular and a tiny proportion of students play rugby. A limited number of students have horses at home and the school has a show-jumping team.

4.5 The Research Paradigm

As previously stated, it is the aim of this research to explore teenage boys' understandings of masculinities and to articulate the process of constructing and policing of masculinities by students and teachers in this coeducational second-level school in rural Ireland. The design of this research study was informed by a constructivist epistemology (Schwandt, 2000). Consistent with this epistemology, the research was conducted according to the principles of 'symbolic interactionism'. Symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self (or identity) and how they define structures of co-presence with others. One of the perspective's central ideas is that people act as they do because of how they define situations.

As a researcher, I reject the notion of a meta-narrative, of there being a single, overarching 'truth' to explain particular social phenomena. I am concerned with the subjective meanings that people attach to experiences and therefore adhere to the notion that a researcher does not sit at a vantage point from which to observe the

phenomena under study, but, rather is part of the social world, and is as vulnerable to the influence of language, culture and discourse as the social group or phenomena he or she is investigating.

In undertaking this study, I drew upon two major theoretical frameworks with respect to gender construction, namely, Masculine Gender Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. The first of these theoretical paradigms, Masculine Gender Theory, provided a useful framework for examining and making readings of subjectivity, language and discourse as was evidenced in this second-level school research site. It provides a conceptual lens for me to read the ways in which the boys endeavoured to position themselves and perform as masculine subjects, to read the ways in which their performances served to position other class mates, to read shifts in and struggles for power, and to read acts of resistance. It also provides me with an interpretive lens through which to read the corridor contexts and the performances played out within it. Critical Discourse Analysis served as a complementary tool to Masculine Gender Theory and provided ways of reading the discursive and social practices at play within this second-level school site and, more specifically, within the emergent narratives derived from the interviews.

4.6 The Research Approach

This theoretical perspective led to the choice of a qualitative research approach. A qualitative approach was also chosen as it allowed me as researcher to investigate "selected issues in-depth and detail" (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Studies concerned with human interaction are often conducted within this paradigm. The qualitative inquirer is not constrained by "predetermined categories of analysis" but is able to collect detailed information that increases understanding (Patton, 1990, p. 13). Having worked in this school for many years and informally observed adolescent boys negotiate, construct and perform masculinities in a school setting, I have acquired considerable experience as an observer. Qualitative research also interprets "phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2), and in this case the phenomenon under study is the formation of masculinities. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) note that qualitative research is

particularly suitable for school-based research where human activities and relationships are intricately interwoven and this is significant for this research.

A comparison between the aims of this research and the central ideas of the interpretative research paradigm highlighted the value of using this research approach. This research examined the phenomena of teenage boys, girls and teachers' understandings and experiences of masculinities. The selection of a qualitative approach was not purely an ideological one but also a practical one, driven by the need to employ those methods best placed to elicit the data needed to address the research questions. In other words, the rationale behind choosing this particular research paradigm evolved as a response to determining the most appropriate methods for both data collection and analysis.

4.7 Research Methodology – Case Study

Kaplan (1973) notes that the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself. Cohen and Manion (1989) describe methods as the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data, which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction.

Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances (Stake, 1995). Case study gives an individual researcher the opportunity to study one aspect of a problem in some depth within a limited time scale (Bell, 1999). It was as a researcher positioned by and within this research paradigm and relative to my theoretical framework that I came to adopt a case study model employing qualitative methods of data collection. This case study used a wide range of methods including informal-participant observation, focus group discussions and semi-structured, open-ended interviews in order to elicit adolescent boy's constructions of masculinities within a coeducational context. The case study model allowed me as researcher to gather rich and descriptive data from multiple perspectives at this site, for example, informal observations of male and female peer groups, interviews with

adolescent boys and girls (aged 16-18), teachers (both male and female), and the school Principal.

Most important in case study research is the concept of triangulation. This term refers to using data from different sources, or from the same source using a different method of enquiry, or by using different observers. In this study, triangulation was achieved by using data from different sources i.e. students, shadowing, informal-observations, teachers, Principal, etc. Using multiple perspectives helps to validate the study and reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation (Stake, 2000).

The use of a case study supports the exploration of the particular circumstances which influence the development of male teenage masculinities in a selected school setting. The approach adopted is not to generalise from the particular to the universal but rather to investigate how school factors influence masculinities amongst a group of senior cycle boys aged 16 to 18 years in a coeducational school setting in rural Ireland in order to add to our understanding of this process in a given context.

4.8 Selecting Case Study Participants

The size of sample needed in qualitative research has received significant attention in research literature. Patton (1990) suggests that there is no fixed sample size in qualitative research. Merriam (1998) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) all state that an adequate number of participants enables the researcher to address the research question set at the beginning of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend that sampling should conclude when the point of redundancy is reached and little information would be added by increasing the sample. Specific indicators of redundancy in this study would include: repetition of the same responses to questions by participants, similar patterns of responses in individual and group interviews and common themes in answers.

The emphasis in this thesis was to examine the interplay of teachers' and students' understandings and school experiences of masculinities. Hence, a limited number of in-depth interviews were chosen in preference to the use of a questionnaire with larger numbers. Both individual and group interviews were used in this qualitative

investigation. Researchers investigating teenage boys' views on masculinity such as Mac an Ghaill (1994) and Pollack (1998) have all used individual and group interviews.

Eighteen interviews were conducted in total involving forty participants. Comparable qualitative research on teenage boys, schooling and masculinity by Willis (1977), Walker (1988), and Mac an Ghaill (1994) have all involved a limited number of participants. I used my considerable knowledge of student behaviour gained from hours of informal-observation and discussions with teachers to ensure that the students selected for interview represented a spectrum of different positions in the informal social landscape of the school.

Students were invited to partake in the research and were notified that they would be interviewed in groups of two, three or four students. The socio-economic background of the students was taken into consideration when selecting students for interview. This study attempted to select students from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds in order to ascertain conceptions and constructions of masculinities relative to social class. Students' academic orientation was also factored into the equation with students selected from various points on the academic/non academic spectrum in order to ascertain if differences exist in terms of masculine performance. In effect, the nature of the sample is purposive.

There were 450 students in the school with approximately equal numbers of girls and boys at the time of the research. A total of thirty-two students were interviewed. I conducted ten group interviews with either two, three or four students in each group. Groups were divided into boys' only groups, girls' only groups, and boys and girls' groups. Twenty-four boys and eight girls were interviewed. The high ratio of boys to girls was deliberate as one of the main aims of this research is to focus on how masculinities are constructed, negotiated and performed by adolescent boys. All students interviewed were aged between 16 and 18 years of age. Student participants, both male and female were selected on a volunteer basis. The interviews, all of which were conducted by the researcher in the school during the school day, ranged from 25 minutes to 35 minutes in length.

For the purpose of clarity a table detailing the names, age and aspirations of the student interviewees and the socioeconomic status of their parents is presented on the next page. Pseudonyms are used for names throughout this thesis. The table is designed to provide the reader with background knowledge with reference to the social class of the interviewees so as to gain an insight into the relationship between class and masculinity construction. The job/career aspirations of the interviewees are also presented in order to highlight traditional versus non-traditional masculine career options.

Table 1 - Student Interview Profile and Schedule. Pseudonyms are used for student names.

Name of student (Date of interview)	**Parents Occupation Father/Mother**	**Academic orientation** Academic (A) Non-academic (Non A)	**Age**	**Future Career Aspiration of Student**
Shay 22-01-10	Fireman (part-time)/Housewife	Partly A	17	Tradesman
Toss	Lorry Driver/Housewife	Non A	17	Block layer
Ken	Building Foreman/Housewife	Partly A	17	Draughtsman
Sean 26-01-10	Garage Owner/Teacher	A	18	Engineer
John	Public Servant/Office Receptionist	A	17	Public Servant
Matt	Farmer+Council Labourer/Housewife	A	17	Computers
Dave 29-01-10	Builder/Secretary	Partly A	16	Civil Engineer
Rick	Manual worker/Supermarket cashier	Partly A	16	Electrician
Liam	Labourer/Housewife	Non A	16	Jockey
Con 29-01-10	Postman/Clerical Officer	Partly A	16	Journalist
Mike	Welder/Housewife	Non A	17	Fitter
Luke	Manual Worker/Shop Assistant	Non A	16	Bar Man
Jim 02-02-10	Horse Stud Manager/Housewife	A	16	Accountant
Pat	Farmer/School Secretary	A	16	Solicitor
Steve 03-02-10	Mechanic/Shop Assistant	Partly A	16	Carpenter
Owen	Small Farmer+Builder/Housewife	Partly A	16	Mechanic
Simon	Manual Worker/Factory Worker	Non A	16	Bar Manager
Kevin 05-03-10	Artist/Mature Student	A	16	Aircraft fitter
Colin	Detective/Pharmacy Assistant	A	16	Teacher
Eanna	Deceased/Crèche Assistant	Non A	16	Painter
Iris 10-03-10	Labourer/Cleaner	Non A	16	Hairdresser
Sara	Farmer/Secretary	Partly A	16	Teacher
Steve	Mechanic/Shop Assistant	Partly A	16	Carpenter
Simon	Manual Worker/Factory Worker	Non A	16	Bar Manager
Trish 16-03-10	Electrician/Part time Cleaner	Partly A	17	Nurse
June	Taxi driver/ Child Minder(part time)	Non A	17	Beautician
Shay	Fireman (part time) /Housewife	Partly A	17	Tradesman
Seamus	Insurance Salesman/Bookkeeper	Partly A	17	Business
Ina 23-04-10	Mechanic/Shop Cashier	Partly A	16	Secretarial
Gretta	Small Farmer/Primary Teacher	Partly A	16	Office Assistant
Pauline	Part-time Bus Driver/Housewife	Non A	16	Childcare
Maeve	Driver/Supermarket Worker	Partly A	16	Boutique Assistant

Eight teachers were interviewed individually. The school had a predominantly female staff with twenty three female teachers and seven male teachers working in the school at the time of this study. In order to represent the majority of the characteristics of the teachers in the school, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Instead of applying the rigid rules of stratified random sampling, it was decided to interview four male and three female teachers plus the female Principal. The deliberate selection of four out of the seven male teachers on the staff was to ensure that the role models of masculinity were represented in this study. Sampling frames were selected on the basis of gender, age and seniority in the school.

Table 2 - Teacher Interview Schedule (Pseudonyms are used for teacher names)

Teacher (Date of Interview)	Subject Area	Position (Seniority)	Age	Number of years teaching in school
Ms. Logan 11-09-09	Secretarial	Asst. Principal (A post)	50-60	35
Mr. Doyle 23-09-09	Woodwork	Teacher	20-30	5
Ms. Ryan 2-10-09	Science, Physics, Chem.	Teacher	30-40	4
Mr. Browne 20-10-09	Science, Physics	Teacher	20-30	1
Mr. Lyons 4-11-09	English	Teacher	30-40	1
Mr. Brennan 3-12-09	English	Special Duties (B post)	50-60	10
Ms. Ward 14-04-10	English + Irish	Special Duties (B post)	30-40	7
Ms. Boland 20-04-10	Home Economics	Principal	40-50	20

The semi-structured interviews were designed to explore teachers' perceptions and policing of masculinities within the school. The teachers were interviewed at their place of work and interviews ranged between 40 and 70 minutes in length. Teachers in this school ranged from teaching veterans with up to thirty-five years of experience to newly qualified teachers.

4.9 Interviewing

Walford (2001) recommends that interviews must be used with great care. Referring to the uncertainty about the validity of interviews, he concludes that the information provided by an interviewee might depend on whether the subjects have "greater potential impact" or "no direct investment" to the interviewer and therefore the words have to be interpreted with caution (Walford, 2001, p.96).

Borg and Gall (1983) observe that the greatest weakness of interviews might be its subjectivity and possible bias. It is important to acknowledge that the epistemological status of the data obtained will inevitably be mediated and constructed through the views of the subjects and the researcher. Responses will be shaped by the person asking the questions (myself, a teacher in this school) and will be produced from within the context of the interview and are not merely passive reflections of the world outside the room.

The implications of the researcher being acquainted with the participants in this study may have some negative effects. Since the researcher is a teacher who worked in the school at the time of this case study and having taught some, although not all of the students involved in this study, there could also be a tendency for them to produce specific answers because they know what I expect and want them to talk about. Acting simultaneously as both a teacher and a researcher posed personal challenges for me in terms of role management within the school. On the positive side, students might feel more comfortable with and trust a researcher they know with more personal responses and feel more relaxed and open to expressing their thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, as suggested by Martino (1999), participants might be more aware of my language use, tone and inflection so that they can 'read' the many meanings and intentions behind the questions posed to them. Taking these caveats into consideration, the data presented in this paper is a genuine attempt to provide access to teenage boys' understandings and policing of masculinities within a coeducational second-level school setting in rural Ireland.

Pilot Interviews

As recommended by Janesick (1994) and Merriam (1998) a number of pilot interviews were conducted to trial interview questions. The interview protocol was piloted with two group interviews (each consisting of three students) and one individual teacher interview. Bringing these students through the full process of the interview provided an informative dry run of my interview questions and technique. Each student and teacher was asked for feedback on the process. This was followed up with a group discussion involving participants and myself, in order to rectify flaws and allow improvements to be made to my choice of interview questions and style of interviewing. I realised that I spoke too often during the student interviews and was acting out the role of teacher. The recorded interview sounded more like a question and answer session than a conversion (long questions, short answers). Despite my repeated questioning, I was not ascertaining much information as the students were saying very little. I decided to modify my interview questions and change my style of interviewing.

Following modifications, a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended questions was developed. This protocol contained introductory comments, a set of questions with associated probes and prompts, and closing comments, as recommended by Robson (2002). The protocol helped to ensure that the same lines of enquiry were pursued with each person interviewed, which as Patton (2002) suggests, makes interviewing a number of people more systematic and comprehensive. The interview protocol moved from the general to the specific by structuring the nature of the questions. The semi-structured style was employed as this "allows respondents to express themselves at some length, but offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling" (Wragg, 1994, p. 272-273). The revised questions and new semi-structured style was used for the main interviews and it proved to be more successful than the pilot interviews.

The interviews which I conducted with the participants can be described as loosely structured and designed to explore teenage boys and their teachers' understanding of masculinities. I used directive questioning in order to test various emerging theories, pursue and clarify points arising during the interview and to cross-check data from

observations. Probes and follow-up questions were used to encourage participants to elaborate on their responses. Following transcription, participants were given a copy of the interview transcript so that all data could be reviewed, amended and agreed between researcher and participant. This practice strengthened the study's trustworthiness. Locations and times of interviews were scheduled at participants' convenience in the school setting.

Every effort was made to ensure that participants were as relaxed as possible during the interviews. As a researcher I am aware of the Hawthorne effect and I am conscious that the responses of the students and teachers might be altered due to their self-consciousness about being interviewed.

Students were interviewed in groups of two, three and four. Questions were initially directed to the group, followed by individual questions to participants. Students were usually interviewed with their friends or classmates and the informal banter between them helped to create a relaxed interviewing atmosphere. Students occasionally challenged each other on points of view. This was particularly evident during the mixed gender interviews with the boys frequently interrupting the girls during the brief discussions.

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. This procedure facilitates detailed analysis of the interview data, and ensured that interviewees' answers are captured in their own terms (Bryman, 2004). I also took field notes, in the form of noting additional ideas, reflections and descriptions during the course of the interviews. These detailed notes added to the 'thick description' generated by the interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Rossman and Rallis, 2003), and informed the data analysis stage.

4.10 Data Validity

The issue of validity has attracted considerable attention in the field of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985), Eisenhart and Howe (1992), Maxwell (1992), Kvale (1996) and Merriam (1998) state that validity refers to the trustworthiness of inferences drawn from research data. This understanding of validity is pertinent to

this study. Maxwell (1992) proposed a typology of five features: descriptive validity, interpretative validity, theoretical validity, generalisability and evaluative validity. He argued that evaluative validity is not directly relevant in most qualitative research. This is the case in this study. However, the remaining four elements are relevant and will now be reviewed.

Descriptive Validity

A primary concern of this study is to establish descriptive validity. This means that the factual accuracy of the qualitative investigation has been protected. Individual and group interviews were audio taped. Transcripts were typed and then checked by the researcher against the audio tape recording and the written research notes. Any inaccuracies were corrected before the commencement of data analysis.

Interpretive Validity

Qualitative research is not only concerned with providing a valid description, but aims to discover the meaning of the experience under investigation. Maxwell (1992) asserts that interpretive validity involves presenting research data in a way that represents the perspectives of the participants. He states that "Interpretive accounts are grounded in the language of the people studied and rely as much as possible on their own words and concepts" (1992, p. 289). To ensure the interpretive validity of the data collected an established data analysis technique within the field of qualitative research known as the 'constant comparative method' was employed in this study. Merriam (1998) describes the constant comparative method as a process of comparing data and tentatively building categories containing similar units of data.

Theoretical Validity

Maxwell (1992) proposes that theoretical validity involves a greater level of abstraction than descriptive or interpretive validity. It brings theoretical constructs to the analysis of the phenomena being researched. Theoretical validity goes beyond description and interpretation to offer explanation of the research data.

Generalisability

The degree to which an account is believed to be generalisable is a factor that clearly distinguishes qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Qualitative research almost exclusively limits itself to 'internal' generalisations, if indeed it seeks to claim any form of generalisability at all (Maxwell, 1992). In a very general sense, qualitative research concerns itself with the meanings and experiences of the 'whole person', or localised culture.

4.11 Data Analysis

Sarantavos proposes that analysis of data is "an interactive, continuous and cyclical process" (1993, p. 299). Thus, analysis was carried out at all stages of the study. For example, on completion of the first three interviews, I examined emerging themes and topics. Data was subjected to what Rapport and Wainwright (2006) describe as continuous re-examination of propositions in which each element can only be understood as part of the whole to which it belongs. It is important – as Rossmann and Rallis (2003) have observed – to challenge the very patterns that seem so apparent, as alternative understandings always exist.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim, then the transcripts were analysed using a systematic approach to thematic analysis developed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Drawing on principles of grounded theory, this inductive approach aims to derive theoretical constructs by identifying recurring themes (or repeated ideas) in participants' talk. I read all the transcripts several times and used content and thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes.

The data gathered through observations, individual and group interviews pointed to a number of emergent themes. After detailed consideration it was decided to select five key questions for analysis. I then made notes and marked the passages in the transcripts that were relevant to these five questions. Finally the resulting groupings of repeated ideas were consolidated into themes. For instance, conventions of masculinity were often described in terms of the need to portray and maintain a specific social persona. The conventions included toughness (e.g., "act tough"),

emotional invulnerability (e.g.," act like you don't care"), and heterosexual dominance (e.g., "act like you are in control").

