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FOREWORD

As Chair of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Gender Equity Taskforce, I am pleased to introduce *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*.

The Gender Equity Taskforce was established in 1994. The terms of reference for the Taskforce arose from the continuing interest in and growing knowledge about gender issues in schools, in particular the impact of issues on the educational experiences and outcomes for both girls and boys and for different groups of boys and girls.

The Framework was developed by the Gender Equity Taskforce and Reference Group following the national *Promoting Gender Equity Conference* which brought together a wide range of academics, practitioners, parents and others with an interest in the area.

Issues of gender equity are fundamental to all areas of schooling. The Framework identifies ten principles for action and five strategic directions which provide a central focus for gender equity in education in order to achieve the best possible outcomes and opportunities for all girls and boys.

The Framework was developed in collaboration with a wide range of groups, organisations and communities. These partnerships, in particular the partnership between schools and parents, are important in achieving the desired outcomes for boys and girls in Australian schools. I commend the *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* to all those involved in the education of our young people.

Cheryl Vardon
Chair
MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce
August 1996

P•A•R•T A

Framework for Action
on
Gender Equity
in Schooling

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSES OF THIS FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools is the result of the work of the Gender Equity Taskforce and Reference Group, working under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). The Gender Equity Taskforce is responsible for providing advice which will enable improved educational outcomes for girls and boys in Australian schools.

Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools proposes broad areas for action which will be taken up, in partnership with parents, by the systems and sectors in the states and territories in ways which are consistent with their authority and responsibility for school education.

The document is in two parts:

- Part A: the Framework itself provides a context for the work of the Taskforce, outlines the principles and strategic areas for action and the reporting mechanisms which trace progress at school, sector and system level

- Part B: the Perspectives is a series of papers, generated by the Gender Equity Taskforce, which provide background reading and which have informed the development of the Framework.

The Framework is designed for use by schools and systems, education practitioners, parents and school communities. It builds on the work already undertaken through the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools* and the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97*[1]. The Framework will operate in tandem with the National Action Plan which is operational until 1997. The National Action Plan will continue to be the subject of reporting through the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (for 1995, 1996 and 1997). The Framework draws upon growing understandings about the construction of gender and its implications for policy and practice, as well as developments in education which examine the differences in the experiences and outcomes of schooling for both girls and boys, and for different groups of girls and boys[2].

Ten principles for action have been developed by the Gender Equity Taskforce, and these underpin the series of strategic directions outlined in the Framework. These principles are integral to the broad intentions of the Framework, as well as to the strategies themselves.

A Framework for Australian Schools is based on five strategic directions for action in the areas of:

- understanding the process of construction of gender

- curriculum, teaching and learning

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[1] It is important that the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* is read as a companion document to this Framework.

[2] Throughout this document reference is often made to different groups of girls and boys. This acknowledges that girls and boys should not be seen as homogenous groups and recognises differences based on factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability, sexual preference or rural/urban location.

·   violence and school culture

·   post-school pathways

·   supporting change.

Specific outcomes are provided for each strategic direction, together with a range of approaches and strategies which will ensure that the overall intentions of the Framework are achieved.

The strategic directions are intended for use at every level of schooling and are relevant to girls and boys from the early years of schooling to the post-compulsory years. They are also intended to provide support to work already under way in sectors and states and territories. It is assumed that they will be implemented within the context of the systems and sectors which are party to the agreements through MCEETYA.

The approach in this Framework has been one which strives for practical applications which flow from understanding gender equity, and which will impact on the daily experiences of girls and boys in schools. It is also mindful of current and possible future developments within education which include, for example, developments in civics education, key competencies and information technology.

Each strategic direction includes indicators of improvement, which are intended to achieve two purposes:

·   The first is to provide information for accountability purposes, within existing agreements for national reporting, such as the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* and sample surveys, and within existing state and sector arrangements.

·   The second is to provide information which will indicate useful directions and demonstrate progress towards achieving the strategic directions at school and system/sector levels. The indicators are designed to focus on improvements in both process and outcomes and they rely on qualitative as well as quantitative data.

The second part of this Framework, *Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling*, contains nine papers and a comprehensive list of resources. These papers, prepared either for the Promoting Gender Equity Conference by individual authors, or for the Gender Equity Taskforce by experts in the field, are grouped together non-sequentially, in a way which will allow readers to access particular information on various issues pertaining to gender equity. At the end of each strategic direction readers are directed to the appropriate paper for further reading and, at the end of the Perspectives document, a list of relevant resources is provided.

BACKGROUND

Gender equity in schooling is based on understanding that differences in experiences and outcomes in education for girls and boys arise from the impact of gender on the expectations, interests and behaviours of both sexes. It acknowledges that the impact is often one which constrains and limits, rather than expands, options and possibilities for girls and women, and boys and men. It also acknowledges that, as with other areas of

human experience, the construction of gender is able to be understood, and is capable of change.

The concepts of gender equity and the construction of gender are examined in the accompanying papers, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction' (page 26) and in 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning' (page 33).

The Gender Equity Taskforce

The MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce was commissioned to provide advice on future action for the achievement of gender equity in schools, sectors and systems, and to report on implementation of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97.*

In February 1995, the Gender Equity Taskforce and its subgroup, The Gender Equity Reference Group, sponsored a national conference, Promoting Gender Equity, designed to assist it in addressing some central questions about gender and educational disadvantage. The proceedings of this conference set down aspects of current knowledge about the causes and effects of gender inequality in schools. They have been published and distributed widely and have provided broad parameters for the ongoing work of the Taskforce.

The work of the Taskforce has also been informed by the experiences of the many educators who have grappled with putting the theory into practice within schools and the systems which support them. Many of the papers prepared for the conference have referred to the significant contribution made by those who have engaged in the reform process, in thinking through and coming to grips with the interplay of factors which contribute to the inequalities still evident in education.

The current work of the Taskforce also acknowledges the changes and achievements which have taken place since formal and public work in this area of education has been undertaken.

Context

It is now 20 years since International Women's Year and the publication in 1975 of *Girls, Schools and Society*, the first investigation into the issue of gender equity in schools in Australia. Since then, there have been many social, political, economic and legislative changes which have had an impact on the lives of women and girls and men and boys. These include:

·   the introduction of the *Family Law Act 1975*

·   the introduction of national equal opportunity legislation (1984), and comparable state legislation, and of other legislation which addressed sexual harassment

·   the increasing numbers of women in the paid workforce and the changing images of women in the public arena as women moved into positions and professions previously the prerogative of men

·   the establishment of women's policy units in both national and state/territory government departments, and in other public and private sector organisations

- international agreements, including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (1981) which have provided governments with a framework for enacting legislation to promote equality between women and men

- the introduction of policies, practices and structures which demonstrate the commitment of all states, territories and sectors within the education system to achieving equitable educational outcomes for girls and boys.

The Australian Education Council established the *National Policy for the Education of Girls* in 1987. *The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* was released by the Australian Education Council in 1993. The directions for action were firmly based on the national policy and derived from a review of the implementation of the policy. The National Action Plan focused on action to address areas of reform essential to improving education for all girls. The implementation of the National Action Plan was overseen by the National Committee on the Education of Girls and more recently by the MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce established in 1994. In 1993 parent organisations called for a focus on the specific educational needs of boys. The terms of reference of this Taskforce were formulated to take account of the issue.

The *National Strategy for Equity*, released by MCEETYA in 1994, provides a broad framework for nationally agreed goals and priorities, which build on state, territory and Commonwealth policies and programs addressing equity objectives. Both the principles which underpin the strategy, and the strategy itself, focus on improving access, participation and schooling outcomes.

Work in this area has operated within the framework established by the *Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia.* Through this the states, territories and sectors demonstrated their commitment to providing an excellent education for all students, so that they can participate actively and fully in all aspects of the life of the community after they leave school. However, girls and women still suffer many inequities because they have less access to participation in policy and decision-making and their contributions to community life are often undervalued. Boys and men, on the other hand, also suffer inequities through narrow definitions of what is appropriate for them in private and public life.

Gender equity for boys and girls

To address the differing concerns and education experiences of boys and girls it is necessary to acknowledge that gender is a central issue for both girls and boys. It is clear that boys have needs that are not being met effectively by schools. Narrow versions of masculinity and obsolete views of men's and women's roles restrict boys' opportunities in relation to their educational and social development, vocational experiences, and therefore their subsequent life chances.

There has been acknowledgment that girls are often disadvantaged by their school experiences, and that girls and boys achieve markedly different outcomes from their schooling. Despite the fact that girls now stay longer at school than boys, they are not deriving the same post-school benefits from schooling. There are also significant differences between the rewards of schooling experienced by different groups of girls and different

groups of boys. It is also acknowledged that to address inequities experienced by girls it is necessary to look at the same time at the education of boys.

This view is supported by a closer examination of both the experience and outcomes of schooling, particularly as they apply to different groups of girls and boys. Differences in subject choices, differences in skill development and significantly different life experiences related to the impact of gender construction[3] are evident in the lives of both boys and girls.

Examination of current participation rates in school subjects, activities and programs and of the post-school lives of girls and boys, reveals the following:

· while girls are increasingly entering many traditionally male subject areas and some are achieving better results, overall they are participating in these at significantly lower levels than boys

· boys' participation remains concentrated in subjects traditionally seen as 'male-appropriate'

· boys continue to predominate in literacy, reading and other learning support programs, as well as in those for students with emotional or behavioural disturbances

· the interactive effects of gender with other factors, such as cultural background and socio-economic status, have differential impacts on particular groups of girls and boys

· sexual harassment and sex-based harassment including homophobia continue to have an unacceptable impact on the school experience of girls and some boys

· schools and communities increasingly acknowledge that violence in schools is related to limited understandings of 'appropriate' femininity and masculinity

· there is a greater likelihood of male involvement in violence, risk-taking behaviours, and behaviours destructive of emotional and physical health

· the consequences of girls and boys continuing to narrowly define gender may be reflected in more limited post-school career options for girls than boys, and in boys being less likely to experience positive and active involvement in family life

· school achievements in gender equity do not necessarily translate into reforms in the workplace or the wider community, and schools do not always teach those skills necessary to overcome post-school barriers to equity

· despite the increasing number of women entering occupations that are identified as masculine, women remain under-represented in management and executive positions and within the full range of decision-making forums which shape society

· women and girls carry the greater share of unpaid work, while boys and men have less involvement in caring and family roles

· women predominate in lower-paid and part-time occupations and therefore have lower incomes than men.

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[3] See the accompanying papers, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction', and 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning' in Part B of the Framework: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

These phenomena are part of the complex dynamic of gender, schooling and society, creating a range of interpretations of masculinity and femininity.

As Connell (1994) states:

> ... gender is a pattern of social relations that exists at multiple levels in and around schools: in institutional patterns, in interpersonal relations, and in culture. Gender relations divide, positioning people and actions as masculine and feminine, but also shape common frameworks of action. Gender relations are constantly under construction, contain significant tensions, and therefore have many possibilities of change.

Patterns of participation in further education, employment and levels of income also show differences in the experiences of men and women which can be linked to the unexamined acceptance of the 'gender divide'. This is becoming increasingly outmoded as technology, work restructuring and community views about participation and equality are played out in the daily lives of the community. These changes in the nature of work, and in the structure and nature of the family, all have implications for the lives of women, which have been widely commented on and which are now well known. Less attention has been paid to the fact that these changes have also had significant impact on the lives of men.

Women and men now must work alongside each other as subordinates, peers and supervisors in almost all areas of work, as women increasingly make inroads into areas never before available to them—as commercial pilots, as members of Antarctic scientific teams, in the military, and so on. Similarly, men are moving into areas of work previously the domain of women—for example, nursing and child care.

Relations and expectations between women and men have been fundamentally altered by these new arrangements, and so too have women's and men's perceptions about what it means to be female and male in our society. Despite these changes in certain parts of society, ingrained attitudes still exist that create barriers which prevent some women and some men reaching their full potential.

Changes in the community are accelerating and young men and women will be participating in a society which is characterised by both individual and systemic responses to those changes. Inevitably, responses will be centred on the reforming and reframing of structures in society as well as the personal lives of community members.

The community looks to education as one of the main agents in the preparation of young people for participation in work, civic and domestic life. *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* is therefore a response to developing understandings about the demands of our society in the future; to the growth in knowledge about the impact of gender and gender construction on human life in and beyond schooling; and to the need for strategic directions for action.

REFERENCE

Connell, RW (1994), 'Knowing about masculinity, teaching the boys', paper delivered at the Pacific Sociological Association Conference, San Diego, April, 1994.

GENDER EQUITY IN SCHOOLING

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

The principles for action have been developed to encapsulate best practice in education for all students, and to link the best practice to the demands of a vigorous and changing community. These principles draw upon current understandings of the issues which are central to gender equity, and are the foundation for *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*.

1. Equitable access to an effective and rewarding education, which is enhanced rather than limited by definitions of what it means to be female and male, should be provided to all girls and boys.

2. Girls and boys should be equipped to participate actively in a contemporary society which is characterised by changing patterns of working, civic and domestic life.

3. Schools should be places in which girls and boys feel safe, are safe, and where they are respected and valued.

4. Schools should acknowledge their active role in the construction of gender, and their responsibility to ensure that all organisational and management practices reflect commitment to gender equity.

5. Understandings of gender construction should include knowledge about the relationship of gender to other factors, including socio-economic status, cultural background, rural/urban location, disability and sexuality.

6. Understanding and accepting that there are many ways of being masculine and feminine will assist all students to reach their full potential.

7. Effective partnerships between schools, education and training systems, parents, the community, and a range of other agencies and organisations, will contribute to improvement and change in educational outcomes for girls and boys.

8. Intervention programs and processes should be targeted towards increasing options, levels of participation and outcomes of schooling for girls and boys.

9. Anti-discrimination and other relevant legislation at state, territory, federal and international levels should inform educational programs and services.

10. Continuous monitoring of educational outcomes and program review should inform and enhance decisions on the development, resourcing and delivery of effective and rewarding education for girls and boys.

NATIONAL MONITORING MECHANISMS

In order to put the principles for action into practice, improved monitoring and reporting procedures are needed which can demonstrate success and critically analyse failure. Much useful information already exists in national data collections. However, where needed, new mechanisms should be designed to monitor the implementation and outcomes using the indicators for improvement within the Framework. These mechanisms, on a national basis, will provide consistency in findings and comparability of data over time. Base-line data, disaggregated by factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability and rural/urban location, need to be established as soon as possible. Suggested monitoring mechanisms include the following:

Periodic national audits/surveys to determine such matters as:

· the content, participation and outcomes, with respect to gender equity, of all professional development courses for teachers

· teachers' attitudes and teaching practices which reflect an understanding of gender construction

· school and system initiatives to promote gender-inclusive approaches to curriculum and resourcing

· school and system practices for the recruitment of teachers which incorporate understandings of gender in their selection criteria

· quality assurance procedures which include principles of gender equity

· the extent to which gender equity principles are reflected in curriculum frameworks

· students' attitudes and knowledge about the construction of gender and its relationship to other demographic factors

· student attitudes about the processes of teaching and the quality of their learning experience

· student attitudes to sex-based harassment, awareness of complaints procedures and sense of personal safety at school

· the range and availability of vocational training programs offered in schools, and the extent to which gender equity principles are reflected in their curriculum

· parents' and students' attitudes to gender issues in the context of the impact of gender on an individual student's development.