4.12 Ethical Considerations

I, as researcher, am acutely aware of the sensitivity of the information sought and note that the publication of such information could "have far reaching implications for teachers, schools and providing institutions and for relations between them" (Nias and Groundwater-Smith, 1988, p. 10). Anonymity was promised and was maintained throughout the study. While a case study requires the researcher to provide in-depth information on the site and participants, I had to carefully measure the amount of data given so as not to reveal the location of the school or undermine the anonymity of the individuals. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) highlight that "[t]he essence of anonymity is that information provided by participants should in no way reveal their identity" (p. 61).

Prior to engagement participants were furnished with information as to the purpose and scope of the study. Permission from the school authorities was obtained prior to conducting the interviews and observations. Written consent was obtained from the students' parents or guardians prior to conducting the interviews. Informed consent was required of participants at each stage of the research. Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper to protect the identity of the research participants. The consensual approach which was used throughout this study will help to reduce threats to internal validity by creating opportunities for incorporating multiple perspectives and levels of awareness (Hill et al., 1997). This will have a balancing effect on the data analysis in keeping with Erlandson's (1993, p. 25) reminder that though "the danger of bias and reactivity are great; the dangers of being insulated from relevant data even greater".

4.13 Research Timetable

The fieldwork for this study was carried out over one academic year beginning in September 2009 and ending May 2010. A pilot study was carried out during the

early weeks of September 2009. Following the necessary alternations and adjustments interviews were conducted over the next nine months. During this time a total of 18 loosely structured interviews and discussions were carried out with both teachers and students within the school environs.

5

Findings – Students' Perceptions of Masculinities

5.1 Introduction

The main focus of this study is to explore boys' perceptions of their experience of the construction masculinities within the formal and informal spaces of a particular school and the perception of girls and teachers of the construction of masculinities. The study investigates two key areas in the field of adolescent masculinities and schooling, first, it investigates teenage boys' understanding of masculinities, and second, how teachers and school experiences influence their understanding of masculinities. In this way the study hopes to produce a more informed and sophisticated construction of adolescent masculinities in this coeducational second-level school. It hopes to articulate the policing of masculinities by students and teachers in a rural coeducational second-level school in Ireland.

In this research I position myself as an observer who takes stock of, gives voice to, and interprets the meanings that adolescent boys assign to their construction and negotiation of masculinities in an Irish coeducational (mixed-sex) second-level school. I am concerned with the subjective meanings that boys attach to their experiences and I adhere to the notion that the researcher does not sit at an objective point from which to observe the phenomena under study, but rather, is part of the social world, and is as vulnerable to the influence of language, culture and discourse as the social group or phenomena he is investigating. I acknowledge the fragility of my position as researcher because of the emphasis upon constructivism; the notions that I as researcher interpret and define social realities through the eyes of research participants. It is through this lens and position that I present this chapter of findings.

Although adolescent boys learn to negotiate and perform masculine identities in a range of social situations, the school setting has been recognised as one of the principal sites where masculinities are fashioned. Schools are agents in the construction of masculinities. Second-level schools are not just mirrors that reflect

the macho values of the social world outside (although they are partly influenced by them), but rather are places where masculinities are actively made, negotiated, regulated and renegotiated (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996). A school is not a passive institution against which identity is constructed, but instead plays an active role in the construction of masculinities. Paechter (2007) puts this well:

> Schools give young people messages about who they can be, what they can do and why, through the images of masculinity and femininity that they convey and purvey, and through the ways in which the capillary disciplinaries of the school act upon and are acted upon by young people as individuals and in groups (p. 112).

In this chapter, I present a number of major interlocking themes that emerged from the analysis of the data collected, with illustrative passages from interviews with students. In the interest of readability, I have removed some crutch words (such as "like," "you know," and false starts) from the quoted material. The chapter is divided into four main sections with each section dealing with a particular theme. The major themes that emerged from the analysis of the data were as follows: Being Tough by Speaking Tough in School; Communicating Soft Emotions and Masculinities; Adolescent Masculinities and Sexualities; Defining Masculinities through Sport.

5.2. Being Tough by Speaking Tough in School

Emerging out of the data collected from interviews and informal observations were the voices of the boys who provided insights in how they saw, understood and constructed masculinities in this second-level coeducational school. About one-third of the boys interviewed spoke about the importance of acting and speaking tough in school and in general not showing vulnerability in any way. Some boys were of the opinion that being tough was part of the expected attributes of men in society. Many of these boys described feelings such as softness as being feminine in nature and were of the opinion that a man should be seen as tough and should not show feelings of vulnerability or weakness.

To test each others' vulnerability some boys engaged regularly in verbal duels which involved the elaborate use of ritualised verbal insults between the contestants. These verbal sparring competitions usually occurred in lunch periods away from the intervention of the teachers. I overheard some of these verbal contests myself while working in my room during the lunch break. The purpose of this verbal exchange, according to the students interviewed, was to belittle your opponent thereby raising your own status principally within your peer group but also within the greater school community. These ritualised verbal exchanges always took place in public places in school and provided an arena for competing 'top dog' masculinities.

Most of the tough lads in this school frequently engaged in verbal sparring, or slagging*, as it is called in this school. Many of the so-called 'macho boys' or 'hardy lads' invested considerable effort in developing their 'slagging' skills and this practice was seen to enhance a boy's reputation in school for being 'cool', particularly amongst fellow gang members. In order to accumulate any kind of peer group credibility 'hardy lads' were not only required to take the insults of others, but to give as good as they got, thereby proving their masculine worth. To this end, terms like 'taking the piss' or 'ripping the piss out of him' are all about the administration of verbal 'wind-ups' in the hope that a fellow student would fail to cope with the pressures at hand and ultimately 'snap'. Simon, a sixteen year old from a working-class background who occasionally engages in slagging, describes how these verbal sparring contests develop.

> If you got into a slagging competition and it was going on for a while and you ended up slagging some chap and eventually the lad that picked on you was silenced...and all the other lads go "Ooh. Ooh" and they would respect you then...they would say "Oh! He is after ripping the piss out of this lad". *(Simon)*

*See Glossary for explanation of slang.

Within verbal sparring competitions, mother insults are common. As a good observer, I frequently overheard young lads belittling each other's mothers with a variety of insults mainly of a sexual nature. According to Kehily and Nayak (2006), mothers are used in insults to probe young men's associative links with femininity and expose their vulnerabilities. Owen, a young man who frequently engaged in

verbal sparring described to me the general nature of these contests. According to Owen, the opponents will loudly proclaim "what they've done with the mother the night before or things like that... they would say that I had your ma at such a time and stuff like that". In Owen's opinion the reason why mother insults are such an integral part of verbal sparring has to do with power. He suggests: "Well it's another big macho thing or it's like 'Oh if I could be with your mother I'd always have it over you". Commenting on mother insults, Rick, a studious sixteen year old from a working-class background highlights the type of things that are said in school, he states, "They would say your mother is a whore or a slut or they would just make remarks about her and your father or what way she goes about her own life, basically".

Mike, a relatively quiet but tough seventeen year old young man, from a working-class background notes how mother insults can easily lead to fights. He comments: "There are certain times when you can take a joke but if they keep at you about your ma...like you are not going to listen to them...you are going to get up and hit them." The emotive issue of mother insults is also addressed by June, a seventeen year old Leaving Certificate female student who believes that these insults have the effect of causing immediate annoyance and unease amongst most lads. She states "It triggers them...they just go mad if you say something about their mother. That's the worst thing you can do". The sensitivity of mother insults is also referred to by Trish, a Leaving Certificate student, she comments, "The whole thing...the sensitivity thing...you are insulting their ma and that really is important to lads because they are all mammies' boys and to insult their mother really gets to them".

My observations revealed that not all students engaged in mother insulting rituals in this school. The practice tends to be age related, usually beginning at aged 14 and continuing until aged 16. It usually begins in Second Year and continues until Fifth Year. Mother insulting is also gender related in that it is almost a completely male activity. Consequently it is predominately found in all-boys groups rather than in mixed groups as girls generally take a dim view of mother insults.

Physical Sparring – Being Tough – A Hardy Lad

In the eyes of some boys, particularly working-class boys, the use of verbal sparring competitions created a hierarchy allowing all lads to be graded along the hard-soft continuum. At the top of this continuum were the 'hardy lads' who are willing to fight in order to maintain their position as top dogs. A typical example of how some boys' view this hierarchy of toughness is represented by comments from Liam, a sixteen year old student who described himself as "a hardy lad", and suggested that one must act tough or else people will see you as a 'softie', and consequently, you will get a hard time from the tough boys. He was explicit in his views about the importance of 'show' and image. Liam believes that a lad should stand up to anybody who might belittle him and immediately answer back. He commented:

> You just kind of stay strong with yourself so that them boys don't come over and start slagging at you. If they say something to you...you say something back to them and then they realise that they are getting nowhere with you, so they just walk on. *(Liam)*

Liam is a member of a small gang of lads who respect people who act tough and occasionally get involved in fights. Membership of this gang is only open to lads who are willing to fight and act tough in school. Liam describes this in his own words: "there's a gang of them and if a lad doesn't fight, they said you're not hanging around with us because you won't fight or do anything; you won't mess." This statement is supported by Owen, who also sees himself as a 'macho' lad. Owen described how one gains respect from peers in a gang of 'macho' lads. He described the following scenario, which might take place on the street after school or at any location where adolescents socialise.

> Like if you hit a big hardy lad, even if you don't win...he is a big hardy chap, everybody is afraid of him and you went up and hit him, they would show you respect for that, because you are after standing up for yourself. You're the hard lad now. They'd say this lad has got a bit of balls. *(Owen)*

Owen is a sixteen year old who sees himself as a young man who will not be pushed around by anyone. He was keen to emphasise that he is willing and able to stand up to anyone who takes him on in a verbal exchange or a fight. He believes that the way

one gains respect from 'macho' lads is through being able to fight and describes the process of gaining respect in the following way:

> Say I was in Greentown and I know one or two of them and a fight broke out and say I beat the head off two lads, they would show me respect and take me into the gang then and they wouldn't say anything to me....whereas if I got into a fight and I didn't want to get into it, they would say "Oh you're a chicken shit and all that". *(Owen)*

Owen's description of an event outside of school represents the competitive and violent style of masculine behaviour that is admired by a very small percentage of boys in this school. Power and control through the use of physicality is one of the hallmarks of this style of masculinity.

The negative effect of this type of physical masculinity on other students is commented upon by Sean, a sixth-year perfect in the school.

> I know I feel intimidated even if I meet some of them down town and some of them in school...you feel intimidated, you feel nearly inadequate but yet then if you were to actually think you would realise that you are more adequate than them. They want everyone to feel small around them. *(Sean)*

The concept of a desirable masculinity adapted by the 'hardy lads' is very different from that of other boys in the school. An example of an alternative image of masculinity is presented by Rick, a sixteen year old from a working-class background, who wanted to do well in school. When asked about the image of masculinity portrayed by 'hardy lads', in the school, he made the following comment.

> I think it's a total different image compared to what I'd be thinking of...what I'd be thinking of is growing up having respect for other people; live a good life and cause no trouble, and while the others[hardy lads] is basically the total opposite of that, so there is a total difference between me and them. *(Rick)*

In summary, verbal sparring competitions can act as a toughening process for adolescent boys who learn that showing sensitivity and hiding emotions is essential if boys are not to be thought of as weak by their male peers. Through the careful use of ritualised verbal insults boys learn how to skilfully avoid the pitfalls of ridicule, but

in doing so they also learn to devalue the possession of openness and sensitivity with each other, because it is at odds with examples around them of what contributes an 'acceptable' masculinity.

5.3 *Communicating Soft Emotions and Masculinities*

The fieldwork at this school revealed that certain types of masculine display were defined by students and also by 'some' teachers as being unacceptable masculine options for behaviour. These included showing 'soft emotions' such as crying and emotional displays of 'weakness'. When adolescent boys were asked about expressing feelings and discussing their concerns with their friends, most replied that it was not appropriate to talk about feelings with your mates. A typical example of this opinion is expressed by Colin, a sixteen year old, who suggested that such behaviour would be viewed as feminine by his mates. He stated, "It would be more feminine to talk about your feelings" and also suggested that "it just could make the situation awkward, like between friends". This view is partly supported by Sara, who is in the same year as Colin, and who observes that boys seldom talk about feelings because "they just don't want to show weakness in front of friends". When asked if a boy would lose respect from his male peers if he spoke about vulnerable emotions, Ina, a female Fifth Year student commented "Not amongst girls but he would lose respect amongst lads".

Some girls, such as seventeen year old Trish, who is in her final year in school, acknowledged that lads look weak in their (male) mates' eyes when they talk about soft emotions but she believes that girls do not see it that way. She states "Well, they would look weak in their friends' eyes, but really if they all just talked about their feelings, nobody would think anything about it, but they think they have to keep it all in". When asked if the practice of concealing some feelings increases the masculine image of boys, she offered the following reply, "I think it's the opposite...if they showed some of their feelings it would make them more appealing and easier to talk to". Immediately Trish's opinion was challenged by classmate Seamus who commended "I wouldn't really agree with her...you are telling everybody your feelings and you are kinda sensitive and that's not really macho". Seamus continued

"I'm not saying that you should keep your feelings to yourself; there is a time and a place and you don't go around talking about your feelings".

The views expressed by Sara, Ina, Trish and Seamus suggest that boys are very conscious of the views of their peers when expressing 'soft' emotions and that many boys are comfortable expressing vulnerable feelings in a private capacity but not in the public domain of a school. The public pressure on 'hardy' boys to conceal soft emotions is also addressed by Pauline who commented "Everybody is human, so everybody shows the same emotions, but the lads don't do it in public. Sometimes the way they go on...they are like 'Oh we don't have soft emotions, we are big hardies and all this".

Sixteen year old Pauline, expressed the opinion that lads deliberately conceal their feelings and commented, "They try to be the bigger man by saying 'Oh no, I don't talk about my feelings to people'. Pauline's views are echoed by her classmate Ina who believes that boys want to see themselves as tough and therefore feel obliged to conceal soft emotions.

Steve, who is also sixteen years of age, notes that it is acceptable for girls to talk about emotions in public but not for boys. He believes that boys would be seen as weak by their male peers if they spoke about their emotions in public. Steve feels that to be a man in society one must distance himself from anything that appears feminine in his character. He commented:

> A girl would be more open to her emotions...like be able to talk about it and feel good after talking about it, whereas a lad would just feel probably worse and it would be seen as a sign of weakness by other lads and they would slag him over it. *(Steve)*

Commenting on whether boys would react in a positive or negative manner if a 'hardy lad' started talking about soft emotions amongst a group of male friends, Pauline, a Fifth Year student from a working-class background makes the following observation.

> I think it would be a bit of both. I think they would respect him for being able to say it and at the same time they would disrespect him for saying that in front of a group of people...it's a bit embarrassing or whatever. *(Pauline)*

Pauline's comments are interesting as they indicate the ambivalence that 'hardy boys' experience in relation to this matter. At one level, they respect a boy for having the courage to express his vulnerable feelings, yet, feel such behaviour is threatening to their perception of their masculine image and hence they feel a degree of discomfort. This helps us to gain an understanding of the fragility of the tough 'macho' image.

Steve also notes that boys are expected to keep their upset and distress to themselves even when a relationship ends with a girl, perhaps as a result of infidelity. He feels that boys would receive minimum support or indeed respect from their friends if they spoke about how the relationship ended to their peers. He describes a typical scenario:

> Like if a girl cheated on you...you wouldn't say 'Oh! She cheated on me' to your friends...that would be losing respect and they would slag you over it. Girls would talk about it and say 'Oh! He cheated on me or whatever' but if a girl cheated on a lad, he would just keep it to himself and he would probably make up stories about that girl for that reason. *(Steve)*

Some adolescents such as seventeen year old Shay, a Sixth Year student who hopes to go straight into work after his Leaving Certificate observed that it is acceptable to talk about certain feelings such as anger or revenge but not appropriate to mention feelings that might portray one as being weak or vulnerable. When asked to describe feelings that would project a young man as 'being macho' he stated.

> Like you said 'I hate that lad over there, I'd love to punch him'. That would be an example that would be considered to be macho. If you were talking about when you were slagged and you went home whinging or whatever, then you wouldn't be considered to be macho. *(Shay)*

Pauline, who is a year younger than Shay consolidates the image of macho lads refusing to show soft emotions. When asked to describe the type of emotions that macho lads are reluctant to show, she stated "Yeah soft emotions they won't show...anger and stuff like that they don't care about showing them, but caring and stuff like that, they won't show".

Shay's friend Toss, who was from a tough working-class background and who enjoyed his cigarette at the back of the school each day, suggested that 'macho lads' should not show feelings at all. Toss tended to engage in macho posturing throughout the school day and had developed an image of himself as a 'hard man'. While he wasn't very articulate in expressing himself verbally he did have definite views on 'macho' students talking about feelings in public. When asked if he thought it would be difficult for a macho student to stand up and talk about feelings in the classroom, he suggested that it would, as it would lower his status amongst his friends who would perceive him as being 'too soft'. He comments, "By being macho you go around and you say you have no feelings at all...you don't care about anything...you want to mess, you want to break the rules, you don't care about feelings or anything else". Toss is typical of boys who see themselves as 'hardy lads' and his opinions are representative of this small core group of boys whose masculinities are cut against rules and regulations of the school authorities. The philosophy expressed by Toss suggests that to avoid showing sensitivity and to hide emotions is essential if boys are not to be thought of as weak or feminine.

The views expressed by Toss are not shared by every student. Pat, for example, who is a sixteen year old from a middle-class background who intends to go to college after completing his Leaving Certificate, feels that it is perfectly acceptable for young men to talk about 'soft' feelings but notes that 'certain' lads had an issue with it. Pat is a keen sports man and plays Gaelic Football and soccer for the school. Consequently he is respected by some students for his football skills and talents. When asked why 'macho' lads seldom talk about emotions in public he replied:

> Because they don't see emotions and feelings as being what a lad should talk about or feel like...because [in the opinion of macho lads] there is only two feelings that you can feel, that is, laughing after insulting someone or being angry. They are the two feelings that they [macho lads] feel most of the time. *(Pat)*

Pat articulates the views of 'macho lads' as boys who only express feelings of power, for example 'laughing after insulting someone' and feelings of anger. The contrasting views expressed by Toss and Pat may be seen as a reflection of the interaction of social class and views about an acceptable masculinity. In general,

distinctive emphases on particular signifiers of masculinity varied according to social class. There were class differences between the working-class and middle-class stances on this issue with many working-class boys like Toss believing that expressing 'soft' emotions threatens one's masculinity while middle-class boys like Pat were more comfortable expressing soft emotions such as vulnerability, fear and distress.

Sean, a sixth-year Prefect in the school, who takes study seriously and plans to secure a good Leaving Certificate, articulates the reasons why students who consider themselves to be 'macho' would lose respect from their friends by talking about emotions in public. He states:

> Their friends would probably disown them or ridicule them about actually trying to show emotions. They probably think it shows weakness talking about [soft emotions]...to be honest they probably think it's gay as they would say. They probably think it is gay talking about emotions and feelings and stuff like that. *(Sean)*

Other adolescent males interviewed such as Owen suggested that most adolescent boys shy away from showing soft feelings as a way of protecting a self-image based on a particular version of masculinity. Owen tends to devalue openness and sensitivity because it is at odds with his perception of what is means to be a 'real man'. When asked why certain lads are reluctant to show 'soft' feelings he comments:

> They might be feelings they want to hide because if people find out they have a weakness or something like that they might think 'Oh! I'm not superior anymore, I'm not the hard man, and I'm not the macho man'. *(Owen)*

The policing of boys who express emotions by their peers was noted by Trish, a Leaving Certificate student, who observes that lads may be taunted by their mates if they speak about emotions in the classroom. She comments:

> They don't want to get slagged by saying something that their friends wouldn't agree with. Lads would never come out and say anything in a class that would make anyone think bad of them, or if it was something private, they would just start making jokes out of it. *(Trish)*

Trish attributed boys' reluctance to speak about feelings in public to peer pressure and the negative responses which she believes boys are likely to receive from their classroom peers.

Expressing Feelings amongst Close Friends

Kevin, a sixteen year old Fifth Year student, suggested that it was acceptable to talk about feelings to a close friend but not to your mates. "But if you needed help or advice or just to get it out of the way, you would go to your closest friends, not just any lad that you hang out with". When asked if he would feel embarrassed discussing his feelings he stated "Not if it was with your closest friends, you wouldn't, you would feel comfortable, and that's why you would always go to them".

Kevin, made a distinction between closest friends and mates, and made the following comment on how his mates would likely react if he began talking about feelings. He articulated his views by stating "if you are talking about your feelings the whole time, of course you are going to get a bit of a slagging over it. You just don't do it". Kevin, who is a relatively good student in school but is also a 'bit of a lad' [his words], describes how he personally deals with worries relating to his family and home circumstances in the following way, "If it's something really close to your family...I wouldn't say it at all, I just bury the emotions, you know, not hide them, not put up with them, bury them and forget about it". Kevin perceives the expressing of 'soft feelings' as being anti-masculine as it touches the softer, gentler side of him, which is difficult to show in front of other boys who are intent on showing that they are 'real boys'.

Colin, a classmate of Kevin, suggested that cracking a joke would be appropriate if a mate started talked about feeling sad or low and this might even help to lift his spirits. Commenting on the benefits of using humour and distraction techniques in such situations, he continues:

> Sometimes that could make it handier though, if someone is maybe sad or depressed about something, and they say something to you and you kinda

> make a bit of a laugh out of it...he might feel better after seeing the funny side. *(Colin)*

The prevailing themes in the responses of both Kevin and Colin suggest that some boys believe that the best way to deal with male peers who express distress or personal worries is to use distraction strategies or make light of the matter. Indeed Kevin seems to believe that making emotional disclosures to peers is un-masculine in nature.

The issue of boys crying in public is also addressed by sixteen year Steve, who is a Transition Year student, who notes that crying is seen as a sign of weakness and would single out a young man as being weak or indeed, homosexual. In the following statement he highlights how inappropriate public crying is viewed by adolescent boys.

> Girls when they are talking in front of their friends, they might cry or whatever. Lads can't do that. Well, it would be a sign of weakness...they would be called faggots or whatever...lads just can't cry *(Steve)*.

It is evident in these narratives that some boys in this school invested heavily in particular forms of masculinity which are informed by and constitute hegemonic versions of masculinity.

5.4 Adolescent Masculinities and Sexualities

The narratives in the interviews show that some boys constantly call each other gay, faggot and other terms implying that someone is homosexual. These words were frequently heard by me in the corridor, lunchroom and classroom and were often used as generic insults as well as homophobic remarks. The term gay was used by boys as a pejorative term on a daily basis within the school environs. Pat, a sixteen year old student from middle-class background makes the following observation on the use of these words. He suggests "While gay is an insult, they don't actually mean gay in that way. Everybody kinda calls each other gay; it's not really an insult anymore. It doesn't mean...it's nothing to do with homosexual anymore".

The word 'gay' is also used to describe anything that is seen as un-cool such as hair styles, clothes, pencil cases, figures of speech and so on. In fact, it is used as a substitute word to describe anything that is seen as un-fashionable. Recent research by McCormack and Anderson (2010) suggests that "gay" is used to indicate something undesirable or negative but that its sexual component and its usage to overtly admonish homosexual behaviours or relationships has largely been removed from use in some U.K. youth cultures today. Despite the wide usage of the word in this school it still causes considerable upset, anxiety and often anger amongst students, particularly those who see themselves as 'macho' or 'hardy'. Sean, a Sixth Year Prefect, makes the following observation:

> But the difference is...we are going to call them 'non-macho' men if they call someone gay, they would laugh it off and say 'Yeah, so what, I like this, I like that'. But in the other group if they are called gay they have to defend themselves to the last...like 'No I'm not gay' and they try to defend themselves to the last. They feel they have to defend themselves in front of their friends. *(Sean)*

Indeed, many students such as Colin, who constantly uses this word in conversations with his mates, points out that most students wouldn't use it in the presence of a homosexual student. In his own words he states "Well if someone was gay I don't think they would actually say it to them whereas if they are not gay, well, then it's a kinda more funny".

Noting the upset and unease that the terms 'gay' or 'faggot' evoke in male students, Kevin, a student from a working-class background who hopes to go to college states: "Whether we like it or not we all have some bit of an ego, so when they say something like that, it does get at you". The meaning of the word varies according to where and when it is used. When used amongst friends it is viewed as just a bit of banter but when lads are in groups they used the term to belittle other students. Owen, a student who likes to be seen as 'hardy' describes the various uses of the word with the following scenario.

> Whereas say there was a gang of lads here in the school that wanted to be macho, they would call other people faggots and they might take offence to that, but if I say "Steve you're a faggot" he wouldn't take any offence to it because he's my friend like. *(Owen)*

Whatever meanings boys like Owen give to terms like faggot or gay, the stark denunciation of homosexuality as outside the bounds of acceptable masculinity is likely to be problematic for boys who are not heterosexual.

Having Female Friends who are not Girlfriends

Further findings from this study suggest that boys constantly monitor each other and note any discrepancy that would set a boy apart by less 'manly' behaviour. Boys' friendships with other boys and girls are closely observed by peers. If a boy is frequently seen in the company of girls and none of these girls are girlfriends, then a boy can quickly be identified as a homosexual. Steve, a sixteen year old in Transition Year makes the following observation: "Some people (boys) would have male friends and female friends and that would be ok, but like if the majority of them were female...they would be called faggots". His friend Simon, who is also in Transition Year, makes the fine distinction between talking to girls who are neighbours or classmates and other girls. He believes that it is acceptable to talk to girls whom you have known for a long time, but one has to be careful about talking to a new girl unless one is trying to 'chat her up' because your peers might note that you seem to enjoy the company of girls more than boys and hence might see your actions as homosexual in nature. He expressed his view in the following way.

> It would be different if you knew that girl for ages and you were talking to her...then people would know. If you were just talking to a group of girls and hanging around with them and walking around the school with them, then the lads would say 'Oh look at that faggot over there'. *(Simon)*

The close observation of boys' actions and mannerisms while in the company of girls is revealed by the following statement from Steve, who carefully articulated the give-away body language signs which reflect the true nature of the friendship. He comments:

> There is a difference between chatting up a girl and talking to her...and lads would see from a distance by a lad's body language if he is trying to chat her up or just talking to her. If he wasn't trying to chat her up, he would be seen as a faggot or a queer. Like it's a different thing messing with girls...like

> always being with them is a different thing...like if you had some male friends and you were messing with some females, that would be alright but if it was always with female friends it would be seen as gay. *(Steve)*

The comments by Steve and Simon highlight the internal fears experienced by boys when the nightmare of being seen as different or gay is contemplated. Iris, a sixteen year old Transition Year girl who is a classmate of Steve, makes reference to the difference between male friends and romantic male friends. She commented.

> If you've got a lad and he's your mate, like you talk to him but you wouldn't sit down with him. Say you are with a group of people, like you wouldn't get up and walk away and just sit down and talk to him, unless he was trying to get stuck into you. *(Iris)*

The comments by Simon, Steve and Iris clearly give a flavour of the covert policing of boys' friendships by other students in the school, in particular boys who spent time in the company of girls who are not girlfriends or potential girlfriends. This research reveals that a boy has to be careful not to be seen in the company of girls too frequently or else he is likely to be labelled as 'gay' by his classmates. This term has serious consequences for a boy's standing within this school community and he is likely to experience isolation and homophobic bullying as a consequence.

5.5 *Defining Masculinities through Sport*

For some boys, sport, and particularly football, provided a means to prove their masculinity in a public arena. It was seen by most boys as an 'acceptable' masculine option and one of the ways that could be used to assert one's masculinity. Some boys use the game of football as a way of constructing, negotiating, and performing their masculinity. Colin, a sixteen year old who plays Gaelic Football and soccer makes the following observation "I suppose if you're better at sports you are seen to be more masculine than someone who isn't as good at sport." Nevertheless, Colin is aware of the various images that constitute masculinity and this is reflected by his comment. "Well some people might see sport as a macho thing whereas others would see standing around smoking to be macho". Indeed many of the boys interviewed suggested that you do not need to be 'macho' to play football but agreed that playing the game does help to promote your masculine image. Shay, a seventeen year old

who plays both Gaelic football and soccer believes that one doesn't need to be macho to play Gaelic or soccer as he observed "Like you are not going to have fifteen lads who are macho on a team. There will be only ever be like five or six". Shay also suggested that "being macho doesn't matter in football", which seems to indicate that sports maybe seen by 'tough boys' as not providing a suitable arena for displaying macho behaviour.

It should also be noted that only a few of the boys who see themselves as tough or 'hardy' play sport on a regular basis. This is principally because sports require self-discipline and commitment and according to Pat, many of these 'tough' boys are seen to lack the necessary attributes to play competitive team sports. Pat, a good sportsman, who is a member of both Gaelic and soccer school teams makes the following observation in relation to good sportsmen being leaders of macho gangs.

> The lad who plays football...he'd go to training and play his matches and he wouldn't be hanging around with them [macho lads] all the time, so he couldn't be seen as the leader as he wouldn't be always with them. He'd be a little bit quieter. He would still have a say in it though, he would still gets his slags in and his insults in and he would be still part of the group. There is very few of them that do play sports though because they think "Why would I bother...they would stay in bed [during morning training] and go out and get drunk the night before". *(Pat)*

This view is supported by Matt, who is also a member of the senior football team. He hinted that 'macho' lads do not have sufficient self-discipline to take sport seriously. He comments: "Say you have a match on Saturday morning you can't go out on Friday night...whereas they would". Colin noted that "some of the hardy fellows might be into smoking and all that and mightn't play sport at all". While Colin's classmate Eanna commented that "They are too hardy for sport".

John, a seventeen old sportsman who plays Gaelic Football and Golf for the school suggested that many of the so called 'macho' lads do not play sport at all because "They are busy walking around the town and just doing nothing, just sitting on a wall for a day". While his friend, Sean, who is a school Prefect and a good footballer, indicated that the reason why 'macho' lads do not play sports is linked to their desire to be 'top dog'. He comments:

> They want to be top dog...you have your captain over you, you have your manager over you, you have your coaches over you and then you even have supporters on the sideline shouting at you;...so you're not top dog, you're nowhere near the top. *(John)*

The opinions expressed by Colin, Matt, Pat and John could be viewed through the eyes of boys who value sporting masculinities and take a condescending view of 'macho boys' attitudes towards sports.

As part of the Physical Education programme in this school all students are obliged to engage in sports and physical exercise. This can pose some difficulties for boys who find sports difficult and may not enjoy participating in competitive games. This was alluded to by Kevin, who enjoys sports and plays Gaelic Football for the school. He suggested that "People who don't play sports would find it difficult in PE because they are obliged to get involved in sport, and they might be useless at what they are doing". He noted that students who find sporting activities difficult often develop coping strategies to overcome this problem. He stated: "I suppose lots of lads who are hopeless at the sports develop a sense of humour and just mess in class and do something to make up for being crap at sports to avoid the slagging...have the spotlights on themselves to take it off the negative side".

Colin, who is a member of the senior Gaelic football team, believes that there is a hierarchy in relation to the perceived toughness required to play certain sports. He believes that rugby players would be perceived as being tougher than soccer players. He states: "Someone who is good at soccer would be seen to be less tougher than they would be if they played rugby".

Nevertheless Colin admits that soccer players command a lot of respect amongst adolescent boys because of the high profile of the game in the media. He acknowledged that "Soccer players still have a lot of respect. There's more skills in soccer than rugby or Gaelic". Trish, a Leaving Certificate student, also makes a distinction between the masculine images of various sports. Noting that rugby is perceived as more masculine than a sport such as badminton, she comments: "Well, if somebody says they play rugby they are a kind of more masculine because it is

such a rough sport or if somebody said they play badminton or something you would think like....alright, ok". These comments help to highlight the hierarchy amongst various sports in terms of the perceived masculinity of the players.

5.6 Conclusion

Swain (2004) observes that each school has its own gender regime which consists, amongst other things, of individual personnel, expectations, rules, routines and a hierarchical ordering of particular practices. The school in this study presents a set of resources and a particular set of options in order to perform and construct modes of masculinity. As is evident in the data presented here, there is nothing straightforward or simplistic about boys' interpretation of masculinities. Such an endeavour is complex, fluid and multifarious. In constructing themselves as identifiable masculine subjects, boys engage in a sophisticated repertoire of performance practices and draw upon a range of complex and often competing discourses of masculinity. The construction of identity and indeed sexuality is as complex, as it is diverse. Masculine identity shaped how the boys in this study viewed themselves, how they treated other boys and girls, and how they presented their public selves amongst their peers. Masculinity can become enmeshed in public acceptability and emerge as a powerful source of identity, legitimacy and social power.

Understanding masculinity is not just a simple case of identifying and codifying behaviours amongst "the boys", but involves acknowledging and unpacking the overlapping and competing ways that boys enact what it means to be a man. This involves a much more complex understanding of masculinities underscored by competing sets of understandings. As this research shows, not only do adolescent boys know what is means to be a man in our society, they are also able to articulate and demonstrate how gendered understandings are expressed in daily school interactions. Interviews with the boys provided a frame of reference and a way of making sense of their experiences of negotiating and policing masculinities. Johnson (1997) notes that "language does not simply mirror gender, it helps constitute it; it is one of the ways gender is enacted" (p. 23). Definitions of masculinity emerged out of the interviews and informal observations that I carried out. This chapter offered

the voices of boys and girls to show how masculinities are spoken and written into existence through daily conversations and performances.

The voices and experiences of the boys and girls included in this chapter provide insights into how young men aged between sixteen and eighteen years construct, negotiate and perform masculinities in a coeducational school setting in rural Ireland. This study clearly revealed that all the interviewees understood and were aware of the specific norms of masculinity that operated in their school. This research widens the lens for seeing and hearing how young men negotiate ways of doing gender. It illustrates the importance of maintaining and managing masculinities that are routinely scrutinised or policed as appropriate by the wider environs of the school.

6

Findings – Teachers' Perceptions of Masculinities

6.1 Introduction

Interviews were conducted with eight teachers and these generated a considerable amount of information, revealing teachers' expectations and assumptions about masculinities in this coeducational second-level school. Four male and three female teachers plus the Principal (who is female) were each interviewed individually. These interviews explored teachers' perceptions of masculinities and provided an insight into how they view developing masculinities amongst adolescent boys. The data were analysed and streamlined into five key themes. From this analysis the following principal themes emerged: Verbal Sparring and Emotional Invulnerability; Big Boys Don't Cry; Adolescent Masculinities and Sexuality; Defining Masculinities through Sport; Power and Adolescent Masculinities.

This chapter presents each of the major themes and related sub-themes. A brief contextualisation and short analysis of each theme is presented in order to provide the reader with a more comprehensive picture of the construction, negotiation and policing of masculinities in this school. Since masculinities are constructed as ways of being within particular communities of masculinity practice, and are likely to change as we move between communities (Paechter, 2007), the attitudes of the key people within a community like a school are very important. Teachers hold the key positions of authority and power within a school and hence their opinions and perceptions of masculinities are of considerable significance to the developing adolescent boy.

6.2 Verbal Sparring and Emotional Invulnerability

The practice of verbal sparring or slagging (the vernacular term for this activity in the school) was a daily occurrence amongst some groups of boys. This activity took place in the corridors, canteen and indeed in the classroom, but usually outside the

earshot of teachers. It was a common enough occurrence and I frequently heard teachers challenge students about this practice. In terms of masculine identity, I explored this practice with the teachers and attempted to ascertain their perception of the role of verbal sparring in the construction of adolescent masculinities.

Mr. Doyle, a woodwork teacher in the school for 5 years, described why he believed some boys engaged in verbal sparring and explained why boys hide their upset when taunted by opponents:

> It is a test of their toughness and being able to take what is thrown at them....they don't show emotion...and that is the thing...they can't be seen to be upset....it is a test of their ability to stand their ground and take it. *(Mr. Doyle)*

The importance of acting tough and being seen to act tough particularly in a public arena is commented upon by Ms. Ward who noted how boys conceal their sensitivities in order to be seen in a favourable light by their peers. In relation to verbal sparring by male students she described how boys usually put on a brave face rather than publicly acknowledge the discomfort or indeed pain of the encounter. She commented that a boy will "not for a second let others see that this might be hurting him. He will put on a front and a bravado". If a boy were to admit to his peers that he was hurt by these verbal encounters, he would risk the possibility of losing status within the network of friends. Ms. Ward commented:

> I think it would be a big blow to his ego...I think the consequence would be that he wouldn't be seen as tough enough...if a student were to admit that there was harm intended in the messing, he could be seen as sensitive, and as a young lad that would be the worst thing that you could be seen to be, is sensitive to anything. *(Ms. Ward)*

Commenting on the importance of adolescent boys maintaining emotional invulnerability during verbal sparring contests, Ms. Logan, a veteran teacher, explained why she considered it important for boys to maintain their composure during these events. She said:

> If you lose you cool it does affect your status, because they are rising you, and you see it happening in classes. I know that certain students will do that to try to get another student to lose his cool. *(Ms. Logan)*

To lose 'your cool' when engaged in verbal sparring was seen as a sign of weakness and vulnerability by many boys. It exposed their sensitivities and this did not correlate positively with their ideal image of the invulnerable macho male. Within the arena of verbal sparring, mother insults play a primary role. These practices of making derogatory statements, often of a sexual nature, about an opponent's mother form a major part of many sparring competitions. Speaking about this issue and the perceived need for boys to conceal any discomfort or hurt caused by these remarks, Mr. Doyle commented:

> I insult your mother and you respond with an insult, but you keep your feelings hidden...the whole point of mother insults and this macho carry-on is to be macho and not to have feelings and you keep things inside and....you don't let people know how you feel because you are a tough man and tough people do not talk about their feelings. *(Mr. Doyle)*

It is argued by Kehily and Nayak (2006) that boys attack each others' mother in an attempt to mobilise a sexist discourse of power against other boys. Mother insults are also used to produce hierarchies between 'hardy lads' and those susceptible to 'feminine' sensibilities and capable of crying. This practice usually begins when boys are aged fourteen and tends to continue until aged sixteen. Mr. Doyle commented:

> In Second year they [boys] test the water and that's when it starts and continues. Some boys will decide they can't take this [mother insults] and won't respond. For boys who think it is ok, it will continue and get worse over time. It starts off "I did this to your ma, your sister". It grows in intensity as the years go on in school, as they continue to try and best each other. I think it becomes more common at the end of Second year and continues until Fifth year. *(Mr. Doyle)*

My observations revealed that mother insulting tended to be a social-class related activity with rough working class boys most likely to practise this activity and it was rarely seen amongst middle-class students.