· levels of parent participation in forums with teachers to discuss mutual concerns about girls and boys

· the coverage of gender issues in school, system and parent forums and publications.

Reporting mechanisms

In reporting through the *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia*, systems should include information on the way in which gender issues have been addressed in each of the selected focus areas. This may include:

· levels of student participation and attainment in key subject areas in the secondary years, vocational education and training programs, and patterns of student transition to post-school destinations

· changes in the direction of funding

· major program and policy developments including policies to monitor sex-based harassment and school violence

· significant achievements in attaining gender equity including those which target particular groups of girls and boys

· examples of best practice across all levels of schooling, of programs to address sex-based harassment and behaviour management programs which represent a whole of school approach to gender and violence

· anticipated work in this area.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF GENDER CONSTRUCTION

Understanding of the process of gender construction is crucial if schools and systems are to work for equitable educational experiences for girls and boys. Dominant concepts of masculinity and femininity define males and females as opposites by highlighting their differences and assigning them unequal value, status and power. These dominant concepts limit, in different ways, expectations of girls' and boys' participation and post-school outcomes. They ignore the way boys and girls actively develop their own concept of what it means to be masculine or feminine and how this may change over time and in different contexts. They also ignore the relationship of gender to other factors, such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability, sexuality and rural/urban location.

Increasingly attention is being given to the negative and positive impact schooling can have on the construction of gender. Development of appropriate curriculum will increase the knowledge and skills of the whole education community to better understand gender construction and improve current gender relations.

Outcome

> **The concept of gender construction will be acknowledged, examined and understood at all levels of schooling**

Develop and deliver curriculum within compulsory and post-compulsory frameworks which provide opportunities for girls and boys to:

- study perspectives on the construction of gender within different historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts

- examine and challenge current gender-based relationships which limit options for different groups of girls and boys

- explore the role of language in the construction of gender

- critically examine the influence of popular culture on gender

- understand the impact of gender construction from early childhood to the post-compulsory years

- develop skills, behaviours, attitudes and understandings that will enable them to construct equal and respectful relationships.

Increase the knowledge, understanding and skills of teachers, managers and parents about gender construction by:

- investigating and identifying the appropriate skills which teachers and managers need to deal with gender construction and its impact on the lives of boys and girls

- identifying ways that teachers, managers and parents can overcome resistance to learning about gender construction

- ensuring that existing and future Commonwealth, state, territory and sector professional development programs, such as the National Professional Development Program, include a focus on the construction of gender in all curriculum areas

- ensuring that parents and teachers work in partnership to explore the issues and develop consistent approaches to achieving gender equity.

Indicators of improvement

- an increase in opportunities across all curriculum areas for students to examine how gender is constructed

- an increase in the provision of, and participation in, professional development courses for teachers and managers which include an examination of gender equity issues

- an increase in the provision of, and participation in, parent/teacher forums on gender equity

- an increase in the proportion of teachers whose teaching practices are gender inclusive

- students are more aware of issues relating to the construction of gender

- classroom dynamics demonstrate improved relationships between girls and boys, boys and boys and, girls and girls.

For background information on this strategic direction and understanding of the concept of 'construction of gender', refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Understanding the Process of Gender Construction', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

2. CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING

The formal curriculum of the school plays a vital role in students' learning about gender relations and in developing a sense of self. Curriculum is fundamental to change, and should be continually trialed, examined and adapted to ensure that it is appropriate. Curriculum reform, through frameworks such as the Statements and Profiles for Australian Schools, will incorporate principles of gender equity into all aspects of curriculum development and delivery. By recognising existing best practice and through constant monitoring, schools will ensure that both girls' and boys' experiences and outcomes of schooling are positive and relevant to their aspirations.

Outcome

> **Curriculum reform will acknowledge and address gender equity principles in meeting the needs of both girls and boys**

Expand teaching and learning within nationally agreed curriculum frameworks, pre-school to Year 12, in ways which:

- incorporate the range of experience, knowledge, skills and aspirations of women and girls as well as that of men and boys

- examine how aspects of current understandings of masculinity and femininity are linked to behaviours which are damaging to boys and men, and girls and women

- ensure that the principles and understandings of gender equity are integral to curriculum development, assessment design and implementation in all key learning areas

- ensure that the curriculum addresses the issues of paid and unpaid work

- develop benchmarks for assessing key competencies which benefit both girls and boys.

Enhance the academic success of all girls and boys by:

- creating the expectation from the earliest years of schooling that literacy and numeracy are core expectations for both girls and boys

- ensuring that early intervention for girls and boys, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy, is sensitive to the impact of the construction of gender

- investigating and developing responses to differences in participation and achievement for particular groups of girls and boys

- placing a higher value on participation and achievement in the arts and the humanities for both boys and girls

- challenging teacher, parent and community attitudes and responses to the continuing sex segregation apparent in subject choices

- establishing links between what girls and boys are learning and their post-school aspirations.

Provide both girls and boys with a powerful basis for engaging in the emerging areas of the curriculum by:

- enabling all groups of girls and all groups of boys to become competent and confident users of all aspects of information technology

- ensuring that the development and delivery of the civics and citizenship curriculum acknowledges and incorporates gender equity principles

- ensuring that enterprise education initiatives with business and industry acknowledge and include gender equity principles and understandings.

Create teaching and learning environments for girls and boys which are characterised by:

- an overall school organisation that is gender-inclusive

- teacher attitudes and behaviours which demonstrate respect for, and have high expectations of, all girls and boys

- reasonableness and flexibility in response to personal circumstances, particularly in situations where students are at risk in gender-specific ways (e.g. pregnancy)

- challenges to disruptive and dominating behaviour within a framework of procedures which reflect an understanding of gender equity

- a range of teaching and assessment, recording and reporting methods

- reduced levels of anxiety and antipathy towards gender equity

- the use by teachers and students of the knowledge and skills needed to actively engage in changing gender relations.

Indicators of improvement

- more schools use information on participation and achievement by gender in planning for improvement

- an increase in the rates of participation and attainment among all groups of students in subjects where they are currently under-represented

- an increase in students' perception that their teachers incorporate principles of gender equity to enhance the quality of their learning experience

- an increase in early intervention initiatives which address the different perspectives of girls and boys

- an increase in the number of schools and systems with policies and procedures to address gender equity in organisation, resourcing, career support and professional development.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Curriculum, Teaching and Learning', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

3. VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

Schools have an important role in providing an environment in which children feel safe and are supported in dealing with experiences of violence in or out of school. Violence, including sex-based harassment, inhibits learning and impacts on the experiences and outcomes of schooling for girls and boys. This impact can be intensified for some students on the basis of disability and cultural background. Whole-school approaches to identifying and eliminating gendered violence in the lives of students are essential. This involves the development of curriculum responses in key areas, gender-sensitive behaviour management programs and an education environment which is supportive and conducive to respectful gender relationships.

Outcome

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Gendered violence and sex-based harassment will be eliminated from schools

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Develop and review curriculum programs and operational practices for all levels of schooling which:

- promote understanding of the construction of gender and its links to violence

- challenge gendered violence and sex-based harassment in schools

- teach effective communication and relationship skills, and the management of conflict, to girls and boys at all levels of schooling

- explore the nature of, and reasons for, violence and bullying between boys and girls, boys and boys, and girls and girls, in both single-sex and co-educational settings at all levels of schooling

- provide girls and boys with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding about, and skills to deal with violence, sex-based harassment (including homophobia), and gender-based power.

Establish and maintain an educational environment in which:

- teachers are supported and valued in developing positive and respectful ways of relating to boys and girls

- school discipline and behaviour management policies and practices are consistent with the principles of gender equity

- procedures for dealing with complaints of violence and harassment are clearly understood and implemented

- school structures and procedures are flexible and enable students, teachers and parents to cooperatively address the issues of gendered violence.

Ensure that the management of student behaviour:

· attends to the behaviour, both passive and active, which inhibits girls' and boys' learning

· develops understanding of, and responses to, resistance to teaching and learning about gender

· challenges the gender-based assumptions about appropriate behaviour

· includes effective, non-violent sanctions against violent and abusive behaviour

· examines the relationship between gender violence and other forms of violence

· operates within policy frameworks and guidelines which are explicit about gender equity.

Extend management procedures for sex-based harassment which acknowledge that gender construction impacts on behaviour by:

· developing and monitoring policies at system and school level

· developing and implementing training and development programs for all staff

· establishing structural processes for handling complaints quickly and effectively

· seeking information from parents, girls and boys to contribute to policy development and to improve practice.

Develop positive, supportive and culturally sensitive environments for girls and boys which:

· respect the need for privacy, confidentiality, safety and physical hygiene

· provide equitable access to, and use of, all learning and recreation areas in school

· are responsive to the views of both girls and boys about appropriate facilities and environments.

Indicators of improvement

· an increase in the number of schools and systems with policies to address sex-based harassment, and behaviour management programs

· fewer incidents of sex-based and homophobic harassment and violence at school

· students, parents and teachers demonstrate lower levels of acceptance of gendered violence and sex-based harassment

· girls and boys report confidence in, and satisfaction with, complaint procedures

· curriculum materials across all levels and learning areas address gendered violence and abuse

· professional development programs incorporate understandings about gender and violence.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Violence and School Culture'*,* Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

4. POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Schools and systems have worked for a generation to challenge girls' and boys' choices of traditionally gendered subjects and occupational areas. Major transformations in society and the world of work make it imperative that all students leave school with the knowledge, understanding and skills to contest inequitable structures and practices. Students need to understand the links between gendered assumptions about, and practices within, areas of paid and unpaid work. Outcomes from schooling should enable students to cross traditional gender lines in subject choices and post-school pathways and shape their futures in private, economic and civic life.

Outcome

> **Post-school pathways for all students will be expanded beyond those governed by conventional assumptions based on gender**

Provide opportunities in the curriculum for girls and boys to critically examine paid and unpaid work by:

- examining the history and implications of the gendered division of paid and unpaid work which supports the current dichotomy of public and private life

- examining society's presumed dependence of women on men's paid labour, and men's real dependence on women's unpaid labour

- acknowledging and examining the implications of domestic and family responsibilities on women's lives and careers and of the traditional divisions of labour on men's lives

- exploring the contribution of unpaid work to the Australian economy

- developing, from the earliest years of schooling, skills necessary to undertake family and household management.

Challenge conventional assumptions of gender-appropriate work by:

- increasing girls' and boys' awareness of differences in power, income and work-time flexibility; opportunities and job security in different types of work; and entry-level requirements for specific study and work options

- developing curriculum about the world of work which explores gender-based perceptions of work and careers, at all levels of schooling

- expanding work experience programs in both paid and unpaid work environments for students of both sexes

- developing curriculum pathways which expand general and vocational pathways for both boys and girls

- providing information to teachers, parents and the community about changed and emerging employment patterns.

Ensure that vocational and entry level training and career education programs are constructed in ways which benefit both girls and boys by:

· expanding the access, variety, scope and flexibility of such programs

· diversifying the range of industries and union and industry personnel involved in school-industry schemes

· providing a range of ways in which all students can identify, develop and demonstrate their competencies

· developing measures of effectiveness for these programs which are consistent with the principles of gender equity

· implementing procedures for eliminating sex-based harassment in these programs

· monitoring of female and male participation and developing initiatives to change any significant imbalances which are identified.

Indicators of improvement

· all areas of the curriculum explore the relationship between the public and private domains

· more girls and boys are able to acquire and describe a full range of competencies from experience in both the public and private spheres which are applicable in paid work

· all vocational education programs reflect gender equity principles

· more boys and girls undertake work experience and vocational programs in non-traditional areas

· more equitable participation and attainment in schooling, and in the range of post-school options for employment, education and training, between all groups of girls and boys.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Post-school Pathways', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

5. SUPPORTING CHANGE

The achievement of gender equity in schools requires leadership, collaboration and signposts for future directions. Educational leaders and managers, teachers, schools and systems provide leadership in this area, in collaborative partnerships with a wide range of groups, organisations and communities. The most powerful partnership is between schools and parents. Change is also supported by the on-going collection of data, and by reporting and accountability processes to track progress and inform future planning and decision-making.

Outcome

> **Gender equity principles will be integral to school and system management**

Support change for gender equity in education by ensuring leaders and managers:

- promote gender equity as central to excellence in education

- participate in professional development about organisational and management practices which are consistent with gender equity principles

- provide resources and teacher professional development to support system and school-level gender initiatives

- support an environment in which the concept of gender equity is articulated and integrated into all policies, curriculum and school procedures

- incorporate demonstrated understandings of, and commitment to, gender equity in specifications for all positions

- provide training and development for all staff about the relationship between the construction of gender and educational processes and outcomes

- include issues of gender equity in performance management processes.

Support change by extending partnerships with parents, industry and the wider community to:

- explore the implications for education and employment of Commonwealth and state anti-discrimination legislation

- develop mutual understandings of gender equity and of the changing needs and concerns of girls and boys

- provide opportunities for collaborative action to achieve gender equity

- understand how the media can support and influence knowledge of gender issues

- ensure that across-agency responses are sensitive to gender and its relationships to risk factors

- position high-risk activities such as drug, alcohol and substance abuse within the framework of gender construction

- design and deliver specific service support in ways which are mindful of the different needs and circumstances of girls and boys.

Support change by developing adequate data gathering and information systems which:

- provide data on girls' and boys' participation and achievement, from a wide range of sources, as a basis for whole-school planning

- incorporate qualitative and quantitative processes

- enable systems to interpret data on the intersection of gender and other factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, disability and rural/urban location

- enable systems and schools to report on gender equity as an integral part of any accountability or quality assurance mechanisms

- enable the monitoring of community and parental support for, and involvement in, gender equity initiatives.

Indicators of improvement

- gender equity criteria are included in teacher selection processes and quality assurance reviews

- teachers, parents and students are increasingly aware of how the construction of gender influences educational outcomes

- teachers, parents and students are increasingly willing to take responsibility for change in attitudes and outcomes

- more parents participate with schools in developing gender equity initiatives

- more resources are allocated within schools to support gender equity initiatives

- educational leaders and managers are increasingly accountable and responsible for promoting and supporting gender equity.

For background information on this strategic direction, refer to Clarke, M and Page, C, 'Supporting Change', Part B: Perspectives on Gender Equity in Schooling.

P•A•R•T B

Perspectives
on
Gender Equity
in Schooling

UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF GENDER CONSTRUCTION

This section and the following four sections were prepared by Margaret Clarke and Carolyn Page under the auspices of the Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.

The fundamental shifts which have occurred this century about what it means to be female and male show quite clearly that femininity and masculinity are not necessarily inherent categories which pre-exist in each individual. Rather, they are historically and socially constructed and connected categories which are inscribed in social institutions, processes and practices, including those of the school.

Parents, care-givers and other adults who interact with young children routinely observe that gender differences 'appear' to emerge in even young children. How do we make sense of this seeming naturalness and irresistible persistence of gender differences? If gender differences were naturally of the order which we routinely observe, then they would be immutable. Research demonstrates that what emerges as maleness or femaleness changes in fundamental ways over time, across cultures and in different socio-economic circumstances.

Any approach taken by schools to work for equitable educational experiences and outcomes for girls and boys needs to be built on an informed understanding about how girls and boys come to understand and position themselves as female and male. There is now a great deal of research about the process of gender construction and some reasonably consistent understandings have emerged. These may seem complex, but because they have implications for how we move forward in the area of gender equity, they need to be clearly stated.

Research confirms that children do not learn how to be female and male in passive ways. Rather individuals actively develop a sense of themselves as gendered people by interacting with the myriad of messages and practices which they encounter. With each individual some aspects of the dominant social order come to be actively desired, while others may be resisted, reworked or responded to in terms of a need to belong or to feel in control. For example, a girl might desire to be seen as a 'good pupil' and position herself as teacher's helper, but may resist the versions of femininity involved in playing with Barbie dolls, and at the same time wear clothing that identifies her as part of a certain set of girls in the class.

As girls and boys develop a sense of self as gendered beings, they may come to actively desire ways of being that can be potentially limiting rather than liberating. For example, the boy who starts to define himself as emotionally invulnerable can find it very reassuring to keep his emotions at a distance. Thus alternative ways of being male or female may come to be seen as threatening and not desirable.

At the same time, positions taken up by individuals can often be contradictory or fluid, as girls and women and boys and men take up a range of different femininities and masculinities, depending on the context. For example, a girl may be very assertive and independent in some situations, but in others, easily influenced by the behaviour and views of boys, a boy may be aggressive with his friends, but very caring and sensitive towards his mother.

The role of language is crucial in this process. Language shapes reality, and it limits what ideas and concepts are available in a particular situation. In all aspects of our lives we engage with, resist, reframe with, the meanings available through language, to give meaning to every aspect of our lives. Ideas and understandings available through language shape our practice in a variety of ways in everyday interactions. For example, Walkerdine (1994) shows how teachers' talk about high-achieving girls frequently draws on deep cultural assumptions about femininity. Bright girls are frequently described as 'nice' and 'hard working' but are less likely than boys to be described as 'having potential'.

GENDER AND RELATIONS OF POWER

While it is important to focus on the way in which gender is created anew in individuals as they respond to social processes and practices, this process of creation needs to be read in the context of broader social processes. Gender is also a vital element of the social structures such as the economy, government, mass media and schooling. The everyday actions of individuals are shaped by their position in relation to these broader social structures.

Everyday notions of gender are generally expressed in terms of differences—differences that are not equally valued. They are also not symmetrical in that masculinity tends to be defined as that which is not feminine, but femininity is not defined as that which is not masculine. Further, to be like a girl is much worse than to be like a boy—so that to accuse a boy of being girl-like has far more negative weight than to accuse a girl of being boy-like. A girl who is positioned as a tomboy can take on some of the power associated with boy-like behaviours, but a boy who is seen as shy and quiet is often seen by teachers as having a serious problem in need of fixing. In this example, the rarely stated but feared possibility of homosexuality underscores teachers' concerns.

However, because power relations do not operate in a monolithic way, it is not true that all girls are always in a powerless position in relation to all boys. Girls may be positioned in powerful positions by teachers, for example, as helpers in the classroom. However, these powerful positions may be temporary, and may be situated within the context of being consistent with positions seen as appropriate for women and girls in the broader society—that of helpmate. In this case, the very fact of its being identified as a 'girls' thing' devalues it anyway. In addition these same powerful girls can always be rendered powerless through sexual and sex-based harassment.

Classroom observations confirm that the dominant masculine practices taken up by a group of boys severely limits the options of girls. For example, the constant displays of physical power and aggression, the deliberately crude and offensive behaviours, and the disparaging comments about girls and their bodies, have the effect of placing girls in the position of being dominated, controlled, disparaged, powerless and silent. When girls become silent in response to this positioning, it is not because they passively accept the boys' positioning of them. On the contrary, silence can be a very powerful and courageous position to adopt. They do of course get very angry about it. Rather, it is more a tactical response taken up because 'it gets worse if you stand up to it'. At times girls also resist this positioning, and fight back through ridicule or abuse, but they are not free to take up many other forms of

response because it is very difficult to completely reject the positioning given one by others, and often sanctioned by teachers.

That is, while girls can and do take up positions of power in schools and in their lives outside of school, the options on ways of being that are available to them are still inevitably inflected with wider gendered power relations. Constraints and processes of exclusion and alienation are not randomly distributed throughout society. Rather they are understandable in terms of systematic patterns of racism, sexism and homophobia.

While there is a dominant, culturally stylised and honoured form of masculinity, other less dominant forms are defined in relation to this position, drawing on such aspects as sexuality, physical development, strength, sporting prowess or social authority. Thus, those boys who do not get accorded status in terms of dominant masculinity may also experience a sense of silencing, subordination and domination, as they are positioned as female-like, or not male enough.

Gender formation can often be more clearly an aspect of group identity than self identity. For example, both girls and boys may experience intense contradictions between the kinds of behaviours they engage in as part of their peer group and their sense of self as experienced in more intimate personalised contexts.

We experience being women and men, girls and boys, in contradictory ways in terms of power relations. An Aboriginal woman may be powerful within her own community but not in the broader community, and a boy may be very powerful on the football field, but experience abuse, threat and disempowerment at home.

The most important point about all this is that individuals are not passively socialised into a gendered identity. It is, in general, a great deal more fluid and unpredictable than that. However, even though individuals make active choices, these choices are still constrained by gender boundaries which may be different in different circumstances These constraints are very real and work at both conscious and unconscious levels to limit the range of positions available to individuals at any given time.

GENDER AND DIFFERENCE

> *The very act of writing or talking about 'girls' can have the unintended effect of making invisible crucial differences among girls.*
> (Jones, 1993)

A lot of writing which acknowledges diversity among girls and boys tends to assume that the intersection of gender with other factors commonly associated with educational disadvantage works in an additive fashion—thus the concept of double disadvantage. This implies that, for example, Aboriginal girls have the same problems as 'Anglo' girls, only more so. However, it could also be the case that the intersection of Aboriginality and gender in some areas leads to qualitatively different experiences and problems.

The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* addresses the issue:

> *The understanding of what it means to be male or female is influenced in central ways by other factors such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, including Aboriginality, disability, religion, and so on. For example, Aboriginal girls or girls with disabilities are likely to encounter more offensive forms of sexual harassment than other girls.*

The notion of disadvantage can often be misunderstood. For example, while there is no denying that many indigenous families are disadvantaged—by poverty; by long-term unemployment; by racist attitudes in the wider community—they are not disadvantaged by being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, but by the ways in which the dominant white culture has constructed Aboriginality.

A critical issue for schools attempting to address gender issues in the context of—for example—ethnicity or Aboriginality is that these girls are faced with a dual struggle. On the one hand they are trying to deal with their femininity in the context of their own values and beliefs, while at the same time trying to position themselves within a cross-cultural situation.

In spite of these complexities, researchers working across a range of equity fields, in general, express at least one overwhelming common concern about the way in which being disabled or Aboriginal or poor or from a non-dominant ethnic group is experienced in intersection with gender issues. Their shared concern ranges around the paradoxical themes of marginalisation as a group, and categorisation in stereotypical and insulting ways.

GIRLS, BOYS AND GENDER RELATIONS

Recent media attention has focused on the negative consequences of dominant notions of masculinity for boys. There is no doubt that the machismo understanding that has come to dominate boys' understandings about masculinity is dangerous to their emotional health and physical well being. However, in addressing this concern, it needs to be clear that the experiences, circumstances and needs of boys cannot be seen as simply parallel to those of girls. It is not a mirror image.

Equating the position of boys with that of girls ignores the existing power relations between women and men and significantly overstates the gains that girls have made. It also ignores the role schools play in perpetuating existing power relations.

For example, the mirror image position would equate the under-representation of boys in the humanities to the under-representation of girls in mathematics and sciences. This overlooks the fact that science and mathematics are at the top of the academic hierarchy of subjects, and can provide bright students with the highest tertiary entrance scores and thus privileged access to the university courses that bring the highest economic and status rewards. In other words success in mathematics can bring with it individual economic rewards

On the other hand, success in the humanities does not, in general, lead to high paying, high status jobs, but can increase students' capacity for understanding people, society and the pressing social issues which those who get the high status jobs will have to solve. That is, success in the humanities will not necessarily bring individual economic and status

rewards. However, it will benefit others because it will increase the capacity of individuals to understand and respond justly to social issues and interpersonal relationships.

However, this does not mean that the problems presented and experienced by boys are not serious and do not need attention. The process of developing an acceptable masculine self has been variously described as a constricting, painful and fearful process requiring the passing of constant 'tests', full of pitfalls, and without any emotional support.

The pressure of gender conformity can be very strongly felt by both girls and boys. In the case of girls, the pressures on some in relation to body image lead to anorexia and death. In addition, girls are faced with a maze of decisions about whether to be like a girl in this situation, or like a boy in that situation—and are often damned in either. In the case of boys, the key aspects of dominant masculinity are clearly in evidence in any classroom in which there are boys. It is based on being strong and rough, on learning to take it, on being first or the best, on disassociating from girls or boys whose identity does not 'pass the test' of macho maleness, on not showing affection, and on defying authority, especially female authority. All these things serve to prove acceptable masculinity. Boys create and preserve this masculinity through fear of whatever might be constructed as female, since whatever masculinity is constructed is better than femininity. This creates problems for both boys and girls.

Gender is central to one's definition of self. Thus school becomes a testing ground for boys' and girls' assumptions about appropriate gender identity.

It is this painful process of developing and proving masculinity, at the expense of femininity, which partly explains the contradictory phenomenon that while men, as a group, are powerful and dominate the economic, political, social and personal spheres of life, they often experience fear of losing power. This feeling of powerlessness may increase males' negative attitudes and behaviour towards females, for example through sexual harassment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Both the formal and the informal curriculum are extremely important in the formation of gender identity. So much attention is now being paid to reform of the formal curriculum because not only is female almost invisible within it, but also because of the ways in which female is constructed in texts. At the same time, a powerful informal curriculum also teaches children what it is to be female and male.

Therefore, response to the demands for gender equity require more than just change to the formal messages which we give students through the curriculum. Gendered understandings are not formed simply through families or schools or peers, but through the myriad of relations with individuals, communities and institutions. What is important is that schools find ways to engage with students to actively draw on ideas and practices from their social context in order to help girls and boys come to see the powerful understandings and practices that sanction alternative ways of being. This is a very difficult and challenging undertaking.

From the students' point of view, one of the core activities which they are engaged in through schooling is the production of meaning of self—a self-identity. In this work, it is the interactions with peers and popular culture which are of utmost importance—who to be friends with, what music to listen to, what clothes to wear, what 'badges' to identify with. The formal culture and curriculum of the school can be of influence, but for students who have become alienated from the culture of the school, it is almost irrelevant in this process of identity formation, except in a negative sense. This is an area requiring curriculum reform.

Any initiative directed at changing boys' and girls' behaviour must take account of the meanings that students give to experiences and action, and the central role that this plays in the development of a gendered self. These behaviours may be perceived by the students as crucial to their acceptance in the group—crucial to their survival.

Unless the official culture and curriculum are experienced as positive for girls and boys, there is no mechanism for schools to intervene in this process except in negative ways.

One of the first steps in providing a climate for girls and boys in which gender identity formation can be undertaken in less fearful and more reflexive contexts is to make schools into caring communities where students feel that they belong, that they are valued, that they can make decisions and be part of a democratic community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR GIRLS

Our understanding about the role which dominant masculinity plays in positioning boys also has implications for girls. It limits the positions which girls can take up, in two ways: first, it positions girls because of the crucial role dominant masculinity plays in defining acceptable femininity; and secondly, the physical aggressiveness and abusive and disparaging behaviour often associated with dominant masculinity, limits the ways in which girls can behave and understand themselves.

Working with girls can have some positive effects in enabling them to identify the positions which they take up in relation to the dominant boys, and to examine a wider range of options. For example, in some classrooms girls have managed to take up productive positions in response to boys' harassing behaviour by acting in solidarity with each other. However, the most likely outcome of work with girls is that hostility will escalate and the non-dominant boys will either continue to be marginalised and silent, or may try harder to 'win' by joining in the oppressive sexist practices in the hope of earning the badge of manhood.

Given that gender is constructed in relational terms, it makes far more sense to focus, not just on the girls and their responses to oppressive dominant masculinity, but on gender relationships. By working with both girls and boys, separately and together, we can assist them to identify spaces and possibilities in their daily lives where gender relations can be disrupted and transformed.

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CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING

Given that all students are entitled to an education that fits them for their future as active citizens, it is essential that both girls and boys have a sustained opportunity to come to understand the ways in which dominant understandings about masculinity and femininity are developed and maintained at both micro and macro levels, and to understand the limits that this imposes.

> *Both girls and boys should be aware that, in Australia, women and girls are still disadvantaged in terms of economics, employment, and political decision making and are less safe in their homes, and that men and boys are more likely to die through accident, suicide, murder, to be jailed and to lead emotionally isolated and restricted lives.*
> (Gilbert, 1994)

It is a relatively easy matter to identify, in almost all areas of learning, examples which show how the ways in which knowledge is organised, selected and valued, reinforces a world view in which masculinity and male perspectives, male experiences and histories, are depicted as central and normal, while female and non-dominant groups' perspectives, experiences and histories are constructed as 'other' and marginal.

Women are by and large invisible in the curriculum, and the skills, understandings and ways of knowing which are traditionally associated with women's spheres of action and expertise are devalued, or omitted. The experiences of some groups are extolled and admired, at the expense of others.