Acceptable Masculine Ways of Expression Emotion

Addressing the issue of acceptable masculine ways of expressing emotion, Mr. Doyle, a young male teacher in the school made the following observation:

> Unless you express emotions in a certain way as in the case of, for example, Roy Keane as an example of somebody who expresses his emotions in a very physical way by breaking a man's leg on the football field....that is an acceptable expression of emotion or for young boys who have social problems to riot, to burn out cars, to joyride...it's not acceptable to law abiding people but it is acceptable to their peer group that they would engage in anti-social behaviour as a way of expressing themselves. *(Mr. Doyle)*

In the eyes of Mr. Doyle, many students admire Roy Keane for his manliness. In many ways Keane presents a classic portrayal of hegemonic masculinity; physically fit, successful, powerful and emotionally strong. For many of the boys interviewed in this study emotional and physical strength coupled with bodily performance was central to their sense of a masculine image.

Speaking about the difficulties that some boys experience when having to talk about emotions in a public arena such as a classroom, the English teacher Mr. Brennan made the following observation:

> I can think about boys who on a one-to-one are well able to express themselves but don't want to be seen to speak about emotions in class among their peer-groups for fear of ridicule and being taunted by their peers. When they come out onto the sporting field it is a different set-up all together...you have a chance to let off steam and give it a hundred percent by using your energy and channelling it in the right direction. *(Mr. Brennan)*

These comments suggest that some students are fearful of their peer's reaction if they verbalise their emotions in classrooms, but are quite comfortable to use physicality within a sporting arena to express their feelings. Addressing the use of sport as a medium for boys to express emotions, Ms. Ward commented upon the positive aspects of sports in the promotion of self-discipline and well-being.

> It is a very healthy way for them to express their emotions. I find generally of all the students I ever taught, particularly the males, if they are some way involved in a sport, they are going to give you very little trouble. They might

> be mischievous, they might be a bit lazy in academic terms but they are not bad, they are not mean; most of the students that I had real problems over the years did not play sport. *(Ms. Ward)*

Each of these teachers has alluded to the use of physicality as a means of expressing emotions for adolescent boys. They have attempted to articulate why some boys find it difficult to express their feelings through the medium of verbal expression. Highlighting the difficulties that many boys face when attempting to express certain emotions in an acceptable masculine way, particularly in a public arena, and conscious of the likely negative reaction of their peers, these teachers have offered reasons why some boys resort to physicality in their attempts to express their feelings.

It could be argued that Ms. Ward's comments on the use of competitive sports as an appropriate medium for young men to express their emotions in a normatively acceptable way is colluding with the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity in this school setting rather than providing alternative ways of dealing with emotions.

Teachers' Views of Rule Breaking and Masculinities

Some boys deliberately kicked against the school rules in an attempt to highlight themselves as 'tough boys'. To a certain extent these boys were expressing their emotions through the medium of rule breaking. They tended to use body language and acts of public defiance against the school authority as a means of expressing themselves. Addressing the issue of adolescent boys acting tough especially in front of their friends, Ms. Boland, Principal of the school, makes the following observation. In relation to deliberate rule breaking she observed that boys are far more likely to engage in public rule breaking than girls. She remarked:

> They [boys] do it publicly or blatantly in a challenging way, and I would say it is certainly class distinct, the kids from lower class backgrounds or less middle-class backgrounds will be more challenging and have less of an interest in education; less of an interest in conforming and will go against the school in lots of different ways...they will break the rules [in school] and they have this audience that supports them in that. *(Ms. Boland)*

These students gain the negative attention of teachers, whom in their role as guardians of the disciplinary function of the school are obliged to give these 'rule breakers' their daily and hourly vigilance. Ms. Boland suggested that social class is a barometer of the likelihood of students deliberately breaking school rules. This appears as a form of protest masculinity by working-class boys against the middle-class culture of the school establishment. The practice of public defiance of school authority and the open violation of school regulations can earn boys creditability amongst some students in the school. Challenging teacher discipline can earn boys a kind of notoriety and fame which gives them kudos in the eyes of their peers. Describing why she believed boys gain admirers (sometimes female) through acts of toughness and public defiance of school rules, Principal, Ms. Boland remarked:

> I think that carefree-ness or that sort of fearlessness is something they [girls] admire in them [boys], or that they don't care; they don't mind authority; they are not afraid of their parents; they are not afraid of teachers, and they are not afraid of being corrected. It doesn't bother them and they laugh about it, and make jokes about it and they will move on to the next craic. *(Ms Boland)*

In the opinion of some teachers, public defiance of school rules provides an opportunity for boys to prove their manliness in the eyes of other boys. These acts of public defiance against teachers and school authorities allow these boys to demonstrate their fearlessness and courage in front of their peers.

6.3 *Big Boys Don't Cry*

One of the findings of this research revealed that some teachers, both male and female, perceived 'soft' emotions such as emotional displays, crying and emotional distress as inappropriate masculine behavioural options. Indeed, Ms. Ward believed that some teachers and elements of society actually rewarded boys for concealing soft emotions. She feels that the ability to conceal soft emotions is something that we as a society value in men. Speaking about the value of concealing one's 'soft emotions' in the creation of an 'appropriate' masculine image for adolescent boys she commented:

> I think it is valued by boys, but I think it is also valued by girls and by society in general. I think it is something that is rewarded constantly. I have often

> seen very young First Year boys who have broken down and cried, and the girls will snigger as much as the lads. The girls seem to get a kick out of it as well, so they [the boys] are being rewarded for that [for concealing their emotions] all the time. *(Ms Ward)*

In relation to society, Ms. Ward suggested that busy parents trying to manipulate work, housekeeping and parenting within a tight timeframe frequently reward boys for keeping quiet about the worries, concerns or upsets, admittedly in a sub-conscious manner. She described a typical scenario.

> When they [boys] come home and their mother is trying to cook the dinner, it's the guy who stays quiet in the corner who is seen as a great lad as opposed to somebody who says 'this really, really annoyed me in school today'. Parents are so busy that they don't really have time to sit down and discuss it with them. It depends on what messages they are being given, but I do think that sort of behaviour is being rewarded all the time at a sub-conscious level by teachers, by parents, by peers, girls and boys, by everybody *(Ms Ward)*.

Noting that many boys are very slow to show sensitivities, Ms. Boland, Principal of the school, made the following observation:

> They [boys] do hide their softer emotions and would be embarrassed if they ever showed any sort of emotion, or even got a bit upset by something. For some of them that would be the worst thing in the world. *(Ms. Boland)*

The habitual practice of some boys hiding their troubles, feelings and worries beneath tough poses alluded to by Ms. Boland is supported by further evidence from Mr. Doyle who addresses the issue of boys openly acknowledging expressions of vulnerability and hurt through the medium of crying. Mr. Doyle, who appears to be acutely aware of the ideals and expectations of hegemonic masculinity within the peer culture of adolescent boys, offers the following explanation as to why crying is seen as an undesirable masculine trait for boys.

> Crying is something that is seen by society as been done by small children and women. You go to the cinema or watch television and you see a woman crying because her boyfriend left her. How does a man react in these films? He goes off to the pub with the boys or he goes off and gets a new woman for himself. Society tells people that this is how we should react and it tells us that kids cry and women cry...we never see men crying...crying is associated

> with weaknesses; it is associated with being very young and weak or as being a woman. *(Mr. Doyle)*

Mr. Doyle's comments suggest that tears are typical of children and females, so masculine men have no use for them. Crying is associated with female weakness and since masculinity is defined against and over femininity, men should not be seen to cry in public. In effect masculine men must distance themselves from the characteristics of the female or risk subordination in status.

The link between stoic self-presentations and manliness is addressed by Mr. Browne, a colleague of Mr. Doyle in this school. Adopting a traditional hegemonic view of masculinity that suggests that boys should assiduously avoid public displays of emotional or physical pain, Mr. Browne commented on the link between displaying 'soft' emotions such as crying and public expectations of masculinity. He said:

> Men are the strong, silent type...tough. They are more worried about their physical attributes...that's the main idea of what a man is, physically strong and so forth, whereas the female is seen as the weaker sex who discusses emotions and cries and so forth; the whole idea of a boy crying in public would lead to ridicule by his peers. *(Mr. Browne)*

It could be argued that the collective opinions of Ms. Ward, Mr. Doyle and Mr. Browne send a clear signal to boys as to what are acceptable emotional displays in the light of the ideals and expectations of hegemonic masculinity within the peer culture of adolescents. The central theme of the message heard by adolescent boys is that one should hide or keep secret one's vulnerabilities and weaknesses in order to secure one of the important constituents of hegemonic masculinity, that is, the stoic self-presentation to manliness. Further guidance for boys in this matter is provided by the way their emotional displays such as crying is handled by Principal, Ms. Boland when they become emotional in her office. In relation to dealing with boys who may express their distress through crying in the principal's office, Ms. Boland made the following statement.

> When an older lad will cry, he will do it for a few seconds or a few minutes and he doesn't want you to see him doing it, so I would usually underplay it and just give him a bit of space and let him get over it without making too big a fuss about it. I would not embarrass him further by highlighting the fact

> that he was upset and I would say 'we will chat when you are ready' rather than ask him 'are you alright?' *(Ms. Boland)*

It should be noted that Ms. Boland feels that she has the interests of the boys at heart when she adopts this approach. Her approach is intended to minimise the distress experienced by the boy in question by ignoring or making 'light of' the outbreak of crying. Despite the well-meaning intentions of the Principal, the message that is sent to the adolescent boy is that 'big boys don't cry'.

6.4 Adolescent Masculinities and Sexuality

The relationship between adolescent masculinities and sexuality was deeply influenced by the spectre of 'gay' identity in this coeducational second-level school. The continuous rejection of 'gay' discourse by boys was highlighted in a multitude of ways through their daily talk, mannerisms and ideology. This matter was addressed by teachers, some of whom have clearly defined views on homosexuality. Commenting on the status of homosexual men in Irish society, Mr. Doyle made the following statement:

> I genuinely think that homosexual men don't have the same status as heterosexual men. I think that there are probably many homosexual men in prominent positions who have not declared their homosexuality for fear that it would damage their reputation. I think that society certainly looks down on homosexual men. *(Mr. Doyle)*

Throughout the school one constantly hears boys call each other gay, faggot or queer. While this word 'gay' is used as a homophobic insult it is also used to describe anything or anyone that students do not like. Commenting on the frequency of boys calling each other 'gay', Mr. Browne, a young teacher at the school noted how the term homosexual conjures images of weakness and is a direct attack on one's masculinity. He commented:

> I think it probably has something to do with the image of the stereotypical gay man which is quite camp and feminine....and it is a way to attack someone's masculinity at a fairly basic level, so you're less of a man than me...so I should be in charge; another bit of a power game and it's also a way of asserting control over somebody. *(Mr. Browne)*

Mr. Browne's description of the stereotypical gay man conjectures images of a masculinity devoid of power and also highlights the powerful relationship between hegemonic masculinity and subordinated gay masculinities. He is also indicating that to be homosexual is, by definition, the opposite of being masculine. Homophobic teasing in this school took many forms such as writing the word 'gay' on student copies, school desks, toilet walls, and in public places. Mr Doyle made the following observation:

> I'm a heterosexual, you're a homosexual, I am a big strong man and you are a weak kind of person, a feminine person or have the characteristics of a feminine person. By writing it down...it is more permanent so it's a bigger insult. It's a way of still insulting and still continuing to present their macho identity to the class without getting caught. *(Mr. Doyle)*

In this school the words faggot and queer were often used to describe a person who was seen to behave or react in any way that was different from a perceived 'macho' image in the mind of the name caller, while the word gay was used to describe anything that was 'not cool' as well as a homosexual male. The term 'gay' was also used, principally by boys, as a generic 'put down' for other boys. It had as much to with failing masculine tasks of competence and strength or anything revealing weakness or femininity, as it did with a sexual identity. Nevertheless, this ongoing homophobic teasing reveals the powerful relationship between adolescent hegemonic masculinity and the spectre of the 'gay' teenage boy that existed within the school.

The link between masculinity and homophobia was referred to by the Principal of the school, Ms. Boland. She observed the anxiety and unease experienced by young boys when they were referred to as 'gay' by their peers. In the following comment she highlights a typical reaction from a young male when this term is applied to him.

> I think they [boys] are so horrified that they would be classed as gay or classed in some way as less-manly, or less-male, that they go out of their way to prove that they are not. I think it is the worst thing for a young boy, and I would say that their biggest fear is that they are gay themselves. And since that is the worst thing for them, they try to pass on the insult to somebody else. It is probably the biggest fear that a boy at a younger age has is that he is gay. *(Ms Boland)*

The fear experienced by adolescent boys who are labelled as homosexual by their peers is highlighted by Ms. Boland who illustrates how boys use projection techniques to move this label onto a neighbouring boy. Certainly in the opinion of Ms. Boland, this is a label that no boy wants, but one that a boy can escape from usually by passing it onto another boy. This is a hot potato that no boy wants to be left holding. This fear is also addressed by Ms. Ward, who in her opinion, believes that parents in general would be horrified if they that discovered their offspring was 'gay'. In her own words, Ms. Ward describes the feelings of parents who discover their child is gay and she expressed the opinion that homosexuality is a rejection of what she considers to be 'normal' in Irish society.

> I think the last thing any boy wants to be is gay, the last thing...and I think, if parents were honest about it, it is probably the last thing that parents want of a son or a daughter; everybody wants a perfect family. And at the end of the day, boys who are gay are so completely different from heterosexual boys that they are easy targets...the last thing you would want to be seen as is gay, and being called gay is a worse insult than being called a girl. I think gay is a rejection of the norm...a lot of gay people are into things that are so completely different from the norm...they are into their style or they are into things that are perceived as being girly, so it's the last thing that they [boys] want to be seen as. *(Ms Ward)*

The personal views expressed by Ms. Ward could be described as stereotypical homophobic and perhaps a little extreme but it is my view that her opinion is representative of many of the conservative and traditional views of teachers, parents and students in this rural part of Ireland. These views reflect the pervasiveness of homophobia in some sections of Irish society.

6.5 Defining Masculinities through Sport

Sport can be seen as a space for influencing the construction, negotiation and performance of masculinities. Football, in particular, can be seen as a key signifier of successful masculinity, and its practices are a major influence on hegemonic masculinities (Swain, 2000). The importance of sport in terms of popularity, particularly amongst boys within this school community was addressed by Ms. Ward, who highlights the significant status gained by boys who play for the school football team. She observed:

> If you are a good footballer or a good basketballer, or what ever is important to the school, I think the chances of you being popular double or triple. Sometimes it's all you need, and I think you are let away with a lot more because you are important to the school. You get a lot more out of it than the guy who is interested in computers, or the girl who is a brilliant dancer or whatever. If you are good at football or if you are good at something that is important to the school...there is a great sense of achievement if you win, and there is a sort of hero worship as well. *(Ms. Ward)*

Ms. Ward's comments reflect the status ordering of the various sports available in this school. Football takes the prime position in this hierarchy and good football players receive many benefits and perks from the institution of the school. Ms. Ward also differentiates between the benefits boys derive from sport as opposed to girls who play similar sports. She comments:

> I would probably always know who the good male footballers in the school are and I can tell you, I don't know who the good female footballers are. You would even hear it in the staffroom who the good male footballers are, you would hear it in the corridors; compared to a girl playing the same sport, there is more status given to the lad. *(Ms. Ward)*

These comments by Ms. Ward reflect how some teachers define masculinity in this school by knowing the names of the good footballers thereby buttressing one of the significant characteristics of hegemonic masculinity.

The hierarchy amongst sports in this school was commented upon by Mr. Lyons who suggested "There is more respect [amongst the boys] for someone who is involved in football than someone who is involved in chess". At the bottom of this hierarchy of sports stands chess alone. The lowly status of chess is highlighted by the reaction of boys when announcements about chess tournaments are heard on the school intercom system. Mr. Lyons describes this reaction:

> When you hear announcements about chess, you will hear sniggering amongst boys throughout the classroom, but when you hear announcements about a football match, the boys listen intently straight away. *(Mr. Lyons)*

It should be noted that many of the football players in the school did not hold chess in high regard. Perhaps this is because football allows boys to develop an embodied masculinity but chess does not. Chess was principally played by quiet, reserved,

middle-class boys (very few girls played the game) and football was predominately a game for working-class boys.

The comments by these teachers show how the school is mirroring society's view of the patriarchal ordering, gender divisions and hierarchies within sport rather than articulating or offering a resistance.

Sporting Masculinities and Physicality

Sport and acting tough on the field of play was linked in the minds of some boys and this association was supported by a comment by Mr. Brennan who is the soccer coach. He commented:

> There have been isolated occasions where players pulled out of challenges, and I've criticised them afterwards telling them about what may have happened in terms of injuries, or what type of negative signs they are giving by behaving in that way, and normally they take it on board and act accordingly, but there are occasions where a boy could get a heavy challenge in the first few minutes of the game...and he is being intimidated by his opponent and therefore he is a bit wary of going into a tackle again...in that case I would normally make a substitution. *(Mr. Brennan)*

These comments suggest that boys are expected to match the physicality of their opponents in competitive soccer games. The penalty for boys who are 'not up for the challenge' (Mr. Brennan's words) was the public removal of the boy from the team to the sideline to be replaced by someone who as Mr. Brennan suggested 'will not let the team down with half-hearted tackles'. As manager of the team, Mr. Brennan makes it explicitly clear to boys that one is expected to 'be a man' on the pitch and this can only be achieved by matching the physicality of the opposition when necessary, to achieve an outcome. Nevertheless, this soccer coach is quick to criticize unfair tackles and unjust play. In essence, he is suggesting that physicality within boundaries is an acceptable dimension as it is a constituent of hegemonic masculinity, particularly within the contact sports arena.