Parts of the curriculum are assigned different values, depending where they lie along the continuum of masculine/important to feminine/unimportant. The central role of gender in the organisation of society and in the values assigned to experiences and social practices continues to be contested. Schools need to address the complex personal and moral dilemmas which students face in understanding and deciding about critical aspects of their lives—for example, work, relationships and family.

Until relatively recently, most people took it for granted that gender differences, as constructed, were part of the natural order. Therefore, the subject of gender construction and its central role in delimiting individual development was not seen as worthy of intellectual reflection. This has left most of us bereft of any means of bringing broader cultural understandings to bear on one of the most important and influential things which we have learned—our sense of ourselves as gendered people. It is important that all students have an opportunity to critically reflect on the impact of gender in their own lives and relationships, both at the present and in the future, and to unravel the ways in which institutions and practices act to maintain unequal and gendered ways of being and relating.

One of the most important findings from work undertaken over the past few years is that teachers too need the opportunity to reflect on the impact of gender in their own lives. Gendered ways of interacting with others and of understanding the world are so deeply embedded into our language, our culture and our everyday practices that it is difficult for the impact of such interactions to be apparent unless opportunities for reflection and discussion are available for teachers as well as students.

Thus for both teachers and students, emphasis needs to be placed on examining the social practices that support and maintain limited views of masculinity and femininity, that set one sex in opposition to the other, and that values those things associated with masculinity and demeans those associated with femininity. One of the important aspects which needs to be made visible is the practices that act as boundary enforcers—practices which reward some behaviours and sanction others, often at great cost to individuals. Girls and boys and women and men who put themselves outside of acceptable parameters can be treated very severely—ostracised, harassed, abused, denigrated and even subjected to physical violence.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

> *What we teach, and how we teach it, presents girls and boys with constant messages about what it is to be male and female, and it can be argued that this works to the detriment of both boys and girls. What is more, the curriculum fails to provide girls and boys with the skills they need to see those messages.*
> (Cameron, 1995)

Both the formal curriculum of the school, and the informal curriculum which operates across all sites in students' lives—classroom, playground, home, and the broader environment—play a vital role in students' learning about gender relations and in developing a sense of self as gendered people.

When students learn about gender, the informal curriculum—particularly that carried in the media—plays a very influential role. The highly gendered sites of commercial television and the multimedia forms of children's and adolescents' popular culture provide familiar, pervasive and influential texts in the lives of students. These are not experienced as messages to be passively received, nor are they necessarily intellectually analysed. Rather, they are taken up with varying degrees of challenge, acceptance and resistance. They become part of the readily available and shared scripts, practices and understandings which students incorporate into their daily lives—into their talk, their play, their presentation of their bodies and so on. When these influences combine with the informal curriculum of the playground and the corridors, it is clear that it is through these avenues that powerful understandings about gender are developed.

These continue to be learned in the classroom and through school structures such as policies and procedures. Students learn about gender in *all* formal and informal aspects of schooling, currently in unexamined and often unnoticed ways, and without the skills and understandings they need in order to engage, contest and rework the information.

Schools, however, have a mandate to *educate*—that is, one of their reasons for existence is to provide a place in which individuals can obtain a broader frame of reference within which to understand through the formal curriculum, the immediate experience and value assertions promoted through all the other agencies of influence. These agencies—the media, the church, community organisations, and so on—may *promulgate* whatever set of values they choose. However, it is the school's responsibility to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for making informed, considered decisions and judgements about these values.

An educationally defensible process would enable people to draw on broader cultural understandings and theoretical frameworks in order to reflect on raw experience. The role of education is to feed informed reflection on the human condition in order that young people might come to participate fully in a dynamic and democratic society. This means that education should help young people to understand and examine what is, and how it came to be that way. If we want to prepare girls and boys for the demands and possibilities that their adult world will offer them, we need schools that will:

· work to liberate girls and boys from gender-based constraints

· allow all members of the school community to be more fully human in an environment that is safe, and challenging

· encourage all students to move beyond the negative constraints that current understandings about gender can impose.

GENDER AND CURRICULUM REFORM

Curriculum is fundamental to change, and needs to be continually examined and adapted to ensure that it is appropriate, particularly in relation to issues of gender and equity. The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* took a comprehensive view about curriculum reform, arguing that it '... *requires a fundamental reworking of what knowledge is valued in the curriculum, how that knowledge is made available and how it is taught*'.

Over the last four years there has been a great deal of research and development work in this area, largely, though not exclusively, through the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project. As part of its brief, this project worked in parallel with the development of curriculum statements and profiles for Australian schools, to integrate inclusive perspectives across all learning areas. The statements and profiles in eight learning areas provide the framework for review and reform of curriculum, and for examination of the values, assumptions and exclusions which we have brought to teaching and to learning—those promoted in the content and delivery, and those taken by students into their post-school lives. The statements and profiles similarly provide the framework for reform of the delivery and assessment process, and for monitoring of achievements and experience, as a basis for decisions about future action.

A number of important resources were produced under the auspices of the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project, and out of this cutting-edge work has emerged a framework for thinking about, and implementing, inclusive curriculum.

GENDER, KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

Gender-differentiated knowledge

A great deal of research has been conducted into the ways in which gender-differentiated fields of knowledge and capacities are developed, identified and mapped out. Perhaps the clearest example of such gender-differentiated fields in schools can be seen in the polarisation of maths and science at one end of the male-female spectrum, with humanities and English at the other. This polarisation reflects the gender dualism which is deeply embedded in our language and culture. Thus, the supposedly feminine attributes of

intuition, emotionality and expressivity have become associated with English and the humanities, while maths and science have become characterised by a particular form of supposedly masculine rationality—to the detriment of both learning areas, and both boys and girls.

This has resulted in areas of learning in which there is strong and uncontested gender tagging. This becomes clear even in the first few months of school, where children appear to self-select out of areas of learning, or are pushed out by others. Often this is seen by teachers as consistent with child-centred understandings about free choice. However, our developing understandings about how gender is constructed suggest that children are not so much making free choices on the basis of 'natural' interests but are already actively positioning themselves in limited ways because of their developing sense of gender-appropriate behaviour, and their strong desire for a gendered self.

Some researchers have highlighted the links between dominant understandings of gender and patterns or styles of learning which have led to particular subjects being perceived as gender-inflected. For many boys, English is at odds with their understandings of masculinity, since it may involve reflective behaviour or self-disclosure, which may result in boys' fearing ridicule. While girls choosing out of mathematics and science has been noted as an area of concern for some time, attitudes of boys towards literacy and English and health-related areas should also be seen as problematic. This highlights the need to consider the role and effect of dominant masculinity in limiting the capacities of boys to express ideas, and to understand, express and deal with emotions. There is also a need to consider the ways in which masculinity sustains violence and abuse, and restricts possibilities for girls as well as boys.

Gender-differentiated learning

Research has also provided new insights into the gender-differentiated experiences of learning and of being a student.

What assumptions about ideal learners inform teachers interactions with their students? There is some evidence that 'a good worker' means different things depending on whether the student is a boy or a girl. Model female students are more likely to be seen by their teachers as nice and helpful, neat, hard-working and obedient, even if this is not actually the case. When girls behave more like ideal male learners—boisterous, rule-challenging, competitive, messy and creative—they are often seen as needing to be brought into line. Similarly, a very quiet boy is often the subject of considerable concern by teachers. But an equally quiet girl may well be overlooked. It is important that teachers make explicit for all students which approaches to learning are valued, and that these approaches are valued and encouraged for all students, both girls and boys.

Review of the research and the resource materials on gender-inclusive teaching identifies a movement away from a position which asserts that there is such a thing as 'girls' preferred learning styles', to an understanding that the principles identified as good for girls are, at one level, good for everyone, but in other respects, not well thought out in terms of class, culture and other intersecting aspects of disadvantage.

For example, relating learning to aspects of lived experience, discussing ideas and knowing that learning is about an active engagement with knowledge, ideally empowers all students, not just girls. However, while many teachers assume this, a failure to make this explicit and to teach all students what this means can lead to only some students taking up these understandings—those students whose cultural context already prepares them for these ways of understanding the learning process.

It is also important to ensure that cultural and class differences in understandings about the learning process are not used to legitimise different educational outcomes. For example, New Zealand researcher Alison Jones concluded that while Maori and Pakeha girls begin school with different understandings about what learning is all about, their different treatment in the classroom and the lack of any explicit teaching about what learning is all about ensured that these different starting points became exaggerated and entrenched.

Finally, it is possible to identify emerging understandings about gendered resistance to some aspects of learning about gender. An understanding about how girls and boys develop a gendered self-identity, the strong degree of investment they have in this process, and the strong sanctions which operate against taking up alternative ways of being masculine or feminine can help teachers to understand why some more direct attempts at delivering non-sexist messages do not appear to succeed.

Both girls and boys may resist engaging in studying and exploring gender issues, and this resistance can be understood when one acknowledges the high degree of investment which boys and girls both have in maintaining dominant gendered ways of being. Often the risks in terms of group identity and acceptance are so high that girls and boys are not simply free to choose. Girls may resist because they are often positioned within the exploration as the victim or the problem. Boys may resist because most do not identify assumptions about masculinity as contributing to any problems which they might have in their lives. It has become 'natural' to always compete, to have to be tough—to show you can take it—and to always be called on to prove yourself in terms of masculinity.

Teachers can assist students to expand their understandings about gender-appropriate behaviours and choices, but students are more likely to do so in response to a problem or an issue identified by them rather than one imposed by teachers.

In establishing a shared ground on which girls and boys can acknowledge the problematic aspects of current gender relations, and their implications for education, it is vital that girls and boys can come to see some of the sanctions that operate, their investments in the process, and some of the contradictions as well as the hurts, injustices and limitations that affect them.

ACCESS AND EQUITY

An inclusive curriculum ensures that the effects of femininity and masculinity, as currently constructed, do not impact on individuals in ways which would disadvantage them in terms of access to all learning areas.

Teachers already draw on their professional knowledge about the learning process. They do this routinely as they make decisions about classroom organisation and teaching practice. However, there are implications for classroom organisation and teaching practice

which arise from understanding about how students take up gendered practices. These implications include:

- addressing sex-based harassment and its impact in limiting or silencing some students

- ensuring that students have equal access to teacher time, as well addressing the quality of this interaction

- using non-sexist and inclusive language, resources and illustrative examples

- ensuring equal access to resources and to areas of learning

- providing a forum in which the student voice is encouraged, included and valued

- developing and using contexts which are relevant and meaningful for girls as well as boys and, in particular, for all groups of girls and boys—for example, girls with disabilities, Aboriginal boys, and so on

- providing bridging experiences when students' background skills and understandings differ because of gender or the intersection of gender and class, cultural and other differences

- recognising and developing support structures for students whose out-of-school, or in some cases, in-school experiences, impose particular barriers and problems—for example, girls who are mothers and have childcare responsibilities, and girls and boys who are homeless or subject to violence and sexual abuse, may need additional support measures, including more flexibility in terms of time, to ensure that they have equal access to learning

- recognising that often the assessment or feedback mechanisms of the classroom give students inadequate messages about what is being valued in the learning process; what is being assessed needs to be well thought out, articulated and clearly communicated to students

- reviewing the selection processes for special provision programs—for example, many students come to the attention of teachers as needing special and remedial assistance with literacy because of their disruptive behaviour.

  It is highly likely that there may be some quiet girls and quiet boys who have equal or even greater need for intervention but are not identified as needing assistance because of their 'invisibility'. There is evidence that selection for special assistance which is based on disruptive behaviour, rather than on objective measures of need, contributes to the marked imbalance in the numbers of girls and boys in such programs.

ENSURING EQUALLY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM

Equality of access to learning is of limited value if the curriculum offering is not equally valuable to all students. Considerable work has already been done on examining the appropriateness of the curriculum.

Initially, action in this area tended to focus on including and valuing female knowledge and experience in the curriculum. This was based on an understanding that traditional approaches to curriculum have tended to marginalise the knowledge, experiences and understandings of girls and women which need to be given more value for both girls and boys. This has usually involved including a broader range of perspectives, voices and skills across all areas of learning, adding units of work which focus on women, and emphasising those areas of knowledge, skills and understanding which have traditionally been valued and undertaken mainly by women—such as cooperative work, conflict-resolution skills, empathy and learnings related to relationships, household work, and caring responsibilities.

The initial justification for this work was that while girls were succeeding at learning across all areas of the curriculum, they were also learning very damaging and limiting things about what it means to be female. They were learning that women do not and did not have agency in the world and over the circumstances of their lives, do not achieve in the things that matter, and that the things that women have achieved or do achieve are not really important.

More recent work in this field has underscored the importance of incorporating these aspects into the curriculum as important and mainstream concerns for all students, not just to challenge and interrupt harmful and limiting images about women and their possibilities (although this is very important), but also because both boys and girls need this knowledge if they are to take up the challenges of the twenty-first century. Boys and girls need to be challenged to ask knowledge why such has traditionally been excluded. This goes to the heart of our social vision for the future and the implications which this has for our understanding of curriculum offerings.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE

So what knowledge, skills and understandings do girls and boys require to live and work in tomorrow's world? What kinds of changes are likely to occur in our society and what demands will this place on tomorrow's adults in terms of relationships, households and family units, in civic and community life, and in workplaces? In what ways do current understandings about masculinity and femininity need to be challenged if girls and boys are to be equipped to take up this challenge?

While these questions cannot be answered with any degree of specificity, we do know that the changes in gender relations which have occurred in the last 20 years alone, already challenge, in fundamental ways, the dominant understandings about masculinity and femininity currently being taken up by girls and boys. The signs of dysfunction are already manifest and costly. The changes that are likely to occur over the next 20 years are likely to be in similar directions (with some countervailing tendencies), but the pace may well accelerate. This suggests that without changes to dominant notions of masculinity and femininity, the indices of dysfunction—such as high levels of male violence and gender-differentiated patterns of poverty, family structure, suicide rates and health statistics—are likely to become worse not better. In addition the need for gender education among key decision-makers (for example, judges) is likely to become even more urgent.

Some of the early work in girls' education tended to be based on a view of equality which assumed male patterns as the goal or the norm. These approaches worked towards the creation of conditions in which girls and women could have life patterns more like those of men, as well as having access to and benefits from structures which men currently enjoy. This goal was somewhat problematic, as historically these benefits have accrued because the social structure of work was built on the life patterns of men, which in turn were only possible because of the life patterns of women, that is, the concept of the full time job was designed for a breadwinner who supported a wife and children at home. The fact that her work in the domestic sphere freed him to be the breadwinner was never made visible.

Women, as a group, will not be able to take up the same life patterns as men without major changes in the ways in which the devalued invisible work in the private realm of the home gets done. It is now recognised that it is no longer justifiable to expect women to participate as equals with men in the paid sphere and in public life, when they still carry the major burden for unpaid work in the domestic sphere.

What is more, men are unlikely to take up this challenge while the public/private and paid/unpaid gendered dualisms continue to inform the way we see the world. This means bringing household work into focus, through the curriculum, as a major economic and productive activity.

It is also becoming increasingly clear that the traditional masculine orientation towards work, relationships, the body and dealing with stress and anger are in need of further work. To address these issues, it is important to engage boys in examining gender construction to develop the skills necessary for good health and equal interpersonal relationships, including empathy and conflict management, to be domestically competent, and to understand that violence towards females and other males is unacceptable.

There has always been a strong tradition in education that espouses the purpose of education as enacting a vision of the good society, that is, it is not enough just to educate future generations to adapt to changes that will be imposed upon them. It is also important to inject a future perspective. Both girls and boys need to be able to reflect on the sort of society and gender relations which they would like to see in the future and to speculate about how they could move towards this vision.

Achievement of equality will be realised **in schools**:

· when girls and boys see each other as equal

· when harassment on the basis of sex and sexuality no longer occurs

· when girls' and boys' participation and achievement is no longer according to stereotypes

· when girls' and boys' experience of schooling is positive and relevant to their aspirations.

Achievement of equality in **life after school** will be realised:

· when both women and men have, and value equally, the skills necessary to achieve a balance between public and private aspects of life, and the benefits and burdens of work in the home

- when work and lifestyle patterns over a generation are less marked by gender

- when the experiences of women and men (from similar backgrounds in terms of culture, class and various other factors) are not highly differentiated in terms of such issues as economic security, participation in decision-making, access to leisure, the spread of unpaid responsibilities

- when violence and bravado, and other gender-related behaviour, are markedly reduced or eliminated

- when women and men both value and work towards equal and emotionally responsible relationships and positive parenting skills.

This would not mean that gender as an important category in terms of self formation will disappear, but that the category will be less limiting on who we can be, as the boundaries of gender-appropriate behaviour, attitudes and ways of being become less rigid.

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VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

The organisational culture of the school is a vital area for analysis in terms of the role it plays in developing and promoting constructions of gender which are constraining and limiting, or equitable and encouraging.

VIOLENCE AND SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

Sue Walpole, the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, makes the following point in her paper to the Promoting Gender Equity Conference in 1995:

> *... unless we assist boys to challenge aggressive behaviour, we will be unable to eliminate sex-based harassment and violence against girls and women in the home, at school and in the workplace. We will not be able to eliminate bullying and homophobic victimisation. And we will also be failing to ensure that the burden of unpaid work is distributed more equitably than it is today.*
> (Walpole, 1995, pp5–11)

The report of the National Committee on Violence (1990) stated that one of the most striking aspects of violence in Australia is that the vast majority of those who commit acts of violence are males. Much of the violence in our society can be analysed in terms of the dominant forms of masculinity—not only male-female violence but male-male violence. It is only fairly recently, however, that connections have been made between the prevalence of violence in our communities and the socially approved forms of masculinity dominant in our society.

Dominant masculinity

There are a number of accounts which describe the current concept of dominant masculinity, and there is widespread agreement about its broad characteristics—repudiating and deriding femininity, restrictive emotionality, seeking achievement and status, self-reliance, aggression, homophobia and non-relational attitudes towards sexuality. These characteristics also vary according to class and cultural location. For example, some studies of masculinity have noted strong elements of anti-authoritarian bravado and an anti-intellectual stance as common elements in working-class locations.

Schools are reflections of our society, and exploration of the role of violence in the construction of dominant masculinity is fundamental to developing a strategy for challenging the pervasiveness of violence in our communities and schools. Violence and sex-based harassment of girls in schools must be seen as part of this larger problem of unequal power relations between the sexes, in the school, home and work place.

The predominant finding of research into student perceptions about life at schools is that violence and sex-based harassment are far more prevalent than most teachers realise. The incidents are often not identified or addressed because they are seen as normal and inevitable—just the way things are. For many students the experience of being treated violently, bullied or verbally harassed is routine and constant and has a detrimental effect on girls and some boys. It is also important to note that the behaviour is often serious even at lower years of primary school.

In a survey undertaken by Jeremy Ludowyke (1995) in 12 Victorian schools, he found that 'the gross incidence of violent behaviour by boys which would legally constitute sexual assault peaked at Year 2'. Further, the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* makes the following points:

> *The impact on the social and educational experience of girls can be devastating. Those being harassed are likely to withdraw from participation in classroom activity or from their social group. Some girls react angrily, and are often perceived to be trouble makers unless the source of their anger is recognised. In some cases girls escape either by ceasing to attend particular subjects or by leaving the school altogether.*

Recently there has been increasing interest in the ways in which these dominant constructions may also hinder the learning outcomes of boys. Some preliminary work into boys' education indicates that boys' learning in self-expressive subjects is negatively affected by dominant views of what constitutes appropriate behaviour for boys, as well as of the acceptability of violence that accompanies those views.

Homophobic regimes in schools play a powerful part in reinforcing dominant ideas about masculinity and femininity. The fear of being labelled gay or lesbian puts great pressure on all students to prove their heterosexual credentials by conforming to a narrow range of body images, or by becoming sexually active, or by engaging in sexual conquest, or by sexualising opposite-sex relations, or by getting a boyfriend or girlfriend, or by curtailing intimacy with same-sex friends. This places huge constraints on the range of behaviours possible for either girls or boys.

For students who are gay or lesbian, or who are perceived to be gay or lesbian, the impact of homophobic taunting and violence can become intolerable, leading some students to leave school or contemplate suicide. In many instances behaviour that is homophobic victimisation is just seen as bullying. There is also evidence that many incidents of homophobic violence or taunting are witnessed by teachers or other students, but not acted upon.

Girls and boys do not have to personally experience violence, bullying or sex-based harassment to be influenced by its existence, for example:

> *... the casual acceptance by boys that violent behaviour is a normal and acceptable part of interactions with other students, the sense of bravado and machismo evident in the recounting of incidents, the right boys assume to make judgements about the appearance and behaviour of girls and to act on those judgements, degree of disgust for the idea of being a girl, and the idea of girls as something completely opposite, alien and inferior*

are some of the dimensions of masculinity which are identified in the report, *Enough's Enough* (1994), as needing to be addressed in any program dealing with school violence.

Some students perceive that teachers behave in ways which are intimidating and unwelcome, and teachers also suffer the effects of violence from students, and from witnessing violence. The Committee into Violence in Australian schools was told of a consistent pattern of unacceptable levels of both physical and verbal aggression towards teachers.

The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* also noted that:

> *... teachers and other educators daily find themselves dealing with the consequences of grossly unacceptable behaviour such as sexual abuse and violence against women in our society.*

There is some evidence that there is resistance on the part of schools to assessing and acknowledging the levels and types of violence that occur at school, not least because there is a fear that such findings will be damaging to the school's reputation.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The vast majority of school-based approaches to violent behaviour, bullying, school discipline, behaviour management and so on tend to focus on the individual who presents the violent or disruptive behaviour. Such approaches may result in individual behaviour change, although the evidence on the effectiveness of such approaches is unclear. However, in general, most behaviour management approaches treat antisocial and violent behaviours as isolated incidents, as though they are not part of a continuum of behaviours which legitimise violence more generally. In order to reduce violence it is necessary to address overt forms of violence as well as the attitudes of individuals, and the school and peer culture that supports violence. The insights gained from work on gender and violence have clear implications for school discipline and behaviour management policies and programs, as sometimes structures of social institutions can contribute to a culture of violence. For example, violence and unequal power relations between men and women, and boys and girls, can be condoned through the social organisation of the school or embedded in its culture as part of everyday language, rules and practices.

Overwhelmingly, the behaviour management field has been singularly unaffected by the gender debate, because the two do not share a common theoretical base. Behaviour management theorists do not take account of gender, but treat individuals as sexless. Therefore, much of the literature focuses on individual problem students. While gender has become a significant category of analysis in the consideration of power and knowledge relations in schools, all too often overt displays of aggressive, abusive and antisocial behaviour, even when overwhelmingly presented by boys, are not seen as anything to do with masculinity. Rather, such displays are seen as requiring discipline or authority responses, and the power relations aspects made are not made visible.

It is also becoming increasingly apparent that historically, behaviour management programs were developed in response to the urgent needs generated by boys' behaviour. This has meant that the many girls who present as needing behaviour and emotional program intervention cannot be incorporated readily into the dominant program processes, and are often minorities in these groups.

Harassment and conflict between girls has also been identified as a particular problem for girls.

> *Girls are harassed if they are thinner than the 'ideal', if they are fatter or taller or shorter and for what they wear and how they wear it. They are also harassed because of things which happen outside of the school and which become part of the recess or lunchtime agenda. [It] seems to occur when best friends part and incidents are magnified in order to define an individual's inclusion or exclusion from the group. These fallouts can be precipitated by rumours ..., about who was seen trying to 'get on' with a boy someone was known to be keen on and about things borrowed and not returned. Girls will call each other names linked to their sexuality, their sexual activity, or lack of it. One of the strongest forms of abuse is to call someone lesbian.*
> (Cameron, 1995)

Very little serious time is devoted to assisting girls to negotiate these conflicts, and these incidents are often trivialised as just 'girls being bitchy'.

Violent and delinquent behaviours are arguably the most difficult and unsolvable issues facing school communities. One area of outstanding need is to understand better how the construction of masculinity works in reference to the overwhelming domination of boys in special behaviour programs. One of the reasons for our lack of knowledge is that the issue of gender has, in the main, been seen as a women's issue, and masculinity has not been put under scrutiny to the same degree.

Many teachers state that they spend more time dealing with discipline than teaching, and that boys are the main focus of disciplinary action. This is because boys' loud, physically disruptive and aggressive behaviour has to be addressed before learning can occur. Such behaviours, and the requirement to deal with them, cut across learning. On the other hand there are also many girls who are not learning in class because of their inappropriate classroom behaviour. Their negative behaviour is more likely to take the form of passive resistance or withdrawal which, because it does not disrupt the learning of others, is often not addressed.

Discipline problems can be increased by inappropriate and often confrontational discipline systems which can have a counter-productive effect. All too often, teachers' professionalism is judged by their ability to keep control. Historically the responsibility for discipline has tended to rest with male staff members, partly because men have overwhelmingly occupied positions of authority. There is a growing body of research which suggests that the organisational culture of schools has been based on dominant notions of masculinity, in which authority is sharply contrasted with compassion and understanding.

With some boys, the discipline system becomes the focus of masculinity formation—a contradictory effect. It is also the case that the prevailing attitudes of some teachers to students whose cultural style does not conform to teachers' preconceptions of 'good students' can lead to students being labelled trouble-makers—a self-fulfilling prophecy, for example, girls who act out are often seen as sexually active or promiscuous.

Finally it is important to assess the impact of some school sport cultures and the extent to which they may produce and reinforce particular macho versions of masculinity, based on aggressive competitiveness and physical toughness. This could reinforce and legitimise

hierarchies of masculinity which may have negative consequences on boys' attitudes to learning.

PRINCIPLES FOR ACTION

The above analysis implies that in order for violence, homophobic practices and sexual and sex-based harassment to be addressed and eliminated in schools, work needs to be done in the following areas:

- reviewing and redeveloping school approaches to discipline and behaviour management, and to the culture of sport

- developing whole school approaches to all forms of school violence

- establishing curriculum in key learning areas, especially Studies of Society and Environment, Health, and Physical Education programs which provide opportunities for both boys and girls to explore the ways in which dominant understandings of masculinity and femininity inform and constrain them, and to assist students to become advocates for change.

Reviewing school culture, including programs and policies on discipline, behaviour management and sport

Schools which have not developed a democratic and just ethos in classrooms and general administration cannot easily provide the basis for an environment necessary to overcome violence and encourage cooperative respectful behaviour. It is important that students see and experience the behaviour which schools wish them to understand and adopt.

Research into student alienation has clear implications for schools wishing to move towards less confrontational and authoritarian approaches to discipline. Some of the most common complaints made by students who are identified as alienated from the process of schooling are about the lack of opportunity to have a fair say when they feel they have not been heard; the overwhelming tendency to label some students because of superficial aspects such as personal style; the lack of positive feedback; and the desire for opportunities to take up responsibilities in the school.

Provision for the student voice to be heard, in all its diversity, as part of a just and democratic forum, is essential in promoting a safe school culture. Schools which have started to involve students in decision-making and to invite their assistance in identifying and solving shared problems have reported positive results. Schools should encourage girls and boys to discuss some of the ways in which they resist, challenge and accommodate gendered expectations.

Changing discipline structures alone will not overcome school violence or dominant masculinity and its antisocial disruptive effects. However, without change, attempts to address violence more specifically are unlikely to be effective.

Relevant and explicit curriculum which teaches girls and boys about gender and behaviour issues, and which encourages them to engage with the paradoxes and contradictions, supports behaviour management and classroom practice.

Providing clear directions on how to incorporate understandings about gender construction into policies and programs in the area of discipline, behaviour management and sport is difficult because there is almost no practical or research work from which to draw. Data collection, research and provision of professional development about gender construction for school personnel responsible for these areas are clear starting points.

Addressing gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is one of the most difficult challenges facing all schools. However, there are schools which operate in a way that ensures that violence is isolated, infrequent, and managed through policy and programs. These schools are characterised by strong leadership, by staff who believe that violence can and should be reduced, and who are dedicated to effecting this change. These schools have a whole-school approach to addressing violence and they ensure that all students know their rights and responsibilities to themselves and others.

The following principles have been identified as the key to successful programs.

- Investigating students' perceptions and experience of sex-based harassment and violence: This helps programs to be more focused and increases the likelihood that they will be accepted by students, teachers and the community. This 'needs analysis' is often more effective if undertaken by someone who is not on the school staff.

- Developing units of work designed to teach young people about gender construction: This enables young people to understand to some degree the ways in which gender relations are impacting on their lives. Ideally this would enable young people to undertake research at the individual school level as to how gender relations are played out at their school in the context of community, society and popular culture, and what impact this has for who.

- Integrating gender perspectives into other school programs and policies: Initiatives undertaken to address gender-based violence should complement other programs that are being implemented as part of the school's supportive environment and behaviour management plans.

- Training both teachers and students in the skills of democratic decision-making, social interaction, conflict resolution, and negotiation.

- Providing professional development to enable teachers to come to an understanding of the assumptions and values which underpin and perpetuate violence, and exploring these issues in the local school context.

- Establishing effective home-school partnerships, structured classrooms, clear expectations about rules of conduct and consequences for transgression, recognition of appropriate behaviours, positive regard and respect for students and staff, and provision of opportunities for students to succeed.

- Collecting data, measuring, monitoring and reporting.