Differentiating between Gaelic Football and soccer, the teacher in charge of the Gaelic team, Mr. Doyle noted that Gaelic footballers are tougher and more masculine than their soccer counterparts. He remarked:

> Soccer would be seen by Gaelic players as being a less physical sport and a certain amount of soccer players would be very.....you know....modelling underwear and this kind of carry-on....it wouldn't be considered to be very masculine behaviour. Gaelic footballers on the other hand, are very masculine; they wouldn't be seen on an advertisement for moisturiser or something like that. *(Mr. Doyle)*

These remarks by Mr. Doyle indicate a differentiation amongst various sporting masculinities. His comments reveal what he considers to be appropriate masculine behaviour and his views on masculinity are obvious to his students, thereby influencing their perception of 'acceptable' masculinities in this school. Mr. Doyle also introduces a hierarchy of sporting masculinities with Gaelic Football players at the top and suggested that Gaelic Footballers are very masculine and do not engage in quasi-masculine behaviour such as using facial creams or moisturiser. The link between adolescent masculinities and toughness on the sports field was alluded to by Mr. Lyons who stated:

> Again that's where the physical aspect comes in; the whole idea of masculinity and being able to hold your own especially in competitions between schools. The whole idea of coming up against another school and finding out who is the physically stronger team, who is the better group...for that age group it is a huge thing...physically stronger and physically more skilful, things like that are very important to young males. *(Mr. Lyons)*

These comments by Mr. Lyons indicate that competitive sports can provide a way of measuring a boy's masculine accomplishment against other boys and therefore act as a major signifier of masculinity. The attributes of physicality and bodily strength, referred to by Mr. Lyons could be seen as contributing to a dominant mode of masculinity.

Positive Aspects of Sporting Masculinities

The positive aspects of sports in relation to promoting 'good' behaviour amongst boys in school was commented upon by a number of teachers, for example, Ms.

Ward, Mr. Brennan and Mr. Doyle. Generally speaking these observations suggested that sport increases the self-esteem of boys and helps to develop self-discipline in young men. For example, Ms. Ward commented:

> I think sport gives them discipline, a healthy sense of teamwork; I think they get an awful lot from it. It shows that they have a positive hobby outside of school as opposed to going out, and maybe drinking. They might put football *in front of* studying their homework but they won't give you any discipline problems, that's what I find, they are usually kind of nice, genuine guys as opposed to the student who goes out at the weekend and drinks, and they are the ones that cause you the most trouble. *(Ms. Ward)*

By reflecting on the positive aspects of sports, Ms. Ward is also revealing her own favouritism towards boys who play sport and in turn is elevating the status of the 'sporting' boys above others in her classroom. She is indirectly privileging the sporting boys over the academic boys in her classroom. Her views on this subject suggest that she is complicit with the construction of hegemonic masculinity in the school.

Mr. Brennan outlined the benefits of playing sport especially for boys who are academically weak and have constantly experienced failure in the classroom environment. He observed that there is a lot to be gained from being seen as very sporting especially if you are not as strong academically. He commented:

> A lot of these boys experience failure in the classroom or have been told they are not good at various subjects, they are not succeeding in school whereas they do know that they have a level of ability on the sporting field that does compensate for that. *(Mr. Brennan)*

Success on the sporting field allows boys who are seen as 'academic failures' to earn bonus points from their peers and thereby creating an opportunity to develop an 'acceptable' sporting masculinity. It should be pointed out that many of the academically weak students find it very difficult to develop an 'acceptable' academic masculinity, something that is promoted and cherished by schools. Mr. Brennan observed that the sporting field provides a saving grace for these boys who may "go through their school career experiencing nothing but failure and having nothing to bolster their confidence and self-esteem".

Both Mr. Brennan and Mr. Doyle made reference to the benefits of sport in developing friendships and inclusiveness amongst boys. Mr. Brennan observed that he "noticed students who have been quiet in class and have tended to be loners change when on the football field and now interact more with their peers". A similar point was articulated by Mr. Doyle who noted that boys:

> Actually let their guard down around each other on a team; they know they depend on each other in order to win the game and they allow themselves to become closer to the lads on their team; they look out for each other on the field. *(Mr. Doyle)*

Mr. Doyle and Mr. Brennan are suggesting that there is something about being part of a team that allows the emotional side of male students to develop. Mr. Doyle feels boys can develop a sense of responsibility to each other and a sense of what is right. He noted that they display a sense of caring for the common good of the team and this spirit of caring might transfer from the field to elsewhere.

6.6 Power and Adolescent Masculinities

Power is important in the construction of masculinities and this was noted by Ms. Ryan, a young female teacher in the school. She highlighted how the power balance between teacher and student could be altered by boys who challenge classroom rules. Speaking about boys telling stories in the corridors about how they challenged teachers in the classroom, she commented:

> The story relayed back in the corridor was a much different story to what truly happened in the classroom.....when one boy starts telling a story the others seem to join in, so they can be part of the story; they seem to have a power thing. If they can make comments in the classroom and get at the teacher, then they will have power over the teacher, and they will have a story to tell at break-time. *(Ms. Ryan)*

These comments from Ms. Ryan demonstrate the relationship between power and resistance in the classroom. Power, as Foucault (1980) notes, is fundamentally relational and operates through interactions which are mobile and constantly changing. Where there is power, there is also resistance and the two go together,

inextricable linked. Within the social fabric of the classroom the battle for power between teacher and students is played out on a daily basis. Mr. Browne, commentating on the constant struggle for power within the classroom made the following observation:

> I think most of it is about power, about having power over a situation. If you can manipulate things so the teacher isn't in control...you're in control of the class by default. *(Mr. Browne)*

These comments reflect the classical 'top dog' analogy. In essence, being in control equates to power. Mr. Browne also commented:

> It is power over everybody because in some ways the teacher is the leader of the class and they will try and challenge that; they want to be in charge. They don't want the teacher in charge; they want to be in charge. There are always a certain number of boys who want to be in charge, who want power over a situation, and when they are not, they will often try and disrupt the lesson because they feel that if they are not in charge; they are not valued. *(Mr. Browne)*

The issue of sexual power within the classroom was addressed by Ms. Ryan, who commented on how boys use sexual comments to exercise power over female teachers and female students during lessons. She stated:

> You will often notice that when one boy makes a negative or sexual comment and maybe get a laugh from it, and then the class would settle down, then another boy would have to try and better that comment...get in there....he couldn't be seen to let the first boy win the day. *(Ms. Ryan)*

While the comments from Ms. Ryan reflect boys' desire to impress each other and their demands for attention from peers, these comments also make a statement about power. Power was a central theme in verbal duels between male students. These were common place in the school between adolescent boys and usually took place in classrooms, corridors, and public spaces. Referred to as 'slagging matches' by the boys, the objective of this game was to belittle your opponent by out witting him with quick insults and negative comments, thereby gaining popularity and status amongst your peers. Ms. Ward describes how the power balance changes between the winner and the loser in these verbal duels. She described it in this way:

> I think it's a kind of 'in order for me to win, you have to lose'. I think it is confidence more so than power, confidence in their ability to put other people down, it means they are better, or they have won, so it's more a self-assurance thing. *(Ms. Ward)*

Ms. Ward's comments reflect the fragility of certain masculinities and also illustrate the central place of power in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Observing that power is one of the characteristics of masculinity, Principal, Ms. Boland, made the following observation:

> It [power] is certainly a mark of masculinity; it is certainly a status. Take the game of rugby, isn't that very much a power thing? Or the ability to get what you want by buying it, or demand respect by the way you present yourself, as a man I am talking about. That's very much a mark of power and I suppose money does buy power and that's the way men sometimes express their masculinity. *(Ms. Boland)*

This comment by the Principal highlights the relationship between masculinity and economic power, respect and recognition.

Masculine Power and Control of Public Space

Boys' use of power to dominate public spaces within the school such as corridors, basketball courts and games rooms to the detriment of girls was commented upon by the Principal, Ms. Boland who highlighted the inequalities that exist:

> If you look at the basketball courts – it's a boy's space...where do the girls hang around? They hang around the canteen but boys would feel quite free to walk through it, but girls will not go out to an area where there are a lot of boys already out there, but boys don't mind coming in to where girls are. *(Ms. Boland)*

Ms. Boland is clearly conscious of how the power dynamic operates between boys and girls in this school, but in accepting the unjust situation she is complicit in the acceptance and constructing of hegemonic masculinity. Girls' rights to public space are eroded as they are often brushed aside in corridors and on the basketball courts. Many boys seem to assume that their own maleness gives them rights which girls

would be foolish to challenge. It is an assumption of privilege that boys come first (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996).

In this school there were public spaces which were dominated by boys. I asked Ms. Boland to articulate why girls are reluctant to go into areas of the school which are perceived as 'boys' space' by the majority of students, particularly areas around the basketball courts. Commenting upon why girls are hesitant to go into public spaces which are seen as 'boys' space', she said:

> I think you would have some comments [from boys] and then you would be observed and then maybe a laugh or maybe too much notice; they [girls] might be seen as too flirty. I think women don't like to be seen to be making the moves either; a lot of them won't go and be seen to be out-there [basketball courts] because the other women will say 'they are only hanging around with the lads'. *(Ms Boland).*

When it was put to Ms. Boland that some boys kick the ball against the wall as the girls walk past thereby creating a hierarchy of power by intimidating the girls, she questioned my interpretation of the situation and suggested:

> Is it their way of showing off by kicking the ball? Is it the peacock element and are they trying to draw attention to themselves to get some form of notice from the women? And maybe it's a way of drawing attention to yourself and getting noticed. *(Ms. Boland)*

These comments reflect the acceptance of boy' space within the environs of the school, admittedly with some caveats by the Principal of the school. It could be argued that Ms. Boland comments suggests that the needs of boys take priority to girls, thereby allowing boys to buttress their hegemonic masculine identity by demonstrating power over and control of girls.

The policing and controlling of these public spaces by boys with the use of sexual innuendo to discourage girls from entering these areas is evident from the comments by the Principal. Further evidence of boys controlling public space is found in the Games Room. This room was set up as a uni-sex room for students during lunch-hour but is now almost completely dominated by boys. My observations revealed that very few girls avail of this room or the facilities that exist within it. This point

was brought to the attention of Principal, Ms. Boland, who agreed in principle with my observation and commented that "the only girls that go in there are maybe girls who are going out with other lads and the lads invite them in". As a consequence of this situation, boys are allowed to dominate public spaces in this school which prevents girls from fully participating in and making use of school resources in developing their own lives.

The power balance between boys and girls in the school and the wider issue of power in society was commented upon by Mr. Doyle, who suggested.

> In general, boys do believe that they are better than girls. It starts off when they are small...boys are better than girls at games and eventually it becomes ingrained. If you look around society you will see that most of the people who hold power are men...the majority of government ministers are men, managers of companies, leaders...they tend to be men. In society there is a bias towards male dominance and you could nearly *forgive boys* for thinking that males are more successful and are entitled to be more successful than girls *(Mr. Doyle).*

This opinion expressed by Mr. Doyle suggests that he is compliant in the construction of hegemonic masculinity and his view of this subject is likely to be projected onto the boys who see him as a role model. Through his actions boys and girls can sense the 'boys first' approach and recognize the power all around them.

The boy/girl power balance was also addressed by Ms. Ward when asked why boys occasionally refer to other boys as girls. She contextualised the term with the following statement. "I think to be a man is to be able to do something, 'I am able to climb the tree, you're not; I'm tougher, I'm better, I'm faster, I'm quicker, I'm stronger' as opposed to 'I'm weak, I'm sensitive'...they are the opposite adjectives".

The comments by the principal, Ms. Boland, and teachers Mr. Doyle and Ms. Ward, reflect traditional views of gender binaries and contribute to the reproduction of a gender inequality regime in this school. In should be noted that the female Principal, Ms. Boland and her colleague Ms. Ward are unwittingly underwriting hegemonic masculinity which promotes compliance and service, subservience and constant accommodation to the needs and desires of males. While these teachers were aware

of the inequalities that existed, they did not feel the need to resist the traditional gender order in the school.

6.7 Conclusion

When assessing the evidence presented in this study, one must not underestimate the power of populist discourses that circulate in and inform the lives of teachers and students. Nevertheless the evidence from this study of teachers' perceptions of masculinities suggests that teachers should make themselves more aware of their assumptions about masculinities and gender. Perhaps, unknown to themselves, they are helping to construct masculinities and femininities in particular ways in this second-level coeducational school.

Some of the opinions expressed by teachers suggest that they feel it is important to police and maintain the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity and steer boys away from perceived feminine attributes. Certainly, certain practices such as crying are not presented as legitimate masculine options for boys by some of the teachers. This shows some of the negative constraints that the particular version of masculinity prevalent in this school can impose.

From the narratives revealed in this chapter it is obvious that some teachers, both male and female, are complicit in the support and construction of hegemonic masculinity in this site. This chapter also gives some insight into how girls experience masculinity in this school. It reveals the power relationships and inequalities that exist amongst boys and between males and females.

7

Discussion and Final Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This research investigated teenage boys' construction, negotiation and experiences of masculinity in a rural coeducational second-level school in Ireland and examined the influence of peers and school experiences on their perception of masculinities. It also explored and critiqued the policing of masculinities by students and teachers in this rural second-level school. In this chapter the findings will be revisited drawing on Gender Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis to ascertain some of the ways in which boys learn to establish their masculinities at this site within the constantly shifting parameters of social practices, routines and human interactions. My analysis is informed by an understanding of masculinities as social practices or relations that are negotiated in fluid and complex ways in the daily lives of boys. I am conscious of Krenichyn's (1999) argument which suggests that from the classroom to the home, teenage boys negotiate their self-concepts and gender identities, changing their performance of masculinity depending on the places and spaces that they inhabit from one moment to the next.

This thesis is framed within a social constructivist paradigm suggesting that gender is socially constructed and that gendered identities are the result of both boys own agency and also coercion by society's unwritten rules. From a sociological perspective, our masculine or feminine identity is shaped by "biology [that] provides the raw materials, while society and history provide the context [and] the instruction manual that we follow to construct our identities" (Kimmel, 2000, p. 87). Schools constitute a significant part in the construction of gendered identities. They have been compared to "old fashioned factories" producing gendered individuals as a result of both the official and hidden curricula that operate within them (Kimmel, 2000, p. 151).

In this research I view masculinities through a constructivist lens with the proviso that in any culture at a given moment certain gender constructions and behaviours are dominant and hence considered normative for that culture. I view masculinities through the perspective of my own identity as a middle-aged, middle-class, heterosexual male who teaches in the school at which this research was carried out. Rather than offering generalisations, I recognise the inherent limitations of this in-depth case study and instead present my research as personally and theoretically informed interpretations of the discourses and practices that were at play in this specific school at the time of the study.

As a researcher, I am conscious that schools are shaped by specific socio-cultural, politico-economic, and historic conditions (Swain, 2006), and second-level school is an arena for identity formation and a primary hub of social life in adolescence. During the second-level school years masculinities remain strongly influenced by the processes and practices of schooling, despite the increasing influence of the wider social world (Paechter, 2007). Individual personnel, rules, routines and expectations all have a profound impact on the way adolescent boys experience their life at school. The students' lives are, to a large extent, shaped by the structure and practices of the school. Subsequently, schools are agents in the construction of masculinities (Salisbury and Jackson, 1996). A boy attending this school is likely to compare himself to the particular types of gender relations and masculinities that exist in this specific school. Each individual school has its own gender regime (Kessler *et al.* 1995) that creates different options and opportunities to perform different types of masculinity. The role that the situational specific dynamics of this school plays in the enacting of particular masculinities will be critiqued and analysed.

Specifically, in this chapter, I draw conclusions about the complex practices and sets of relations that enable boys to cultivate for themselves a recognisable masculine identity, as boys, within the context of the second-level school environment. As researcher I am also conscious that the style of masculinity in a given school often reflects the surrounding community. Since as Skeleton (1996) argues that not all schools 'operate within identical constraints', a case study of this nature is useful in drawing attention to specific practices and strategies that are deployed in maintaining

particular forms of masculinity in the daily lives of boys in this particular site. This chapter attempts to draw some conclusions about the nature of the lives of adolescent boys as they negotiate the complex and often contradictory terrain in their development of a desirable masculine identity.

In doing so this chapter also attempts to articulate and critique the discourses informing boys understanding of masculinities using theories developed by Connell (1995, 2000, 2002) as a framework. Connell asserts that gender is structured relationally and hierarchically and consists of multiple masculinities. His idea of "hegemonic masculinity" is one of the most influential constructs in theorising masculinity. Rather than arguing that there is a dominant or main role for masculinity, Connell (1995) argues the hegemonic masculinity occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations and is multiple, fluid, and always contested. Connell's theory outlines a hierarchy of masculinity within which men, and boys for that matter, are caught. This contested hierarchy of power includes complicit masculinities, or the men that do not adhere to all the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity but nonetheless benefit from it; subordinated masculinities or mostly gay men who are suppressed by the definition of hegemonic masculinity; and marginal masculinities or men who have gender power but lack power in other areas such as race, ethnicity, class, and so on.

This chapter will now examine and critique the findings of my research by firstly outlining the general trends in relation to masculine formation in this second-level coeducational school and secondly by exploring and drawing some conclusions about the underlying culture that contributes to masculine construction in this site relative to the literature.

7.2 Summary of Findings

Scholars of masculinity like Kimmel (2003) have documented the centrality of homophobic insults to masculinity especially in school settings. He argues that homophobic teasing often characterises masculinity in adolescence and early adulthood. Fieldwork, informal-observations and interviews in this case study suggest that in the minds of many boys, masculinity is not just defined by what it is

but rather what it is not. The antithesis of masculinity was identified with girlishness and homosexuality. The fear of unmanliness and its link to homosexuality was central to most boys' understandings of their masculinity in this school. This concurs with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) suggestion that "patterns of masculinity are socially defined in contradistinction from some model (whether real or imaginary) of femininity" (p. 848).

In other words many of the boys and some of the teachers interviewed defined masculinity within a set of cultural practices that involved a rejection of behaviours that they perceived to be markers of homosexuality. Owens (1987) has argued that homophobia is not primarily an instrument for oppressing a sexual minority; it is rather, a powerful tool for regulating the entire spectrum of male relations. It became apparent through the interviews that I conducted that homophobia functions in boys' lives as a means of confirming masculinity. Many boys were seen to engage in the continuous rejection of traditionally feminine and homosexual attributes or behaviours and this rejection has serious consequences for the construction and regulation of adolescent masculinities.

The greatest fear for many boys in this coeducational second-level school was the threat of being called 'gay*' or 'faggot*'. The practice of boys calling other boys gay was commonplace, occurring on a daily basis. It could be heard in the corridors, the canteen and in the classroom. By publicly labelling young boys as 'gay' and suggesting that their actions or mannerisms are 'out of place', students are helping to make public space 'straight' in this school. I noticed that students were constantly monitoring each other, and making distance between themselves and what was regarded as 'gay'. My observation is buttressed by research by Lodge and Lynch (2004) and McSharry (2009) in Irish second-level schools, who noted similar social intolerance towards people who were gay or lesbian.

*See Glossary for explanation of slang.

Appropriate Masculine Emotions

Some boys and teachers, both male and female, expressed the view that softness, vulnerability and emotional expression might mark a boy as being gay or girly. Both labels were considered insulting and stigmatizing by boys and the greater school community. This view stems from the belief that disclosing 'soft' feelings, emotions, and vulnerabilities is an indication of weakness and therefore should not be exhibited by boys particularly 'macho boys'. Mac an Ghaill (1994) argues that to escape the association with femininity and homosexuality many boys develop heterosexist attitudes characterised by a strong need to distinguish or distance oneself from weakness and femininity. Many of the boys in the study showed an overt disdain for anything that might appear soft. Boys who displayed evidence of softness or vulnerability were viewed by certain boys, for example 'macho* boys' as having characteristics that were not only antithetical to being 'manly' but also highly undesirable. This behaviour can be partly explained by exploring Phillips (1993) argument that many boys abandon emotional connection and emotional involvement in the search for the key to masculine power and see toughness as the price to be paid for being male.

A number of boys referred to things that they perceived girls do, for example, seventeen year old Seamus, who is a member of the football team, commented "you are telling everybody your feelings and that you are kind of sensitive and that's not really macho". As Kimmel (1994) argues, "Peers are a kind of gender police, constantly threatening to unmask us as feminine, as sissies" (p.132) and many boys in this study experienced tensions between expressing emotions in school and 'appropriate forms of masculinity'.

Hegemonic Masculinity

A small but significant group of boys in this school engaged their bodies in ways that enacted or performed hegemonic versions of masculinities. These boys engaged in an outward encoding of masculinity beyond the level of spoken language – a "macho posturing" (Measor and Woods, 1984). Essentially, the body is, and operates as, "a communicative site for the construction of masculinity" (Nayak and Kehily, 1996, p.

221), and a key feature of this behaviour is the exuding of "a hyper-masculinity through a range of exaggerated dramatisations and body styling forms" (Nayak and Kehily, 1996, p. 225). For instance, there were a few boys who deliberately cultivated aggressive, 'macho' forms of behaviour, which they saw as a way of establishing their masculine authority. These boys were predominately from working-class backgrounds and were in the process of developing embodied masculinities based on toughness.

Boys were often admired for slagging* (verbal sparring) within certain peer groups in this school, and the ability to 'hold your own' in a slagging match was seen as an important way of gaining and maintaining status. As Kessler *et al.* (1985) shows this particular form of behaviour is based on a system of verbal abuse and put downs in which a hierarchy of masculinities is established. Lyman (1987) argues that verbal sparring or 'slagging' is an effective way of teaching young boys to control their emotions – one of the primary values of hegemonic masculinity.

Power, Sexism and Gender Inequality

My informal observations and comments from teachers revealed how boys constantly jockey for dominance within the male peer group. Some boys engaged in practices of differentiation which were operational in certain peer groups in terms of how boys rate each other in the hierarchical power ladder. This was a competitive game where the most ruthless and daring boy rose to the top. It clearly highlights Foucault's (1980) observation that power does not belong to one person or another, to one group or another, nor is it based on one factor such as money, education or ancestry; rather, people negotiate power in each discursive interaction.

Some of the boys in this study used sexism as a means of taking control of public areas in the school. This was referred to by a teacher, Ms. Ryan in one of the interviews, who noted that boys control public areas of the school such as the basketball courts during the lunch break. She observed that many girls who play basketball seldom use the courts when boys are present and commented "there is a shyness or lack of self-esteem for them to go and play in the same area as the lads". The Principal of the school, Ms. Boland agreed with my suggestion that boys control

the basketball courts and said "I think you are right; it's a domination of space". It certainly was an example of masculine domination of public space within the school setting where the school authorities were aware of the problem but chose not to put measures in place to rectify it. It could be argued that women like Ms. Boland actively participate in the reproduction of traditional masculinity through a set of micro-practices that contribute to the construction of a more hegemonic and resistant patriarchy.

In relation to the unisex Games Room, which is predominately frequented by boys, I suggested to Ms. Ryan that some boys make remarks about girls who use this facility thereby making this space uncomfortable for girls. Ms. Ryan agreed and stated that "they [girls] don't want comments made about their sexuality if they play football or pool". Griffin (1996) observes that homophobia is more than the fear of gays and lesbians; it is a powerful political weapon of sexism and girls who play male dominated sports endure intense scrutiny about their sexual identity. The comments by Ms. Ryan and my observations would suggest that some boys in this school use sexism to control entry into certain public areas of the school.

Defining Masculinities through Sport

The importance of sport in the formation of masculinities has been recognised by a number of writers (see, for example, Mac and Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1995, 1996, 2000; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Martino, 1999; Skelton, 2000; Swain, 2000). Sport is a major signifier of masculinity and a significant site where masculinity is constructed and confirmed. Some boys in this study defined their masculinity through action and the most esteemed and prevalent resource that the boys drew on to gain status was physicality usually in the form of strength, power, fitness and speed. In essence, the physical performance aspect of masculinity was seen by some boys as the most acceptable and desirable way of being male (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). In other words masculinity is brought into existence through performance (Swain, 2006), and in the eyes of many boys physical prowess seemed to be, and was seen as a rite of passage to manhood.

This research has shown that sport not only provides a way of measuring a boy's masculine accomplishment against classmates, but also against the wider world of boys. Sporting competition with other boys, such as interschool leagues provided a stage for establishing oneself both as individual and as appropriately masculine. It also provided a mechanism to establish a pecking order amongst boys and an opportunity for boys to police and validate the masculinity of each others' bodies.

Many boys in this school valued physical strength in the ideal male image. Bodily strength is an important resource in a physical team game such as football where an arena is created to allow the boys to test their toughness, skill and stamina against the opposing team. McSharry (2009) notes that the policing of boys' bodies by other boys takes place through the medium of physical activities and physical challenges rather than verbal dialogue. She suggests this practice perpetuates the "notion that boys should express feelings through displays of physical power and suppress airing their feelings in discursive dialogue" (p. 130).

Physicality and athleticism particularly in relation to team sports like Gaelic Football was cherished in this school and was used as a valuable resource to buttress a hegemonic form of masculinity. In these games the ability to withstand bodily pain was frequently put to the test and it was important for boys to refrain from showing weakness by admitting to the feeling of pain. Showing weakness or admitting to pain was equated with being a 'wimp' or a 'sissy' and tended to undermine their 'macho' image in the eyes of their peers and team mates.

7.3 Exploring the School Culture that leads to Homophobia

The negative identity assigned to homosexuality in this school was revealed in comments by a young male teacher's description of why students bitterly resent being called 'gay'. Mr. Doyle suggested "In society at large homosexuality does not have wide acceptance, so to be labelled gay or homosexual, whether it's true or not, would cause discomfort. The fear would be that this label would stick". This stark denunciation that homosexuality is outside the bounds of acceptable masculinity is buttressed by the notion that being 'gay' is associated with weakness, inferiority and

femininity. Another teacher in the school Mr. Lyons described the negative attributes ascribed to homosexuality in the following way:

> I think it's the idea of anything that is kind of feminine, any sign of femininity especially in a boy of that age is looked on as weak. The ideal male is someone who is good at sports, is able to get on with his mates, be at the head of the pecking order, is physically strong so anything that deviates away from that...anything that is emotional or weak...the whole idea of homosexuality is almost the complete opposite to their image of what they believe the perfect young man should be. *(Mr. Lyons)*

These comments clearly suggest a stratification of masculinities with heterosexual masculinity receiving privileged treatment. Both teachers' comments also indicate that heterosexuality is seen as the norm through which everything else is defined. These remarks buttress Renold's (2006) observation that hegemonic heterosexual performances are maintained through the shaming and policing of 'other' sexual/gender practices. Therefore to be a 'real boy' would involve desiring or growing up to desire the opposite sex, such is the power of heterosexual imaginary.

The views expressed by Mr. Doyle and Mr. Lyons are supported by Connell (1995) who notes that within the framework of hegemonic masculinities there are specific relations of dominance and sub-ordination played out between different groups of men. In these interactions, heterosexuality assumes a dominant status, while homosexuality acquires a subordinate position in the sex/gender hierarchy. It could be argued that the views expressed by these teachers make hetero-masculinity normal and ordinary for boys in this school and alternative sexualities are therefore viewed as deviant. This corresponds with research by Epstein and Johnson (1998) that illuminated the institutionalisation of heterosexuality in schools. Ferfolja (2007) suggests that although often unintended by individual members of organisations, heterosexuality and masculinity are institutionally privileged at the expense of other sexual and gender identities. In this paradigm, a dominant masculinity is automatically assumed to be heterosexual.

It was common practice for boys to subordinate other boys who were perceived to fall short of the masculinity considered to be socially and culturally superior. This subordination was invariably achieved through heterosexist practices and associating

the boys who 'don't measure up' with the feminine side of the male/female polarity, and denigrating them as weak and inferior, or homosexual (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). I heard these remarks on a daily basis in the Social Areas and corridors of the school. Speaking about the nature of these remarks, Ms. Ward commented upon what she regularly heard in the Second Year Locker Area, she said, "Sexual put-downs like 'gay', you hear that a lot, also 'Faggot, get out of my way' is another common one". Ms. Ward's observations are supported by a recent study by Barron and Bradford (2007) of fifteen young men aged 16 to 25 years who attended a LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People) youth project in Dublin which showed overt homophobic bullying in a school context mainly in the form of name calling (e.g. 'faggot', 'bender', 'queer') and/or physical violence.

'Real Boys' and 'Gay Boys'

It should also be noted that a boy who calls someone gay, even in fun, is implying that he himself is not, and therefore asserts his own masculinity by subordinating and belittling the masculinity of another. Indeed there seemed to be a need for some boys in this study to demonstrate and perform their heterosexuality for fear that it might be deemed absent.

Any boy in this school could temporarily earn the label 'gay' in a given social space or interaction. The term gay was a mobile one, but certainly an identity that no boy appeared to want. Boys constantly tried to put another in the 'gay' position by lobbing the gay nickname at one another. The title 'gay' was a hot potato that no boy wanted to be left holding. My informal observations revealed that most boys went to the trouble to be seen to be openly heterosexual. This was partly because any form of sexual 'deviant' behaviour would be immediately pounced on by other boys in the school. Consequently, most boys found it necessary to continually state and re-state their position to ward off the biggest humiliation of all, the accusation of being gay.

The consequence of this homophobic environment was that all public and visible expressions of masculinity display in school hallways and classrooms were heterosexual in character. None of the boys I witnessed rejected these highly valued

ways of being a heterosexual young man in this school. It would take great courage and independence to resist these prevailing conventions and norms of heterosexual masculinity. This begs the question as to the costs for any boy willing to confront, oppose and indeed expose the conspicuous homophobic culture evident in this school.

Heterosexuality was the norm in this school and in my opinion, the outwardly gay body would generally be seen by teachers as being problematic. The wearing of a school uniform was compulsory in this school, however students could find ways of altering school uniform or wearing them in such a way that suggests a non-heterosexual orientation if they wished. As researcher I did not observe any male students whose behaviours or mannerisms would suggest that they were obviously non-heterosexual. I would suggest that this is because the school as an institution restricted the style of masculinities that could be constructed and performed there by supporting a dominant heterosexual practice. I would argue that within this traditional and conservative school community everyone exerted a disciplinary gaze on everyone else, thus ensuring conformity to the collective constructed concept of heterosexual masculinity. In effect, the school processes and school ideology, creates a site for the enactment of heterosexual masculinities to the detriment of homosexual masculinities. The evidence from this case study suggests that heterosexuality is constituted and consolidated in the everyday practices of young men in this school and the institution of the school has the effect of consolidating and validating a particular form of masculinity.

The school did, however, follow best practice guidelines in its policies and procedures pertaining to sexuality and homophobic bullying. Posters about homophobia were placed on notice boards in the corridors and students were constantly sanctioned and disciplined for using homophobic expressions. While there was a systematic way to record homophobic bullying such as Misbehaviour Reports, in general, homophobic name-calling was dealt with by individual teachers, and is some cases was not officially reported. Perhaps this was because some teachers may have been entrenched with hetero-sexism and may be unaware of the detrimental effects of homophobia.

7.4 Acceptable Masculine Emotions in this School?

Most boys tended to act in a particular way, displaying traditional forms of masculinity and avoiding behaviours that may be considered effeminate by their peers and indeed by some teachers. For many boys the consequences of failing to live up to an acceptable standard of masculinity was to risk losing their masculine status within the culture of the school. One outcome of this behaviour was that many boys believed that they must deny or conceal important aspects of their personality in order to display a desirable masculinity, believing it was by talking tough that boys get status and respect.

Many of the boys interviewed were cautious about showing soft feelings, vulnerability or tearfulness out of fear that their masculinity or sexuality might be questioned by other boys. Colin, a Fifth Year student suggested that "It would be more feminine to talk about your feelings", while Toss, a working-class Leaving Certificate student noted that a lad who talks about emotions or feelings "would lower his standing amongst his friends. They would think he was too soft". It is likely that some boys deliberately hid their soft feelings and elevated robust masculine aspects of their character such as toughness and hardness, in order to gain approval and acceptance from their peers.

These views expressed by Toss and Colin support Chodorow's (1978) observation that emotional detachment helps to maintain both clear identity boundaries and the norms of hegemonic masculinity. They also concur with Connell's (1996) theory that many boys learn to establish their masculinity in opposition to femininity. These views illustrate that many adolescent boys define their masculinity within a set of cultural and social practices which involve a rejection and denigration of what they consider to be feminine attributes (Butler, 1996). This style of masculinity helps to maintain the dominant gender order. The suppression and rejection of certain emotions can stem from a fear of appearing unmanly in front of their peers. It could be argued that some of these boys have a weak grip on their own masculine identity and find it difficult to tolerate any deviation from a traditional robust masculine image.

The views expressed by Colin and Toss were not shared by all boys in the school. Some boys believed that it was acceptable to talk about emotions publicly especially amongst close friends. Jim, a sixteen year old academic student from a middle-class background, was a typical example. He expressed the view that he would be comfortable telling his close friends about his feelings "soft or otherwise" and has often done so. Perhaps Jim's comments reflect the shaping influences of the social construction of masculinities and social class in the complex making of gendered identities.

Jim's friend Pat noted that some of the 'hardy lads' would not make 'a skit out of you' [his words] if you talked about your feelings to them on a one-to-one basis but once they are with their friends and 'they will ridicule you'. This comment suggests that some boys devalue the emotional aspects of the male persona and tend to hide their emotions and vulnerabilities in order not to be shamed in front of their peers. This internalised interpretation of masculinity makes it difficult for these boys to acknowledge their emotional needs and perpetuates the stereotypical myth that it is only acceptable for girls and women to possess and express emotions. This is part of the price that boys' pay in their pursuit of this form of masculinity. These boys may believe that they are affirming their masculine identity by avoiding a public display of vulnerability.

For many boys the emotions and behaviours considered most inappropriate, and most highly stigmatized, were those associated with what are considered as feminine expressions of intimacy like the private world of feelings and emotions. Expressing emotions was seen as signifying weakness and was devalued by the majority of boys, whereas emotional detachment signifies strength and was valued. Fear of appearing effeminate can contribute to boys displaying aggressive masculinities as a defence mechanism against the perceived threat of humiliation from others. Since many boys felt obliged to maintain an unconcerned and tough demeanour, they had to steer clear of both displaying emotion and concern for others. This style of masculinity is likely to prove deeply problematic in terms of human relations and interdependency.

The double edged nature of these feeling rules did not go unnoticed by some boys who expressed the notion that it is 'easier for girls as they are allowed to speak about

their feelings'. An excerpt from an interview with Steve, a sixteen year old Transition Year student, is representative of these views. He commented: "A girl would be more open to her emotions...like be able to talk about it and feel good after talking about it, whereas a lad would just feel worse...and it would be seen as a sign of weakness by other lads and they would slag him over it". While accepting that these rules allowed a boy to affirm a particular style of masculinity, it is at the expense of being restricted in expressing one's feelings and vulnerabilities.

Consequences of Breaking the Norm

It was common for boys and teachers to anticipate that public ridicule would follow if a boy openly displayed vulnerability in this school setting. Just before Easter, Ms. Ward came across two twelve year old boys fighting in the corridor. One boy had his opponent in a head lock and after Ms. Ward broke up the fight, she could see that one boy was injured. In the public arena of the corridor this boy refused to admit he was hurt, despite the fact that he obviously was. To show that he was easily hurt or to 'cry like a girl' would quickly identify this boy as being 'soft' in the eyes of the surrounding group of onlookers. Ms. Ward suggested that he adapted this stance because "He could be seen as sensitive [if he admitted he was hurt], and as a young lad that would be the worse thing that you could be seen to be, is sensitive to anything". This incident provides a glimpse into the type of masculine characteristics that were valued by some boys in this school setting.

The incident also resonates with Seidler's (2007) argument that many boys and men have devalued the emotional, both in themselves and others, and have fallen victim to culturally prescribed standards of masculinity, whereby boys and men hide their emotions and vulnerabilities in order not to be shamed in front of others. This perception has resulted in boys and men keeping the pain they experience in their lives hidden within private spheres where they are free from the threat of being perceived as vulnerable or insecure. Consequently some boys may feel that they are affirming their masculinity by hiding their vulnerabilities or refusing to seek help from others. This suppression and rejection of certain emotions can leave boys feeling isolated from others and reluctant to talk about how they truly feel.

The injured boy in this case deliberately avoided displaying any emotion that his male peers might associate with either femininity or homosexuality. This style of masculinity encourages boys to reject, as feminine, a wide range of characteristics that are simply part of 'normal' human behaviour. The suppression of feminine emotions can be seen as a means of establishing individual masculinity as the masculine ideal involves detachment and independence. It was clear from the comments of many of the boys and teachers interviewed in this school that masculinity is constructed in relation to and against femininity and subordinated forms of masculinity.

The Role of Verbal Sparring in Establishing a Desirable Masculinity

The daily practices of some boys in this school suggested that they considered horseplay, teasing, mocking, and shoving other boys around as natural and everyday aspects of manly behaviour. Amongst certain groups of boys, particularly working class boys, it was standard practice to engage in abusive language, direct personal castigation, and traditional all-male banter such as scornful humour. This activity, referred to as 'slagging' by the boys, ranged from face-to-face verbal interaction covering anything from friendly messing and teasing to highly personalised attacks. It could be a private affair between two individuals but was more likely to be a public exhibition involving whole groups.

In essence, horseplay, taunting, slagging and shoving around other boys affirmed a boy's masculine status. At the same time, reciprocating such behaviour was necessary to sustain (or restore) the victim's masculine status. This challenge and response sets in motion a self-perpetuating cycle. Walking away from the cycle would mark a boy as 'girly' or 'gay'. This style of masculinity puts a premium on toughness and force. Taunting and teasing seemed to play a dual role in establishing boys' masculinity. These practices provided opportunities for boys to assert, test, and improve on their own and one another's masculinities.

A number of boys talked about how important their reputation was, and a good reputation, as far as they were concerned, was gained by standing up for oneself, acting tough and being noticed by peers. One of the interviewees, sixteen year old

Liam, a young lad from a working class background, who wanted to be seen as tough, commented on the requirements necessary to be seen as 'hardy' or 'macho' by his peers. He noted that "You have to be hardy, you have to defend yourself, you have to be able to take a slagging and you can't be a snitch*".