Programs for boys have been developed in a number of schools and systems. To date there is very little information about the assumptions underpinning such programs, their goals or their relative effectiveness. The strongest argument for working separately with boys and

girls on matters to do with gender construction is that coeducational discussions on these matters can be counterproductive without prior work with both girls and boys. This is because the patterns of interaction that dominate mixed-sex groups are unlikely to provide a safe and supportive environment for either girls or boys to discuss sensitive matters. However, in the long run, girls and boys will get further on these matters when they are able to discuss these matters with each other in productive ways.

Working with girls

Girls' programs have had a much longer history than boys-only programs and because of this there are a number of things that have been learnt about single-sex work that should not have to be relearned all over again in working with boys.

The most important insights that relate to work on gender and violence include the following points.

· Contrary to some views, all girls do not naturally have highly developed skills in interpersonal relations, even though they may take this matter more seriously than boys. They need to be taught the skills of conflict resolution, active listening, assertive speaking, articulating their feelings, fair ways of arguing and so on, just as boys do.

· Girls will not usually respond positively to attempts to define the problem for them. For many girls the dominating, aggressive and undermining behaviour of some boys has come to be seen as natural and unremarkable—not even worth commenting on. They may be more likely to see attempts to label boys in this way as undermining and threatening their fragile relations with boys.

· It is always important that the dominant girls do not speak for all girls. Girls' experiences and insights will vary considerably according to other aspects such as socio-economic background, culture, sexuality.

· It is important not to position girls as homogeneous and passive victims of the boys' violence, as though this is the only source of girls' problems. When teachers encourage students to study the effects of masculinity, there is always a danger that the negative aspects of some understandings of femininity will be ignored. There is also a danger of reinforcing gender stereotypes and of ignoring intra-group differences. Many girls resist boys' positioning. They can also be disruptive in their refusal to learn and can become school resisters to their own detriment.

Working with boys

The goal of boys' programs is to support boys in their work of developing a non-exploitative gender identity and to equip them to work as equal partners with girls on these matters. How to go about this needs to be thought through very carefully. There are a number of programs that have been developed on the basis that boys' problems can best be solved through an approach which celebrates masculinity and which helps boys discover 'the warrior within'. Such programs are likely to increase dualistic thinking which denigrates femaleness. This will only escalate violence. At the same time it is important that boys' programs still allow boys to feel good about themselves and not adopt a negative blaming tone, as this will also be counter-productive.

While there are no definitive evaluations of boys' programs, the work done by the organisation Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) and by some committed male teachers do offer some general principles in terms of overall goals. These programs suggest that boys' programs can assist boys:

- to see the world more accurately, rather than through a distorted lens of media and popular culture (many researchers have noted that, particularly in the early years, boys' descriptions of what girls are like bear very little resemblance to most of the girls in their class)

- to explore ways in which dominant masculinity, and its exclusion of femininity (and the male-female dichotomies created) inform their relationships with girls and with each other

- to explore violence and how it relates to masculinity and femininity

- to identify the sanctions against being able to take up different ways of being male

- to identify the effects of dominant masculinity and enable them to consider the benefits of change

- to develop the skills of listening, empathy, being able to view a situation from the perspective of those who are marginalised—skills which will be transferable to coeducational groups and to their post-school working, domestic and civic lives

- to identify ways in which the school can change to support them in more respectful ways of relating to girls and each other.

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POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

GENDER AND THE CHANGING DIVISION OF LABOUR

Major transformations are occurring in the ways in which work is organised, and in industrial relations—particularly the introduction of enterprise bargaining. These changes have made it essential that all students develop skills in negotiation, and that they are capable of being skilled advocates in the creation of work and home environments which meet the needs of all workers and their families. A democratic school environment is the best starting point for the development of such skills, through the inclusion of student and teacher input into all issues of significance in the teaching and learning environment.

It is important that young people understand the extent to which our ideas about 'the world of work' and 'the world of the family' are historical constructs, not absolute truths. A knowledge of the history of work and of domestic life can give students greater confidence in contesting structures which have become inequitable or inefficient anachronisms.

Schools have worked for a generation to challenge students' choices of traditionally gendered occupational areas. However, students also need an understanding of the gendered power relationships within large organisations, particularly those between the production-oriented areas (or 'profit centres') which deliver an organisation's bottom-line results, and the support side (or 'cost centres') such as human resource management and public relations. Although the real power of organisations lies with the money-making centres, these are not the areas of corporate life which commonly attract and promote women. While businesses are being urged to move women and men between the profit and support sides of their operation, schools must actively prepare young people to operate effectively in either place.

Similarly, the three major groupings within the paid workforce—those who manipulate data, words, and images; those who work face-to-face with customers; and those who work in routine repetitive tasks—all reflect clear gendered divisions. The first and third groups are dominated by men, and the second by women.

It is important that teachers understand workplace and reform structures and practices, as schools have a responsibility to increase young people's awareness of the differences in power, remuneration, work-time flexibility, opportunity and job security involved in different types of work, and to offer students opportunities to develop those skills and competencies which offer them the greatest choice.

Schools' work to prepare students for workplace changes will have an impact not only on current imbalances between women's and men's participation in and reward from the paid workforce, but also on the Australian economy's ability to remain internationally competitive.

Women's participation in the paid workforce

The most significant of all changes to the division of labour in Australia has been the increased participation of women in the paid workforce. But to date, this change has not been accompanied by a complementary change in the distribution of wealth and power, nor in the roles of women and men in unpaid work.

- In 1994, 53% of women and 74% of men in the 15 plus age group were in the labour force. The participation of younger women in the workforce is significantly greater than for older generations: of women aged from 20 to 50 years, 70% are in the labour force, and this is expected to increase to 85% by 2005 (Kenway & Willis, 1995).

- While there has been an increase in the amount of domestic work undertaken by men, it does not approach an equal share. Women and girls perform an estimated 70% of the unpaid work in families (Australian Bureau of Statistics): they have a more active role than boys and men in care for young children, for domestic tasks, and for care of the sick, elderly or disabled.

Gender differences in women's and men's participation in paid and unpaid work reflect the persistence of women's presumed dependence on men's paid labour, with men's legitimate dependence on women's unpaid labour (Bryson, 1994). It is important to see these reciprocal relationships as historical constructs, which have become anachronistic as Australian family debt structures have changed and high proportions of women have entered the paid workforce.

Work performed in a private or domestic context is assigned a lower status in the hierarchy of work and is still seen as the primary responsibility of women and girls. The strength of our cultural attitudes means that women with family responsibilities cannot pursue a 'career' in the same single-minded, unproblematic way that men do. As Bryson (1994) points out, it is still not generally acceptable for a woman to keep a househusband and to depend on his unpaid labour to support her role as primary wage earner. While this remains the case, women will continue to suffer fundamental disadvantage within the paid workforce.

There are material costs to women as they struggle to combine both roles: assumptions about women's primary responsibility as carers and for domestic work are built into the way workplace structures both accommodate and reward female workers.

- The Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Sue Walpole, reports that women's average earnings are 83% of average male earnings, with the gap more marked in certain occupations and industries. (Intra-occupational differences are even more marked, as noted above.) Although the principal of equal pay for equal work has been enshrined in law since 1972, the report *Pay Equity for Women in Australia (1991)* found that women do not receive the same pay as men even when they perform the same work as men. Women receive only 30% of all above-award payments, are less available for shift work and have less access to overtime.

- While men's work frequently involves allowances for strength, dirt and industry conditions, women's work rarely attracts comparable payment for repetitive work, high concentration and manual dexterity (Kenway, 1995).

- Women are more likely (76%) to be employed part-time, and are often 'under-employed'—that is, working fewer hours per week than they would wish. The reasons for this are strongly related to the burden of unpaid work, particularly the prime role of women as carers.

- Through part-time and casual work, breaks of service and missed promotional opportunities, women forego substantial benefit in wages and superannuation.

·   On-the-job training is more frequently provided for men than for women. This is particularly marked in the case of school-leavers: while close to 16% of all male school-leavers are paid to undertake training through an apprenticeship or a traineeship, only 5% of all female school-leavers undertake paid training. A further discriminatory effect is that training is almost never offered to casual and part-time workers—who are predominantly women.

·   The images of women as leaders are still largely confined to industries with a caring or servicing role.

Workplace structures and family responsibilities

Few occupations make it structurally easy for either women or men to balance paid work and family responsibilities, despite the provisions of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Agreement 156. Those occupations which are compatible with family responsibilities are dominated by women, but this involves a further jeopardy: female-dominated, poorly unionised areas of the workforce have lower job security and attract lower earnings than areas dominated by men. In negotiating within an enterprise bargaining environment, women have tended to opt for 'work-time flexibility' at the expense of other benefits which may result from increased productivity. These problems may result in a workforce even more marked by gender inequality than it is at present.

Women's quality of life also suffers from the expectation that they can actually manage the double shift of paid and unpaid work. Nearly a quarter of women with dependent children are now in full-time employment and another third are in part-time paid work. Women in paid employment spend an average of almost 31 hours per week on unpaid household work; employed men with family responsibilities spend, on average, half this time. In 1992, an Australian Bureau of Statistics study showed that when a woman marries, she increases her unpaid work by almost 60%, and when a baby arrives, her unpaid hours go up by an average of 91%—to 59 hours per week.

> *The catch-cry 'Girls can do anything' has created a destructive myth—the 'myth of manageability'. The cost of managing both shifts, especially for new mothers, is 'chronic fatigue and exhaustion … women in paid work find themselves being forced to use up their own sick leave to look after an ill child, juggling the different operating hours of childcare centres, schools and workplaces'.*
> (Kenway & Willis, 1995)

Men, boys and post-school life

For men, the central value assigned to paid work and to positional power has its own costs. Many male writers have focused attention on the sense of loss which men are experiencing as a result of their limited emotional responsiveness and their limited role in family life.

South Australian researcher Christopher McLean has explored the 'double-bind' imposed on men by dominant constructions of masculinity:

> *Power is personally costly in that it narrows the experience of life into the pursuit of something that can never be achieved … the struggle and the structure become all absorbing, and men are encouraged to regard all other parts of life as secondary …*

*Men are generally distant from their children and partners, and their working lives
are dominated by competition and mistrust.*
(McLean, 1995)

While schooling and the media have raised girls' expectations about equality both within
work and within private life, few comparable transformations have taken place in the
attitudes of boys and men.

The role of boys and men in relation to domestic work

One of the most controversial of recommendations in the work of gender reform is that all
boys and men should have opportunities to develop skills and confidence in relation to
family life and domestic work. On the release of the Department of Employment, Education
and Training Family Studies curriculum materials early in 1995, one newspaper ran a story
under the headline 'Housework: Not on for our schoolboys!' Such reactions are
manifestations of the low status accorded to anything marked as 'female' in our society.
There are few status rewards in housework and routine childcare, and boys and men often
feel unskilled and ill at ease in relation to many aspects of it. The ready source of humour
found in this is frequently exploited: the 'Mere Male' column of women's magazines and
the archetypal man-in-an-apron cartoons which need no caption to raise a laugh.

Such humour plays its own part in the resistance which boys show to any suggestion that
they should prepare for a post-school role as carers or as equal partners in household
work. However, schools have a core responsibility in this area, for both girls and boys.
From the earliest years of schooling, girls and boys should have the same opportunities to
reflect on the conflicting demands of public and private life. Curriculum and timetable
design should ensure that boys as well as girls are appropriately skilled to play an equitable
and responsible role in domestic work and childcare. Teachers (of both sexes), parents,
guest speakers, and others involved in the school community, should work to put this issue
on the agenda in a responsible way.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Schools do little to prepare girls or boys to clarify their respective roles or to undertake this
balancing act. Students need to be more fully informed about the equity issues in paid and
unpaid work, and to understand that the traditional interdependence of women and men in
these roles is an anachronism. This knowledge should include an awareness of the
international conventions and national legislation which supports women and men in their
efforts to achieve more flexible working conditions and greater equity in pay and
promotion. These skills and understandings will help students become critical and active
participants in schools and workplaces. Further, the historic, economic and political reasons
for inequality of all kinds should be explored and challenged through the school
curriculum.

Single-sex programs for boys

A number of writers see an answer to these problems in the development of special males-only programs, some of which have been trialled in a number of schools. There is growing discussion about single-sex boys' programs and their place within the full range of gender education. Single-sex programs can serve a useful purpose in co-educational settings, and in laying the groundwork before girls and boys work together on gender issues. Some thoughtful work has been done on designing and evaluating programs which 'interrupt' boys' ideas about masculinity, including the widely recognised study by Denborough, which arose from his work with men in maximum security prisons (Denborough, 1995). He describes the care which must be taken in helping boys and men speak openly about the problems of violence and the difficulties they have with self-disclosure. Denborough's work with young men has helped inform the development of the Department of Employment, Education and Training-funded national Gender and Violence Project.

Whole-school approaches

However, most educators and academics with a background in gender issues agree that isolated single-sex programs have limited impact on the life pathways of either girls or boys. Gendered constructions of identity are formed through daily interactions among girls and boys and adults, and are reinforced through curriculum, school culture and organisational structures. Any lasting work on gender identity has to occur in the same embedded, whole-school way.

The on-going work of schools should aim to contest dominant assumptions about gender as they relate to school and post-school pathways, including providing a strong sense that the construction of gender is open to choice, that women and girls, and boys and men, have the ability to change gender relations within a work or learning environment. Such work should be carried out on a whole-school basis.

Skills recognition

Skills recognition is an aspect of vocational preparation which has significant implications for the post-school pathways of girls and boys. In particular, there is little formal recognition that skills developed through domestic work and care are not innate, but are learned and transferable. Many interpersonal and organisational skills developed as a normal part of life experience for girls and women are not recognised within skills formation practices or formal salary awards, although they are informally valued within the workplace and contribute to the preference shown by many employers for hiring female workers. Skills recognition is an aspect of the work of enterprise bargaining forums, usually male-dominated and seldom grounded in an understanding or appreciation of such competencies. These understandings are an important part of the development of young people not only as workers but also as employers of the future. This is also one of the many gender issues associated with national training reform for which teachers in the schooling sector need assistance.

Schools need to provide teaching and learning which supports all students in the identification and description of the transferable vocational skills which they have developed through unpaid work, and to recognise these attributes in others. In support of this, teachers should be given opportunities for appropriate training or industry placements which will lead to a greater understanding of the changing nature of work and vocational skilling.

The impact of sex-based harassment

Hostile educational and work environments which are permeated with sexual harassment prevent girls and women from full enjoyment of and participation in their work (Walpole, 1995). Sex-based harassment continues to cause girls and women to leave education and employment, and has a devastating impact on health, self-esteem and economic livelihood. It continues to be the most common type of complaint under the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cwlth). Until schools deal firmly with sex-based harassment in the school environment, teach about its gendered nature, and assist students to understand its impact and legal implications through curriculum materials at all levels of schooling, it is unlikely that major changes will occur in workplace behaviour.