Liam is typical of a number of boys interviewed, whose perception of masculinity resulted in them being dismissive of the pain experienced from verbal sparring and appeared to be separated from their internal world of feelings and emotions. Liam covered up his vulnerability by dishing out the ritual insults and carried his body with a mock bravado and swagger. To boys like Liam the concealment of distress and vulnerability was a crucial attribute of an ideal or desirable masculinity.

It should be noted that it is a necessary requirement in the informal culture of these boys to appear tough. If Liam were to opt out of a direct challenge from another boy he would face peer ridicule and his status within the peer group would diminish. This peer group valued toughness as a central part of the process of masculine identity and defined itself in opposition to the supposed vulnerability, passivity and emotionality of 'sissy boys', girls and homosexuals. Liam's comments illustrate that boys who want to maintain their position of status in these peer groups have to learn to stand up and look after themselves in the face of verbal threats and sometimes physical intimidation.

Doing Hegemonic Masculinity as 'Self-harm'

Liam has learned that to ignore or to take abuse without showing emotion is one way to show emotional invulnerability, one of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Segal (1990) argues that an aggressive masculine psychology is produced through the denial of weakness, vulnerability and dependency. Some of these boys will grow into men who fear and devalue all emotions, actions or behaviours which they see as 'feminine'.

In conclusion, boys like Liam felt considerable pressure to appear confident and display their masculinity in a forceful way, typically through verbal sparring, bravado, and the use of insults. In public, these boys feared feelings of humiliation

by appearing weak in the eyes of their peers and were terrified to engage in any activity or behaviour that could be considered to be effeminate. From my interviews I ascertained that some of these boys experienced ambivalence between their 'public' and 'private' persona. In private, some of these boys face their anxieties and try to cope with their inner emotions, often resorting to anger, aggression and self-harm. This was revealed by a throwaway comment from Iris during one of the interviews, who said, "Yeah! Lads punch walls all the time", while speaking about her brother. These boys have learned that 'big boys' should be in control and are therefore reluctant to seek support from others.

In essence, the norms of hegemonic masculinity prescribe restricted emotionality and identity for boys. So boys learn the coolness, defensiveness and physicality which they see as necessary to survive and achieve in a male atmosphere. They learn that they have to conceal their vulnerabilities if they are not to "lose face" in front of their peers. They learn that certain emotions are a sign of weakness and that male identities are to be affirmed through showing self-control.

7.5 Displays of Power over the Feminine

In Irish culture and much of western culture, masculinity is often constructed around ideas of dominance, social power and control over others, therefore, it was not surprising to find that the informal structure of adolescent boys peer groups in this second-level school were based on hierarchies of power and domination. This practice was referred to by Ms. Ryan who stated that "there seems to be a hierarchy...and I think some students in the middle will look up to them [top dogs] because they stand up to teachers". Ms. Ryan spoke about the importance of power in the world of boys and referred to the hierarchy that exists within male groups. In relation to how the power game plays out within the classroom she makes the following observation. "One boy makes a negative or sexual comment and gets a laugh from it, then another boy would have to try and better that comment, get in there...he couldn't be seen to let the first boy win the day".

Mother Insults

This research also revealed that some boys frequently verbally abused each other over a mother's imagined sexual activities. This was a form of verbal competition that involved the trading of insults and disgusting remarks about the opponent's mother's sexual life. The important thing for these adolescent boys was to be able to take the insults without getting upset and give back as good as you got. In some working class boys' peer groups, mother insults* were part of the banter between the members and contributed to the informal culture of the clique.

Mother insults were also used as an instrument of power by young lads jockeying for status within the peer group as Owen, a tough sixteen year old, reveals by this remark "Oh if I could be with your mother I'd always have it over you". This remark concurs with a comment from Ms. Ryan who suggests that mother insults were used by boys to "gain power over others, maybe to humiliate them by making sexual remarks about their mother". The practice of 'mother insults' was described by Mr. Doyle in the following way:

> One guy whispers to another something about his mother and if he reacts he is seen as being weak but if he can take it in his stride...he is a big man....It is a test of their toughness and being able to take what is thrown at them....they don't show emotion...and that is the thing...they can't be seen to be upset. *(Mr. Doyle)*

In this exchange the ability to keep control of your emotions in the face of personal abuse about your mother was seen as a demonstration of a competent, socially validated masculinity. Boys who engaged in this practice attempted to puncture their opponent's ego through the use of inappropriate sexual comments about the mother. Winning this game required the ability to absorb and respond to highly personal comments about one's mother or sister without showing emotion. Mother insults had the effect of producing a hierarchy between 'macho boys' and those susceptible to 'feminine' sensibilities and capable of showing vulnerabilities or crying. These mother insulting rituals showed the techniques that boys in this school utilised to make each other vulnerable while emphasising the power of dominant versions of masculinity.

Kehily and Nayak (2006) argue that the reference to a boy's mother exploits the contradictory 'private' emotions of material affection and the public disavowal of the 'feminine', where boys are positioned as some kind of moral guardians of their mother's sexual reputations. The role of family protector is a strongly masculine-marked practice where one's duty is to defend the family honour. The sexism embedded in mother insults where female sexual reputations were casually talked about in male banter was part of the gendered inequalities that girls endured on a regular basis in the public areas of this school. Mother insults are highly misogynistic and were employed by boys at the expense of female students and teachers. They are just one example of activities employed by boys to display power over the feminine in this coeducational second-level school.

Replicating the Gender Order in the Classroom

Some boys, particularly those who were fearless and ruthless, were known to make sexual remarks about female teachers in classrooms and in corridors. This was a rare occurrence but it did happen occasionally. One boy made comments of a sexual nature to Ms. Ward who told the following story:

> I had an incident with a student in my first year here, and I went to the Principal about it, because I wasn't having it, and his father came in, and proceeded to address me as 'love' for the entire meeting. So I knew then that the father had no respect for me as a young teacher. *(Ms. Ward)*

This story provides an insight into the role of sexualised power that a young female teacher faced during her daily teaching. Another teacher, Ms. Ryan reported that sexual comments were never made to her by students but said "Yesterday I heard a story about what a student said to a teacher and he got into trouble for it [making a sexual remark]". When I pushed this issue a little further Ms. Ryan suggested that this was an issue of power where male students tried to gain power over female teachers. She believed that in some families boys are treated more favourably than girls, and boys grow up believing that they are superior to their sisters. The boys carry this perception into the classroom. In her own words "It is brought into the school [the belief] that they [boys] are that bit better or that bit above us...and

especially with the female teachers, they have the power or feel they should have the power".

This sense of power and agency in the domain of the classroom can be conceptualised as the power to control others including the teacher. This behaviour can give young men confidence and heighten their ability to put others down. The way the power game plays out during class-time was addressed by Mr. Browne who commented on the various strategies used by boys and girls to dominate and control others in the classroom. He stated:

> It's a very complex interplay...people egging each other on and girls manipulating lads into annoying girls they don't like but I think the lads can assert themselves by being rude or by being seen to be rude to the girls, to disgust them or act out in a certain way....to assert themselves sexually and that certainly can disturb or upset the girls a little. *(Mr. Browne)*

Mr. Browne's comments provide an interesting insight into how some boys were in the business of deploying certain techniques of power in the pursuit of a particular form of masculinity. It also shows how some boys' sense of masculine identity is caught up in the exercise of power over girls and women.

7.6 Embodiment of Masculinity – Physical Power - Sport

Sport has traditionally served as a socially esteemed institution where boys formally learn hegemonic dominance by showing overt physical prowess (Messner, 1992) in order to raise their masculine capital among peers. This has being described by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) as the "toxic practices" of masculinity (p. 840). Here boys are taught to employ the processes of hegemonic oppression to construct socially esteemed identities in an effort to maintain or improve their position with the social stratification. In sport, players who do not live up to the expected orthodox scripts of masculinity are often subordinated through physical dominance and ridicule. Traditionally, competitive sports have therefore encouraged adolescent boys to value and reproduce orthodox notions of masculinity.

Competitive sports like Gaelic football and soccer can be seen as a medium of expression used to define some of the key features of a dominant version of

masculinity. Certainly, football is a major component of successful (heterosexual) masculinity and establishing oneself as a good footballer goes a long way in helping to establish one as a 'real boy' (Swain, 2000). The game personifies the pinnacle of masculinity and communicates ideas of fitness, strength, competition, power and domination. Establishing oneself as a good footballer went a long way in helping to establish a desired masculinity in this school, a point emphasised by a number of teachers and students.

The attribute of physicality in soccer and its link to a particular form of masculinity is referred to by the coach, Mr. Brennan, who commented "There have been isolated occasions where players pulled out of challenges and I've criticised them afterwards". This statement highlights the link between physicality and masculinity. It also contributes towards generating a school ethos of manliness. Mr. Brennan's comment can easily lead to the normalising of aggressive behaviours, as boys' were expected to defend themselves in response to challenges to their masculinity. Regardless of the level of physicality a boy has previously shown, this comment by Mr. Brennan could temporarily void a player's masculinity. It also suggests that the threat to one's masculinity is constructed in relation to the physicality of the opponent on the opposite team, where the risk is a loss of publicly perceived masculinity. Mr. Brennan's comments imply that pulling out of a tackle or a challenge is associated with softness and weakness, traits thought to be typically synonymous with femininity.

Using Sport to Promote Hegemonic Masculinity

The language used by Mr. Brennan encourages boys to equate player competency on the field of play with notions of masculinity, particularly hegemonic masculinity. Boys who may have a different view of masculinity will tend to be compliant, as coaches, like Mr. Brennan, maintain the ability to punish players who contest him with the threat of de-selection. Through his language he is sub-consciously conceptualising a systematic set of processes that construct and regulate specific masculine behaviours in sport. His gendered discourses are establishing a framework for masculine behaviour on the sports field and a mechanism for its regulation. The language contributes to the construction of masculine ideals and

influences boys' masculine identities to align with the semi-aggressive playing styles expected by him. Whether intended or not, this teacher is an agent in the construction of student masculinities, particularly on the sports field. Imagines of desirable masculinities were produced and reproduced in this school through the everyday, institutional practices and routines of teachers like Mr. Brennan.

Another teacher, Mr. Doyle referred to the particular type of masculinity promoted by physically tough games like Gaelic football in the following way:

> I suppose we are valuing the strong, fast, cool under pressure, boy.....I suppose you have to be strong....you have to be tough...you have to be cool under pressure and make the decisions....you don't have time to talk about it. I mean....we have a chess club here and things like that as well....certainly; you wouldn't catch somebody who plays football playing chess. *(Mr. Doyle)*

The opinion of Mr. Doyle is obviously communicated to his students and can lead students to believe that they are expected to live up to a particular standard, in which sport functions as an indicator of desirable masculinity. The values which he endorsed helped to create a culture in which living up to a particular ideal or version of masculinity was a part of the everyday life at school for students. The values of aggressive competition, physical toughness and honour were applauded and encouraged by teachers like Mr. Doyle and Mr. Brennan in this school.

Mr. Doyle's statement about valuing the strong, competitive player is supported by Messner and Sabo (1994) who suggest that "to be manly in sports, traditionally means to be competitive, successful, dominating, aggressive, stoical, goal directed and physical strong" (p. 38). Through ordinary and mundane practices such as encouraging physical fitness, participation in games and competition, Mr. Doyle and Mr. Brennan encouraged masculine identities founded on physical aggression and domination.

7.7 Where to now?

This study reveals some of the ways in which masculinities are understood, constructed and negotiated by adolescent boys in this school. Boys learn through observation of others and participation in communities of practice of masculinity

what it is to be male in their specific contexts. Central to the idea that individual masculinities are constructed within communities of masculinity practice is the local nature of this construction (Paechter, 2007). In this particular community of masculinity practice, a second-level coeducational school, boys differed in their engagement with the ideals of masculinity, and this was often influenced by social class backgrounds. These findings concur with findings by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) who point out that multiple definitions of masculinity exist, oftentimes within the same localised community.

Stereotypes that have been culturally and socially reinforced are difficult to overcome. This includes those stereotypes that society acknowledges through word and action and those that it does not. The reinforcement of questionable stereotypes is not solely the domain of parents and educators. The attitude of male peers to masculinities can have a powerful influence on a boy's perception of a desirable masculinity, a point that was revealed through some of the narratives.

The process of masculinisation is sometimes described as a hardening or toughening sequence. It could also be described as a flight from the feminine and the driving out of the feminine emotions. Being seen by others and by oneself as masculine is central to an adolescent boy's self esteem in second-level school. As some parts of the narrative indicate, portraying oneself as sufficiently masculine is not always simple and some boys in this school attempted to infuse their own identity with recognisable masculine characteristics. A few boys, particularly those who adopted a 'macho' image, went to considerable trouble to develop a tough and stoical personality, expressed fear of feminisation and showed a dislike of homosexuality. Their masculinity was defined as being in opposition to characteristics of femininity and homosexuality. In these groups there was constant policing of boys talk and behaviour in a mutual effort to maintain a particular masculine image.

Some boys drew on conventional norms of emotional hardness to fashion their identities, but others did not. While some of the boys displayed a style of masculinity that was rooted in both anti-femininity and homophobia, others defined their masculinities in more inclusive ways. Most of the boys who displayed a more inclusive masculinity did not challenge hegemonic masculinity as their masculinity

style was not one of protest, but rather one that coexisted with traditional hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless some of the boys who displayed an inclusive masculinity lived in fear of being stigmatized as homosexual by their classmates.

The masculinity styles exhibited by the students in this case study represented a wide range of variations. One implication is that the theoretical intention and emphasis on multiplicity within studies of masculinity in school should be followed up in empirical and analytical practice. This suggestion echoes a recommendation put forward by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005). They stress the importance to future masculinity studies of incorporating a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy. This includes explicit recognition of the internal complexity and contradictions of masculinities, giving much closer attention to femininities and girls' identity and practice, and analysing the interplay of femininities and masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

The multiple styles of student masculinities in this study highlight the relevance of this recommendation to the study of student masculinities. Masculine identities are at the core of many of the problems boys in general have, ranging from under-achievement in schools, anti-social behaviour, reckless lifestyles, to severe emotional problems which can lead to suicide. Addressing the issue of masculinity will begin to address these problems. Not only should more research on student masculinities be included, but also the variations within masculinity styles require more empirical and analytical attention.

In relation to teachers, the study clearly highlighted that teachers bring their beliefs, prejudices, and fears to the classroom. This was evident in many of the statements and attitudes expressed during the interviews. These views should be understood in the context that the school ethos was primarily conservative in nature supported by patriarchal, (even though the Principal was female), middle-class, heterosexual assumptions.

Much of the narrative from the teachers suggest that teachers think boys and girls are essentially different and they treat them differently and give them different opportunities for development. This differential treatment promotes certain

behaviours and self images that recreate the preconceived cultural stereotypes about gender. Some of the actions and narratives from the female teachers indicate that they participate (perhaps unconsciously) in the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity through a set of micro-practices that contribute to patriarchy.

The Challenge Ahead

If we want a society where boys have the freedom to take up and perform a wider range and scope of masculinities than is currently the case, we need to find ways of intervening in local communities of masculinity practice to undermine the dominance of particular ways of being and provide alternative conceptions of what it might mean to be a boy (Paechter, 2007). The characteristics of dominant masculinity should be deconstructed and boys need to be helped to see how destructive and limiting its practice can be on social relationships, school achievement and opportunities in general. Boys could be helped to examine their gendered identities and explore broader expressions of masculinity. The dominant masculine image could be replaced by desirable options and alternatives that boys can aspire to, without them being alienated. Lingard and Douglas (1999) has shown that offering boys the opportunity to explore their masculinities through a range of alternative means has been successful in encouraging boys to become more aware of their own gendered identities.

There is a need to nurture boys' acceptance of the many "diverse ways of being human rather than singular ways of being masculine" (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998b, p. 36). Reconstructing the traditional, hegemonic male image through positive role modelling and the acceptance of multiple ways of practising masculinity would help to release boys from the perceived 'gender straitjackets' that currently inhibit them. Connell (1995) referred to this as encouraging, practising and supporting "gender multiculturalism" (p. 234). Broadening boys' outlook on alternative forms of masculinity would result in greater acceptance of marginalised expressions of masculinity and femininity.

Change will be challenging as many people in schools and society, male and female, hold stereotypical, traditional and entrenched interpretations of men and

masculinities. Issues surrounding masculinity and what it means to be a boy are increasingly complex, contradictory and confusing. From childhood, males are bombarded with powerful messages about what it means to be a boy. It may be difficult for boys to overcome their fear of vulnerability and humiliation in a dominant masculine culture where young men are likely to receive very little support for disclosing emotions within the public sphere.

Evidence of the dominant masculine culture in Ireland was revealed when a programme named Exploring Masculinities was introduced and piloted in a number of second-level single sex boys' schools between 1997 and1999. This programme was aimed at boys aged 15-18 years and explored different perceptions and experiences of masculinity. Amongst the aims of this programme was the promotion of equality among and between the sexes, and the exploration of concepts of masculinity that encourage a positive and meaningful understanding of male roles.

Following criticism of this programme by a parents' organisation and some influential journalists, the Minister for Education and Science chose not to disseminate the programme nationwide. The principal concerns of the Catholic Secondary School Parents' Association included the failure of the Department of Education and Science to officially consult the parent bodies (Gleeson *et al.* 2004). This Association demanded the withdrawal of the Exploring Masculinities Programme because " it undermined young boys by asking them to disclose their feelings about private and personal matters in the classroom; offered group therapy; and overemphasised homosexuality" (Mac an Ghaill, Hanafin and Conway, 2003, p. 123). The main criticism of the journalists centred on the concept of gender as a social construct and the perceived underlining feminist ideology of the Exploring Masculinities Programme.

Currently, the topic of sexual orientation is all but invisible within the second-level school-based Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme in Ireland (Mayock *et al.* 2009). As a mandatory subject without a mandatory curriculum (Inglis, 1998), individual schools agree on the content of RSE in consultation with parents and the broader school community. Sexual orientation is the subject of only

two lessons in the resource materials available to teachers for the teaching of RSE at junior cycle level and these may be interpreted as optional or discretionary.

The absence of school programmes in the second-level system which explore masculinities and sexualities is contributing to some boys adhering to narrow and restrictive interpretations of masculinity that can create complex contradictions in the lives of these boys. These boys may feel that they have to conceal their vulnerabilities if they are not to 'lose face' in front of others. They have learnt that emotions are a sign of weakness and that male identities are to be affirmed through showing self-control (Seidler, 2007). Vulnerabilities are often hidden as adolescent boys can feel they should be able to handle their emotions and fear they might be shamed by public disclosure. They take refuge in the notion that as long as their emotions remain unspoken and others do not know, these emotions are not real and might disappear just as they arrived.

Boys often feel it is harder to make a phone call, send a text or e-mail in order to reach out when they are feeling down than when they are feeling good about themselves. Young men sometimes find it easier to take their own lives than to reach out for help to those around them. They do not want to share what is troubling them or the source of their depression, which they may not be aware of themselves. They feel so bad about themselves and feel that it would only be worse if they dared to show their feelings to others. With suicide, often those who are left behind are shocked that they knew so little of what was going on for the young man they loved as part of the family or as a friend. Unfortunately, Ireland's youth suicide rates are the fifth highest in Europe and Ireland also has the highest male/female suicide differential in Europe, with the male rate of suicide significantly higher than that of females (Health Service Executive, 2005).

There is a need for more understanding and appreciation of where adolescent boys are coming from, and the damage caused to boys through the narrow, stereotypical and often unrealistic cultural interpretations of what is means to be a man in today's world. Some versions of masculinity can be seen to lock boys into narrow and restricted ways of being human that can have negative effects on their health and their relationships. This can lead to emotional and social problems for boys and may

tilt them towards aggression, repression, conflict and violence. Understanding the impact of masculine contradictions is crucial to understanding how best to develop practice and policy in this area (Harland, 2008).

Developing new and more creative methods of educating boys will require courage, vision, research and investment. Supporting boys as they try to understand, challenge and critique the stereotypical image of the macho male is a significant issue for schools, as it requires a fundamental challenge to those notions of masculinity, which are long-rooted in some facets of society and in some homes. It asks boys and men to scrutinize their approaches to emotions, to relationships, to behavioural patterns, attitudes and image.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998b) encourage schools to adopt a strategy whereby boys closely examine the effects of traditional masculinity on their development and actively reinterpret those virtues that are contained within it. For example, certain virtues are often associated with "macho male behaviour". These include strength, independence, courage, endurance, leadership and self-control. They assert that these do not have to be practiced in a manner that negatively associates them with aggression and non-compliance and with bullying behaviour that is hegemonically masculine. These virtues can be interpreted in action and ways that focus on a more positive expression of them. They suggest that boys need to be exposed to the destructive and limiting elements of traditional, dominant masculinity and to be encouraged to reject those in favour of expressions of these virtues in positive affirming ways.

The mechanisms by which certain types of masculinities are perpetuated in schools and how they affect boys who do not feel part of this culture need to be examined. Masculinities will remain inconspicuous in schools unless two things happen. The first is the recognition that masculinities can contribute to discrimination. The second requirement to make the articulation of masculinities visible is to move the teacher from the belief that masculinities are not a problem, to a broader stance of seeing that dimensions of this problem lie in the way things are done, or indeed in the individuals approach to work and life (Hearn, 1992). This recognition opens the way to a discussion in which masculinities are understood as multiple and dynamic,

having good and bad effects for boys as well as girls. The current silence around masculinities in Irish education serves the purposes of those who gain from existing understandings.

If teachers want to make a difference to how boys construct and perform masculinities in schools many would need to alter what they think about their gender identities. If teachers want boys to be able to resist the constraints on their identities, then they need to examine themselves as central members of a school community, and to consider whether their practices act to support or militate against this aspiration. A school environment which is sympathetic to, and models, values of exploration, openness, interaction and expressiveness would be helpful in this regard. Support for teachers is of crucial importance.

It may be expedient for teachers to create a 'discursive space' in order to reflect upon the various narratives of masculinity and femininity. This examination of identities might bring to the surface a range of powerful emotions that male teachers in particular, may have previously suppressed. Reflecting on these issues can help teachers to gain a greater understanding of how they contribute to the status quo by their perception of reality. Male teachers are likely to share a reluctance to discuss masculinities, principally because engaging in reflection and discussion of masculinities is a marginalised discourse, accruing little power for the speaker. Even if male teachers experience the failure of hegemonic masculinities to provide a comfortable masculine identity, they are unlikely to 'solve' this failure through resort to a culturally and discursively sanctioned practice, such as declaring their feelings and seeking intimacy, if they have no history or experience of accessing such a practice (Norton, 1997).

The education departments in universities and colleges of education have a role in facilitating teachers in this regard, as have the key teacher in-service providers. One should not underestimate the complexities involved in making masculinities available for understanding, for teachers and students (Sinclair, 2000). For a facilitator of a teachers' masculinities programme, there are pedagogical issues involved in facilitating a self-disclosing discussion of masculinities amongst teachers. Introducing a discussion of masculinities will allow a richer and deeper

exploration of men and women in schools, including the pressure to perform against sex stereotypes.

While masculinities remain implicit and un-discussed, teachers remain captive of an un-theorised regime, less able to see choices about how their perceptions of masculinities influence their teaching styles and the lives of their students. By making masculinities more visible and discussible teachers will be able to identify how work cultures can be shaped to de-couple repressive masculinities and ways of working. Furthermore much of the work on gender that begins in the classroom will gain meaning and momentum in outside discussions with friends, parents, family and in the home and social settings.

GLOSSARY

Craic:	The practice of chatting, telling jokes, gossiping and having fun.
DEIS:	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
Gay/queer:	A homosexual person, usually a male.
Macho:	Strongly or exaggerated masculinity.
Mother insults:	Derogatory references, often of a sexual nature, about an opponent's mother.
Pussy:	A label applied to a young man who is effeminate.
Skitting:	The practice of making satirical remarks or comments towards another person.
Slagging:	Verbal interaction ranging from friendly teasing to highly personalised attacks.
Snitch:	To act as an informer; to tell a teacher or somebody in authority.
Swots:	Enthusiastic students, or simply those keen to succeed at academic work.

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Appendices

Appendix A

A Sample of Interview Questions with Boys and Girls

I have listed a sample of the interview questions below. The order of the questions listed was not rigidly adhered to in my interviews with participants. For example, I began the interview by asking questions or prompts that followed a particular theme but on occasion the answers from the participants moved onto a different theme. If this theme was relevant or interesting I would avail of the opportunity to gather further information and follow up with additional questions on the topic. If a question or prompt elicited a single word or short answer, I would follow on with additional questions or prompts to ascertain more detailed responses. For the most part the sequencing of questions asked at interview did not follow the predefined order. For clarity I have listed the questions in a thematic order

Could you describe a situation in which somebody would be seen to be macho in a school environment?

What type of classroom behaviour might you engage in to show your mates that you are macho?

Does this behaviour have anything to do with power?

Is power important in a verbal duel between a teacher and a macho lad?

When boys challenge a teacher in the classroom are they trying to gain power over the situations?

Is giving cheek to teacher seen to increase or decrease your macho status in school?

Is rule breaking important when trying to achieve a macho image?

Can you give me an example or describe a situation where someone would be seen to be tough or hardy in a classroom situation?

Why do some students stand up to teachers on a regular basis?

Do you think some guys get respect from peers by intimidation other students?

Could you describe things that 'hardy lads' do?

Do 'hardy guys' respect people who fight?

How do macho lads get respect from people?

Do macho boys have a public image to protect?

What do you think distinguishes the so-called softies from the hardy fellows?

If telling tales is considered to be girly behaviour, how do macho lads solve their problems?

If a macho lad was being bullied or pushed around, would he go to a teacher?

What do you think of the statement "It bothers me when a guy acts like a girl"?

What are the conditions of membership of a macho gang?

Macho boys have an image of what is means to be macho and an image of what it means to be girly. Could you describe the difference?

How does one achieve the macho image?

Do you have an image of how a man is suppose to behave?

Is it difficult for a guy with a macho image to speak about feelings when discussing poetry during an English lesson?

If you were to talk about feelings of vulnerability in public, would you be ridiculed or taunted by other boys?

It is important for macho lads to act like there is nothing wrong when there is something bothering them?

Do you think that showing 'soft' feelings would mark a macho guy as kind of girly?

What other kind of things do you describe as 'girly stuff' besides talking about feelings?

Why do you think some lads would be reluctant to show that they have 'soft' emotions?

Do they think lads look weak if they show emotions?

Would macho lads cry in school or say 'Oh! I'm hurt' or do they tend to keep away from soft emotions?

Would the fear of a negative reaction from mates have anything to do with it?

Are some lads willing to talk about feelings the project themselves as strong but not feelings that project themselves as weak?

Do you think a lad should keep his emotions to himself?

Would you be ridiculed by macho lads for speaking about feelings in public?

Do girls get slagged if they talk about feelings in the class?

Do boys seem superior to girls because they won't talk about feelings?

Boys often call each other 'gay'. Why do you think that happens?

Is a person who is described as 'gay' seen as less of a man?

Is the word 'gay' a big threat to a boy's masculinity?

If a boy preferred to be in girls company most of the time, how would he be seen by other boys?

Do you ever write the word 'gay' in other boys' copies or books?

What does the word 'gay' mean to you?

What do boys slag other boys about?

Why do macho guys often engage in verbal slagging competitions?

Is there a pecking order amongst boys who slag others?

Why do you think some boys slag each other's mothers' a lot?

What way do you react when your mother is insulted by other boys?

Why do boys belittle other boys' mothers with remarks about her sexuality?

Do you think that by belittling other people they bring themselves up?

Why do you think boys always pick on other boys' mothers?

Is mother insulting used to gain power over the other boy?

Can you be a good student and be 'one of the lads' at the same time?

Can an academic student be seen as a macho lad?

When tough boys play sport, does the toughness come through on the field of play?

Do you have to be physically tough to play Gaelic football?

Is playing sport good for a macho image?

Do the guys who are weak at sport get a hard time?

How are players viewed by their team mates if they withdraw from a challenge?

Appendix B

A Sample of Interview Questions with Girls

I have listed a sample of the interview questions below. The order of the questions listed was not rigidly adhered to in my interviews with participants. For example, I began the interview by asking questions or prompts that followed a particular theme but on occasion the answers from the participants moved onto a different theme. If this theme was relevant or interesting I would avail of the opportunity to gather further information and follow up with additional questions on the topic. If a question or prompt elicited a single word or short answer, I would follow on with additional questions or prompts to ascertain more detailed responses. For the most part the sequencing of questions asked at interview did not follow the predefined order. For clarity I have listed the questions in a thematic order

We are going to have a conversation about boys and the way they tend to hide their emotions in the classroom. Have you even noticed when a teacher starts talking about emotions that some boys make a laugh out of it?

Some of the boys seem to believe that to be seen as 'macho' means not to show any 'soft' emotions. What do you think?

Do you think a lad would lose respect from his peers if he said he was upset or distressed by events in his life?

Do boys find if difficult to talk about topics such as love when studying poetry?

Did you even notice that some of the macho lads who stand up to teachers are the very guys who are shy when it comes to talking about their emotions?

How do boys who like to be seen as 'hardy' behave in the classroom and corridors?

What makes a lad look strong in public?

Do you think guys earn respect from the friends if they hit other guys or push other guys around?

Do some guys think it is macho to make fun of other lads?

I noticed that some lads want to be different but they are not allowed to be different because of peer group pressure. Did you even notice that lads behave differently with the peer group than on their own?

Do you think guys who study and work hard are seen as sissy or girly by other boys?

Do you notice that some lads call each other gay all the time?

Why do you think they call each other gay?

Do lads think it is 'gay' to talk to a girl if they are not interested in developing a relationship with that girl?

Some lads have a simple theory; you are either macho or your gay. Is that they way your see it?

Do you think boys try to dominate public space in this school?

I have noticed that some lads form human corridors during lunch breaks and can be intimidating for girls to walk through this space?

Power is something that is not just given, it is sometimes taken. Do boys try to take the power from the girls by controlling corridors and public spaces like the Games Room?

Do boys who play football appear macho to you in appearance and demeanour?

Appendix C

A Sample of Teacher Interview Questions

I have listed a sample of the interview questions below. The order of the questions listed was not rigidly adhered to in my interviews with participants. For example, I began the interview by asking questions or prompts that followed a particular theme but on occasion the answers from the participants moved onto a different theme. If this theme was relevant or interesting I would avail of the opportunity to gather further information and follow up with additional questions on the topic. If a question or prompt elicited a single word or short answer, I would follow on with additional questions or prompts to ascertain more detailed responses. For the most part the sequencing of questions asked at interview did not follow the predefined order. For clarity I have listed the questions in a thematic order

Do you think the staff of this school sends out messages in either overt or subtle ways, that there are different ways of being a male – some more valued and prestigious and powerful than others?

Does this school produce specific expectations about "proper" masculinity and ways of becoming a man?

Does teacher talk reflect gender meanings? For example, do teachers say things like "I need a big, strong lad to lift some boxes"? Or "Don't act like a girl"?

What messages about masculinities are we as teachers sending out to our students?

What do you think is an appropriate form of masculinity for teenage boys?

Do you think teachers' use gender comments when trying to control a class?

Do you think that schools promote a type of middle-class image of what it means to be a man?

In this school some students who fail to live up to the academic standards expected from the teachers form deviant groups or gangs. One of the ways for these students to achieve high status within the group is through confrontations with authority, specifically the teachers. Would you like to comment on this statement?

Did you ever noticed some boys in groups adopt an exaggerated form of masculinity by the way the walk, the way they talk and behave towards each other and people in general?

Do you think that some boys in deviant groups develop an exaggerated masculinity to compensate for their subordinate status within the academic field and see our discipline system as a challenge?

Does rule breaking become central to the making of masculinity for boys in deviants groups?

Do you think rule breaking is important to some boys who are trying to assert their masculinity?

Do boys who break the rules see themselves as being more masculine than boys who are compliant?

Why do boys tell stories in the corridor about how they challenged teachers?

Some students openly engage in anti-school behaviour, and by defying existing power structures, they can display their independence from the control of their teachers and the school establishment. Do you think that these students exercise a particular form of 'protest masculinity' by these actions?

Why do some boys invest heavily in ideas of toughness and confrontation?

As a school do we encourage boys to speak about their emotions or do we have a more traditional view of masculinity?

How do you think the tendency for some boys to conceal their emotions ties into their concept of masculinity?

Do you think some boys link emotions to femininity?

Do you think that some boys equate academic success and academic study with femininity or something that 'girls do'? Do some boys consider performing well within the classroom to be a characteristic of femininity?

How do teachers react when boys start crying? Is the reaction the same as when a girl cries?

Boys seem to be very quick to hide what they would consider to be soft emotions and very slow to show that they are upset. Why is this?

To show that you are upset is often seen as showing that you are weak, and if you are weak it means you are less of a man. What do you think of that statement?

Do you think that it is difficult for young boys to tell teachers that they are having difficulties in school or just difficulties in life in general?

Is expressing certain emotions a particular problem for young lads?

When you are teaching a subject such as English, do you notice a difference between boys and girls when it comes to speaking about topics relating to emotions?

You may have noticed that a lot of boys are continuously involved in the rebuff of anything that is seen as feminine or homosexual, such as homosexual attitudes and behaviours. Why do you think this is so?

Boys often call each other gay. Would you like to comment on that?

One hears students say 'your pencil case is gay; your hair cut is gay; and sometimes students take these remarks so seriously that they change the item or will not use it any more. Have you noticed this?

Do boys police each other's sexuality? Students have told me if a guy spends time in the company of girls because he likes to be in the company of girls, but he is not interested in chatting-up girls, then, he would be seen as gay. What do you think of that?

Dominant boys sometimes refer to other boys as gay. Is this because they don't have the same macho image as themselves?

Why do you think students react so badly when they are referred to as 'gay'?

If a male teacher were homosexual, would he get a very difficult time from boys in this school?

Does this school promote a certain type of masculinity; a certain type of heterosexual controlling type of masculinity?

One of the things that some boys do in groups is constantly put each other down and engage in verbal sparring or slagging. Have you ever noticed that?

What is the end game in this slagging match? What are they trying to achieve?

Do you think boys gain power through slagging others and using humorous insults?

Is the ability to take insults and ridicule and not get upset important in verbal sparring?

Does verbal sparring teach young men how to keep control of their emotions?

One of the main types of verbal sparring amongst groups of deviant boys is mother insults. Do you have any ideas as to why boys insist on insulting each others mothers?

A lot of the insults refer to the sexuality of the mother. Why do you think that is so?

Do mother insults exist during the full cycle of secondary school or is there a period when it is most prevalent?

Is being cool is an important male value in other settings as well, such as sports or work?

Can we talk about power and the ways boys use power? How important is power in terms of masculine image?

In a mixed class do the boys or the girls control the class?

Do you think the boys feel they have power over the girls?

If you look at boys and observe how they dominate public space in this school and one example of this is the Games Room. Do we as teachers sub-consciously allow the males to dominate the females in this school?

Do you think that some boys look down upon the girls and look down on femininity in general?

Do you think most boys see masculinity as having a higher status than femininity?

In relation to the boys and the dirty talk, the sex talk, does it happen in your class?

Have you even seen examples of where male students would use their sexuality to intimidate or control female teachers?

Do you think that boys will behave differently with a male teacher than a female teacher? Are they more likely to make sexual comments in a male teacher's class than a female teacher's class or is there any difference?

Every time one hears an announcement about chess over the Intercom students giggle in the classroom. When the announcement is about football, students listen attentively; why is that?

Is there a hierarchy amongst sports in terms of masculinity?

Do you think that sports are important to lads in terms of masculinity?

Can we talk about the link between sport and masculinity and the idea of being tough on the sports field? What do you think about that?

Do you think that some sports like football promote toughness?

Do players who tackle opponents in a timid way during a football game lose status amongst their team mates?

Do you think games like football or soccer promote a particular type of masculinity?

Appendix D

ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE DRUMCONDRA

Informed Consent Form

Research Study Title

A Case Study of the Construction and Negotiation of Adolescent Masculinities in a Coeducational School in Rural Ireland.

Researcher

John Fitzgerald

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the Research is to investigate senior secondary school students, aged 15-17 years, construction, negotiation and performance of masculinities in a coeducational second-level school.

Requirements of Participation in Research Study

Adult Participants will be requested to partake in single interviews while participants under the age of eighteen will be requested to partake in group interviews with one to three other members.

Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed.

Arrangements to protect confidentiality of data, including when raw data will be destroyed, noting that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.

Anonymity is promised and will be maintained throughout the study. Pseudonyms will be used for the school and for each of the participants to preserve anonymity. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

Researcher's Signature _____

Participant – Please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).

Have you read or had head to you the Plain Language Statement?	Yes/No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No

I have read and understood the information in this form. The researcher has answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE DRUMCONDRA

Plain Language Statement

Introduction to the Research Study

This doctoral thesis is an exploratory investigation of senior second-level school students' understandings, construction and performance of masculinities in a coeducational school setting.

Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require

Participants will be asked to partake in group interviews. It is intended to hold ten group interviews of consisting of two, three or four students.

Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study (if greater than that encountered in everyday life).

None

Benefits (direct/indirect) to participants from involvement in the Research Study

None other than helping to provide a more informed perspective on the social practices of masculinity impacting on boys' lives at secondary school.

Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations

Anonymity is promised and will be maintained throughout the study. Pseudonyms will be used for the school and for each of the participants to preserve anonymity. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study.

Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period

All data will be destroyed after the thesis is completed. Raw and processed data will be securely stored by the investigator for the duration of the study, separate from the computer (on a memory stick) which will be securely under lock and all documents will be kept under lock.

Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Involvement in this research study is voluntary. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the study are completed.

If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,
Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,
St. Patrick's College,
Drumcondra,
Dublin 9.
Tel 01-884 2149