Through structures and curriculum, schools should ensure that both girls and boys understand that sex-based harassment is linked to issues of income and fair access to employment, training and promotional opportunity, and is covered by state and Commonwealth legislation.

Subject choice, key competencies and post-school pathways

Both girls' and boys' life pathways are affected by narrow, gender-based patterns of subject choice. Girls' patterns of choice in school subjects and post-school pathways can reflect a strong interest in interpersonal relationships, care for others and human problems. As such, subjects and pathways come to be dominated by girls and women: they historically acquire a lower position in the hierarchy of education and work compared with those which are dominated by boys and men.

Boys' subject choice is a problem in other ways. Choosing mainly from scientific, manual and technical subjects disadvantages boys whose strengths lie elsewhere, and denies them the opportunity to achieve excellence. Moreover, the heavy investment of boys in manual work is inappropriate at a time when such work is becoming relatively devalued and in some cases disappearing.

Research shows that boys are particularly reluctant to participate in those curriculum areas which are positioned as feminine, such as the arts and the humanities. These are the areas which can develop key competencies in working cooperatively with others, developing and expressing creative ideas, and understanding relationships and solving human problems. This is now clearly to the disadvantage of boys, as the key competencies have provided employers with a more diverse set of measures for the selection of school leavers.

Neither girls nor boys readily cross traditional gender lines in participating in work or training: the work and learning environment of certain vocational areas is often actively hostile to women and girls, and males suffer from homophobic harassment and

marginalisation from other males when they seek to enter female-dominated areas. Schools need to identify and collaborate with supportive workplaces, and to 'debrief ' girls and boys after work experience placements by discussing issues relating to gender, work culture and management styles.

Given the difficulty which both girls and boys have in crossing gender lines in the selection of school subjects, it is important that schools explore ways of embedding vocational skills across a variety of subjects. For example, computer-aided design skills (CADS) should not be confined to technology, but should also be taught within the arts. Similarly, teachers in all subject areas should ensure that students develop skills in working in small teams.

Schools should explore strategies which will assist all students to participate in a balanced package of subjects, and develop skills which prepare them for a wider variety of post-school pathways.

Schools and systems need to keep a close watch on gender issues in work experience and placements linked to vocational courses, and in the broad careers counselling which supports these placements. Schools should also be proactive in addressing gender issues in the transition of students to post-compulsory education and training.

Women in civic life and decision-making

It is not only in employment but also in civic life that women are under-represented in relation to men, which means that the perspectives of women are not adequately represented. Although girls take more responsibility than boys in school leadership roles, they are not adequately represented in the decision-making forums which give direction to Australian life: government, the boards of major companies, the professions, and the senior ranks of the public service. In many cases this is due to the same structural barriers which limit women's full participation in the world of work. In addition, attitudes towards the place of women in such forums is only gradually changing. The goal of schooling should be that all students become informed, critical agents of change in private, economic and civic life.

Negotiation skills

As previously stated, changes in the organisation and structures of the workplace have resulted in all workers—management and employees—needing a range of skills in negotiation. 'Both unions and management have a common interest in good morale' (Kenway, 1995). These skills should be supported by skills in research, analysis, problem-solving and goal-setting, and should be linked to a capacity for positive, generative thought.

Daily experience in negotiation should be a part of every student's education: negotiation about curriculum and assessment, about school environment, about uniform, and about other issues of significance to their experience of schooling.

Students should develop an awareness of decision-making structures in Australian life and pathways for active participation. This should include an awareness of those individuals and groups, particularly women, who have been effective agents for change.

DATA ABOUT GENDER AND POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Retention to the end of compulsory schooling, subject choice and Higher School Certificate (HSC) results (or their equivalent), compared by gender and by group, have long been a means of identifying areas which schools and systems needed to address. Indeed, in the past 20 years, there have been significant improvements in retention rates for both girls and boys as a result of targeted changes to schooling practice. The serious imbalances evident a generation ago in girls' retention rates have largely disappeared, and there has been a significant increase in girls' participation in subjects previously dominated by boys, particularly in mathematics and science.

However, there are serious limitations to the usefulness of these indicators in predicting post-school outcomes. In 1996, the Student Pathways Project, led by Associate Professor Lyn Yates and Professor Gilah Leder (Yates & Leder, 1996) of La Trobe University, Victoria, in conjunction with the Australian Council for Educational Research, investigated the ways in which data about gender and education has been collected and used in Australia. They found that most of the focus of data collection, especially in the public debate, had been on 'the fine differences at the top end rather than the patterns and the implications for those not doing so well'. Those who drop out, particularly those who are homeless, are not well included in educational data collection.

More importantly, the design of data collection has reflected the concerns and perspectives of Australia's dominant groups, of those well integrated into the system. The issues generally flagged about 'pathways' assume a linear progression to tertiary and further education and employment, and do not reflect the changed circumstances of this generation. For example, for Aboriginal students they do not capture the important issues of attachment to society or to family, which are intrinsically related to economic issues. Much of data collection also reflects issues which have been of importance to men, and constructs women's outcomes in deficit terms. The less linear progression of women, as they integrate family and relationships with work, is not well accommodated.

End-point data and long-term inequalities

The Pathways Project (Yates & Leder, 1996) also showed the limitations of end-point data in informing current debate about girls and boys. Overall, while data does clearly show girls' improved participation, it is not at all clear that boys' participation has been decreasing. Importantly, existing data is not at all helpful in establishing the role of education in perpetuating long-term inequalities. For girls, the issue of inequality has never been adequately represented by abstracting out the Year 12 results: they do not get the same 'payout' from their results as boys (as shown clearly in the earnings data). We also need to understand the paths by which career choices are made and rewards gained, and to understand in a more finely differentiated way the differences between girls and boys from different socio-economic backgrounds and other intersecting factors.

Richard Teese's report (Teese et al, 1995) has contributed some more differentiated readings of the results data. He found that girls from high socio-economic status (SES) do not maximise their advantages (in economic rationalist terms) to the same extent as boys, in that they do not so uniformly take on the highly inter-related and rewarded maths/science path. Nor are high SES boys necessarily the winners through over-participation in high-

status mathematics courses. This pattern results in higher rates of failure for boys, compared with choice patterns that are more closely related to interest and ability. The Teese study also found that low SES boys are 'dumped to the humanities' at a greater rate than high SES boys.

Integrated material is generally lacking about the impact of financial support and family expectations on girls' participation and outcomes in schooling. These results are also significantly differentiated by specific ethnicity and family patterns.

Objectivity

Databases are not objective, and neither are they reliable measures of many of the things we want to know about, 'because people filling in the survey make their own decisions about how to represent themselves' (Yates & Leder, 1996). For some groups, surveys (particularly mail and phone surveys) are a particularly unreliable way of gathering data (for example, rural Aboriginal students, disabled students, homosexual students). Links between students' self-perceptions about their ability and career aspirations in some major databases do not allow for any comparison with students' actual ability and achievement. Political sensitivity and the difficulty of collecting reliable data have led to the omission of critical SES data from many collections. One state database concerned with migration and ethnicity refused to include gender 'because it would blow out the costs'.

The quality of analysis of data

'Too much of the funding and effort goes into the collection of data, and too little to sensitive analyses of it' (Yates & Leder, 1996). The Pathways Project found many instances of the misleading use of data 'because those using the data did not understand that the indicator in question was tied to something else'. Many researchers have written about media interpretation of HSC data, and the ways in which community and political understandings have been shaped by it.

Conclusions

All data should be collected and analysed by gender. Data collection and analysis should be 'fine-tuned', so that there is more detailed consideration of information which relates to the experiences of those who are 'losing' in the system as well as those who are 'winning' in it.

The use of databases, especially for understanding the effects of factors, formations and intersections such as ethnicity, sexuality, types of disability and Aboriginality, should be supplemented by more focussed and qualitative research on these groups.

More use should be made of some existing databases, such as the state assessment bodies' databases.

More research and better statistics are needed on gendered experiences in non-university forms of further education and vocational training.

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SUPPORTING CHANGE

The work of education is undertaken in circumstances filled with contradiction. Among these, school leaders, school systems and the school communities need to make explicit the value which they place on equity outcomes. This valuing should occur not only through policy and practice, but also through the way in which we materially recognise and support those who work towards these outcomes.

Because education plays a central role in the formation of a fair, safe and productive society, it is also important for political and community leaders to articulate a vision of the future and to support the process of change.

This paper explores three areas in which vital work for change occurs:

· the role of educational leaders, teachers, school and systems structures, and the community

· productive partnerships with parents, the media and popular culture, business and industry, and other agencies

· reporting and accountability, which provide data and directions for future change.

A: LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURES

There are many challenges in pursuing equity initiatives, not the least of which is the way in which school leaders are positioned by competing change agendas. It is important to recognise the many forms which leadership can take, and the different sources from which the impetus to change may arise.

Leadership for change

The role of principals as educational leaders and as managers for change is crucial to the success of the achievement of equity in schools. They must believe that change is possible, and be aware that any new direction will be taken up effectively only in so far as it is seen as a solution to a perceived problem, and to accord with teachers' beliefs. The imposition of change through policy alone has no chance of success. However, principals are in a position to give organisational coherence and legitimacy to a school's work for equity outcomes. Jean Ruddick suggests that commitment of this type involves three qualities:

· coverage: looking steadily and with determination across various areas of institutional responsibility—for example, promotions, hierarchies, dealing with sexual harassment

· courage: readiness to be up front, direct and clear about values, to be able to justify those values, and to be prepared to stand by them and challenge others

· consistency: establishing a framework of concern and watchfulness within which all staff and all students are expected to act—monitoring behaviour, monitoring goals, monitoring progress, reviewing goals.

This whole-school approach is increasingly seen as the only way of achieving real and long-term changes to gender relations in education. Constructions of gender are embedded

in every aspect of school practice. Ruddick has also drawn up guidelines by which a school's coherent approach to gender equity issues may be measured. These are:

> *The existence of a policy statements that expresses commitment to [gender equity], that is clear in intent and that all members of the school know is to be taken seriously. This policy statement may be supplemented by documents that offer clear, practical guidelines to classroom teachers, to heads of departments, to year heads and to the senior management team.*

> *The school has a system for monitoring adherence to the principles expressed in its policy statements. Its strategies for dealing with problems will be firm and clear_ and yet not without understanding of the issues individuals have, in our society, in translating [gender equity] principles into practice on a daily basis.*

> *The school has a system for maintaining records that enable it to analyse data along [gender equity] dimensions. There is an expectation that the analyses will be discussed within the school, and that, where necessary, action will be taken.*

> *Advertisements for posts within the school will emphasise the school's commitment to [gender equity] issues so that staff who apply know that [gender equity] is a central concern of the school and so that the appointing panel can be confident that the person appointed will respect the values and principles that the school stands by.*

> *The school is concerned that all its members_ including ancillary and support staff — understand what the principles mean for their work in the school.*

> *The school is prepared to find ways of sharing its values and principles with groups and individuals who regularly relate to pupils (including parents) or who work with students on particular occasions e.g. work experience.*
> (Ruddick, 1994)

However, in raising awareness and achieving a change in attitudes at a school level, there are many real and practical obstacles. There are few opportunities for teachers to reflect at any length on their long-standing beliefs and practices, individually or collectively. The multiple roles of a teacher within a working day result in professional development selections being prioritised. Enrolment in courses dealing with equity issues becomes the province of committed specialists, who may have limited opportunities to pass on their understandings to colleagues. For schools to allocate even one of their limited whole-school development days to a particular issue requires a widespread acceptance by the principal and the teachers that the issue has a high priority. If school systems genuinely wish to change thinking and practice in schools, they must recognise the importance of providing quality time as well as material resources in support of change.

The role of the community

Parents and the wider community are also powerful agents for change, and adequate resourcing of parent programs, particularly those run by parents themselves, should receive a high priority. Schools and parents have complex work to do in exploring gender issues in the local social, ethnic, economic and geographic contexts.

Principals should create opportunities for school communities to reflect together on the costs and benefits of gendered behaviour for girls and boys, and to develop policy and strategies for change at a school level. School systems can also cooperate in the development of needs assessment instruments for schools wishing to conduct gender equity audits in the school community.

> *Promoting gender equity is not an easy task. It contests the status quo. It means delivering messages that may not be welcome. It involves presenting alternative ways of being that will often be resisted. So unless gender equity strategies are adequately funded and resourced, it's probably not worth the effort. A program here, the odd staff member there and a bit of tinkering along the way is not sufficient.*
> (Walpole, 1995)

Devolution and competition

Among the competing agendas for school leaders has been the trend towards school-based management, bringing with it increased competition between schools for enrolments. Increasingly, principals seek new ways to establish an 'image' for the school within the community, and to acquire those resources which position the school most favourably in a competitive market. In creating a school image, principals may feel disinclined to 'problematise' equity issues in a public way.

> *It has been shown that the tendency of schools competing within a dezoned market is to develop curriculum and school culture which approximates that which is offered (or which they believe is offered) by schools positioned at the top end of the socio-economic range. Where schools attempt to gain an 'edge' through niche marketing, this approach tends to target 'the gifted, the dramatic, the linguist and the athlete but rarely ... the NESB's, children with learning difficulties, Koori children, children from the lower socio-economic classes ...'*
> (Meyenn & Parker, 1993).

Moreover, the competition for 'value added' clients can be a disincentive to principals to publicly investigate and air equity problems, especially sex-based harassment and homophobia. Without structured opportunities for school communities to listen to girls and boys about their experiences of being female or male in a school setting, there is little incentive for schools to change their practices. The power of the student voice should not be under-estimated.

In examining the available incentives for action on gender equity, systems should give attention to the delicate balance between devolved management structures and central policy direction. Overseas research has shown that system-level commitments to social justice become problematic when accountability structures permit schools to ignore them. Harold (1991) outlines the resulting dilemma for Australian education:

> *How can systems be seen to be 'letting the managers (of schools) manage', while being able to report that these schools are diligently pursuing the system's corporate goals?*

Examples of 'best practice' in equity programs should be showcased in numerous forums, thereby reducing the sense of risk which principals may feel in embracing new directions in the school's operation. Such arenas can include parent journals, teachers' professional and union journals, principals' association journals, and regional and system level forums.

Selection of school leaders

As school leadership becomes more managerial and entrepreneurial, there is a risk that the selection of leaders will come to reflect only the need for these capacities, at the expense of a broader concern for democratic and educational outcomes. Overseas experience has been that this risk is increased where principals and other staff are chosen at a school rather than a system level. Systems need to consider and provide for such unforeseen costs in the course of changing selection processes.

Systems should consider giving high priority to demonstrated effectiveness in relation to equity issues, when establishing selection criteria for educational leaders.

Welfare staff, school counsellors and student welfare coordinators

The work of school counsellors also needs to be reviewed by schools. If a heavy emphasis is given to assessment-related roles, the needs of girls and boys from different groups and with different needs may not be met. Students with special needs, such as disabled students, may need counsellor support in dealing with gender-related issues such as sexuality and personal development, course selection and post-school pathways.

Schools need more refined protocols for inter-agency collaboration, especially in relation to students at risk. There is need to recognise that such students—girls and boys—are often at risk for out-of-school reasons. Work on students at risk can take up to one-third of an assistant principal's time, time which is not recognised within the work statement, or for promotion. For this work to effectively address gender issues, additional time and resourcing is needed.

School systems, in cooperation with teacher unions and teachers' professional associations, should investigate the experiences of teachers who have worked to design and deliver equity programs, particularly in the area of gender. The outcomes of this investigation should lead to the development of strategies for principals and systems to use in supporting the work of teachers working on equity issues.

Gender equity and the law

Outside school systems, a legislative framework is developing which is playing its own part in shifting community attitudes towards gender and harassment.

> *You won't change the world by legislation—but legislation is a significant ingredient in bringing to the forefront of our consciousness and debate the very fundamental issue of human rights and gender equity.*
> (Kevin Vassaroti (1995) Executive Secretary, National Catholic Education Commission)

There is an increasing tendency for individual students and their parents to lodge grievances about educational outcomes. This has implications for school and system leaders, as the community becomes more aware of the impact of sex-based harassment, and homophobic and racial vilification on student retention and attainment.

School and system leaders have a responsibility to ensure that teachers and other people employed in an educational setting understand the ways in which gender issues are addressed in state and federal legislation. Most teachers are aware that the Commonwealth's Sex Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for teachers or other school employees to sexually harass students or staff. However, not so many are aware that under that Act, students aged 16 years or over can be held individually liable if they harass a member of staff or another student who is 16 or over. Even fewer are aware that a younger student who is sexually harassed by a staff member may bring a sex discrimination claim against the educational institution itself, on the grounds that it failed to protect them against unlawful discrimination. Additionally, instances of sexual harassment may also give rise to charges of criminal assault in particular circumstances.

> *… gender equity strategies in education are underpinned by the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and a domestic legislative framework. It is for this reason that we have introduced a Charter of Students' Right which sets out legal entitlements to a discrimination and harassment free education. To use the words of the WA Equal Opportunity Tribunal in a recent decision, 'Preventing discrimination and harassment is not simply a moral imperative. It is a legally enforceable obligation'.*
> (Walpole, 1995)

Systems and school leaders should ensure widespread teacher and student knowledge and understanding of the requirement that the maintenance of a harassment-free school is a professional and moral responsibility which is also legally enforceable.

Teacher training and professional development

These issues of responsibility and accountability in the areas of gender equity have implications for teacher training. At present, many teacher training institutions provide gender-related units only as 'options' within a package of units leading to a degree. All students presenting for employment as teachers in government or non-government schools should understand the ways in which young people actively construct a gendered identity through daily interactions, the ways in which school cultures and organisational and teaching practices can reinforce gender constructs, and issues of teachers' legal responsibilities. Teacher training should also provide for examination of the processes of gendered identity formation, based on its history and socio-culturally constructed nature, and for curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies which are gender-inclusive.

Teaching about gender needs to lead to an awareness that 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are not universal constructs, but that gender construction intersects with other factors, such as socio-economic status, ethnicity, Aboriginality, disability, location, and so on.

An area which has not been well understood is the way in which gender issues are experienced by girls and boys with disabilities. Integration into mainstream teaching for the disabled has been the source of tension between schools, parents and systems, sometimes leading to industrial action. A contributing factor is the preparation of mainstream teachers for teaching students with disabilities, and for understanding the ways in which the education system can prepare them to live fully in the world. An understanding of their sense of themselves as gendered is fundamental to this.

Research is needed into the ways in which gender affects the schooling and life experiences of girls and boys with disabilities, to ensure that appropriate teacher training and professional development are provided to all teachers. This should be supported by a system focus on this issue, including the provision of appropriate resourcing for disabled students in mainstream classes.

B: PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

While schools can achieve a great deal, they cannot by themselves achieve equitable educational outcomes for girls and boys.

> *[What happens in one sector of education] ... is a part of a larger system of formal education and ... this larger system is the partner of still other systems: the family, that most powerful of faculties; the economy, the toughest of faculties; the media, that most insidious of faculties; and our discourse, the master faculty that instructs the others.*
> (Stimson, 1994)

Partnership with parents

The most powerful of all partnerships which an education system can create in setting and achieving goals, is with parents. Parents are the child's first educators and bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the school. They are integral to the formulation of educational aims and principles, and to the development of gender policy. They provide access to the child's social background and cultural framework, which are the bedrock of gender work in schools. Such partnerships should not be limited to those parents whose children are currently enrolled in a particular school, but should be extended to the wider community, including parents of children who are not yet of school age.

Considerable work is being done at a school, state and national level by parents who understand the power of the parent voice in achieving change. Local and national parent groups in the government and non-government school sectors have developed policies dealing with a range of issues in the areas of school-community relations, social issues, education for special needs, resourcing curriculum development and assessment. At a local level, parents can play an important role in 'getting gender on the agenda' in their schools.

Parents working with parents[*]

An important aspect of the work of parent organisations has been the development of kits and resource materials which enable parents to work directly with other parents on key issues. The Australian Parents' Council, representing parents in the non-government schools sector, ran a successful project in 1994 under the Department of Employment, Education and Training Quality Schooling Program on parent/school collaboration in early literacy. Extrapolation from the major findings of this project may provide a guide to the ways in which such partnerships can most effectively operate.

·   It is important for parents that the issues are presented by other parents.

·   Parents appreciate the opportunity to discuss parenting and their children's development with other parents.

·   Parents sometimes are not aware of how important their interests and attitudes are to their children's learning outcomes.

Schools cooperating in the project found that this approach was successful in attracting parents whom 'they had never before seen at school', and that it was particularly effective in attracting parents from school communities with a low socio-economic, high non-English speaking background.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), which represents parents in the government school sector, actively promotes productive partnerships, which means that principals, teachers, parents and students, that is, men and women, girls and boys, can work together and improve the situation at the local school level. Productive partnerships are statements about equal power relations, which allows parents to engage in discussions and decisions about school policy and curriculum matters.

ACSSO participated in the Gender and Violence Project in 1994–5, and suggested strategies to strengthen productive partnerships and parent participation in the 'No Fear' kit's whole school approach. Teachers wanting to work with parents should engage the school parent organisation which will welcome teachers and provide a forum for the sharing of ideas. Another strategy is to invite the school parent organisation to nominate 'key parents' to work on a school team. These 'key parents' would also work to involve other parents in discussions about the school team's gender project.

Schools are finding that programs designed to change young people's gendered attitudes are more effective when the programs' goals and key information are also provided to parent groups. Parent-led discussions can provide an opportunity for reflection on the part which gender plays in education and life experiences and pathways, and the ways in which the nature of work and the nature of the family have both changed in a single generation. Sometimes parents groups find that a guest speaker with specialist information can provide a stimulus for parent work and action.

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[*] For the purposes of this document, the term 'parent' includes parents, guardians and care givers.

Schools and school systems should join with parents in exploring the impact of gendered constructs on their children's post-school pathways. This work is ideally carried out by partnerships between parents, teachers and administrators and by providing appropriate resource materials.

Schools need to make issues of gender and equity explicit in framing and publicising school policies in the school community—the ways in which sexual harassment affects a student's right to equitable education opportunities; the ways in which school policies about violence and harassment link to the laws governing such behaviour in the workplace and community; the types of uniforms which are most appropriate to girls' full and safe participation in sport and other activities in school life.

Communication with parents

It is important that schools give consideration to the ways in which parents, guardians and caregivers are 'constructed' through home-school communications, and in the roles which they take up within the school community. Who is assumed to supervise the child's home reading program? Who is assumed to be available for sports coaching, for school maintenance, for the canteen roster, book covering and so on? Who is the first point of contact in case of accident or for disciplinary matters?

There is a danger that in their daily interactions with parents, schools can reinforce particular ways of seeing women and men within their family roles, and can contribute to the meaning we give to words like 'mother' and 'father'. In confirming the mother as the 'privileged' parent in relation to home-school matters, the school may both impose a burden of responsibility and guilt on working mothers, while at the same time fail to recognise the importance to fathers themselves of developing a significant role in these matters. In *Foundation Stones: The Construction of Gender in Early Childhood*, Alloway (1995) argues that if schools value parents' work with children as a life-enriching experience, it is equally unjust to dismiss, or at best trivialise, the potential of the father-child bond. Underlying assumptions in schools' relationships with parents can help to 'create a gender divide that might or might not otherwise be so' (Alloway, 1995). Schools need to be aware of the diversity of parenting and work circumstances in the school community, being particularly careful not to pathologise single-parent or unconventional families in the course of its work with students.

The role of men in children's lives has received special attention in recent work on home-school factors in creating gender differences in educational outcomes:

> *If we are to see family literacy as literacy for the whole family, then current barriers to men's participation in certain literacies need to be addressed. It would appear that one formidable barrier exists in men's and women's association of masculinity with the rejection or avoidance of some literacy-related activities. We should consider the implications of these beliefs for the sons and daughters of these parents.*
> (Nichols, 1994)

Information about gendered child-rearing practices are of interest to both mothers and fathers, and can be promoted in the feeder community as well as through school-based parent discussion.

Parent groups can actively promote an increased awareness of the significance of parents' input to students' learning outcomes. This can include information about practices which contribute to gender differences in students' skills, practices and sense of self, and ways in which parents can support students in contesting aspects of popular culture.

It is important for schools' work to take into account the ways in which gender is constructed within a community's different ethnic, religious and social groups. Teachers and school administrators learn about their communities through the school's daily interactions over the operation of its excursions policy, its uniform code, its personal development and sex education programs, its systems of formally and informally rewarding achievements, its fundraising goals, and the way its responds to gender-related incidents between students.

Socio-economic circumstances, ethnicity and geographic isolation also intersect with gender in students' learning, and have implications for home-school liaison. A large-scale study of literacy in Victoria (McGaw et al, 1988, referred to by Nichols, 1994) showed that socio-economic status—as measured by father's income and reading materials available in the home—was found to be significantly associated with achievement for females and males.

It is important for teachers to use their knowledge of gender and the school community to develop school curriculum and organisation that is sensitive to the needs and concerns of students and their families.

THE MEDIA, POPULAR CULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

Partnership with the media

The media is one of the most powerful sources which students draw on in constructing a sense of gendered identity. It also remains the single most important site for debate of issues which are in the public interest. This has become an area in which parents and teachers are successfully collaborating—in the home, in the classroom and in the public arena. However, it is also an area in which schools have significant responsibilities to teach all girls and boys to identify, contest, consider and rework the ways in which gendered identity is represented and reinforced by the media.

Television, radio and print media play a major role in the identification of issues, and influence the direction in which public debate is taken, through the use of language and the emphasis given within the presentation of media stories. Who will get air time? What will be selected for quotation? Which events will be selected for inclusion in a television news story? Which will be edited out? How will pictures be selected and captioned?

Recently there has been a significant shift in the ways in which gender issues have been taken up and offered for public response. Earlier reporting focused on a 'war' between opposing, irreconcilable interest groups, with headlines and captioning such as *'Gender Wars in Class', Battle of the Genders', Life's Tough If You Weren't Born a Girl', 'Boys v Girls',* and *'It's Time to Give Boys a Fair Go'.*

In recent reporting, the representation of the issues has changed. There is a greater understanding that:

- the educational needs of girls and of boys are interrelated

- the significant problems experienced by girls and boys are different but stem from the same limitations and restrictions imposed by current narrow constructions of gender

- some indicators of girls' educational performance have shown improvement in the last generation, but these improvements have not been translated into equality or gender equity in post-school pathways

- educational outcomes should not be measured only in terms of end-point scores, but also in quality of life.

Serious reporting is showing a greater awareness of what constitutes 'expertise' in the area of gender and education, and is addressing gender issues in a way which is more complex and less adversarial. Some topics have emerged from invisibility, in particular homophobia and its impact on students' educational outcomes. Titling and subtitling in newspapers and popular journals reflects this shift:

> *Boys will be boys, but for how much longer? ... As parents, schools and society strive to cope with 'gender equity' only one thing is certain: new kinds of masculinity are emerging in a social revolution that will change Australia.*
> (*The Australian Magazine,* 11–12 March, 1995)

> *'Homophobia Starts at School: Let's Stop it There'*
> (*The Australian,* 1 March, 1995)

Schools, systems, academics, parent organisations and education unions can all be proactive in the representation of gender issues in the media. However, care should be used. Reporting which sensationalises gender reform is counterproductive if it suggests that girls' achievements in mathematics, science and technology, or boys' engagement in family studies, community service, performing arts or home science are unnatural or remarkable. As for textbook and course content, school organisation and teaching practice, the goal of reporting on gender should be to normalise the participation of girls and boys across the full range of human activities.

There is a range of issues which schools should consider when designing and approving material for publication.

- Does it sensationalise the involvement of girls or boys outside traditional gender areas?

- Does the reporting of sporting achievement give a greater emphasis to boys' sports than to girls' sport? Do team contact sports dominate the news at the expense of other types of sport?

- Does the use of language and captioning reinforce gender stereotyping?

- Are concepts for advertising and sponsorship appropriate?

· Do photographs of girls and boys, women and men, show a reasonable gender balance (including the presentation of those in active or supporting roles)?

· If photographs are intended to formally represent the image of the school in the wider community, is the representation of the school's diverse population accurate?

· Are photographs of female students appropriate?

Schools and systems, parent organisations and education unions should develop guidelines for the presentation of information to the media, including processes for checking text before publication. This should include non-sexist language, captioning, content, advertising and sponsorship concepts, and the selection and composition of photographs.

Stimson (1994) calls the media the most insidious of faculties for young people in the formation of a gendered identity. Teachers and parents must work together to ensure that students are able to recognise and respond critically to media representations of masculinity and femininity.

Many concerns about media and gender were raised in submissions to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia. These included:

· the portrayal of older people, particularly women, as stupid and incapable and as the butt of jokes

· the portrayal of sole parents as generally being welfare recipients, and as producing problem children

· the portrayal of women in the home as 'idle and unfulfilled'

· the invisibility of Aboriginal women, disabled women and women of non-English speaking backgrounds.

Also of concern are:

· the portrayal of men in a domestic context as incapable, and the portrayal of 'househusbands' as failed men and as the butt of jokes

· the portrayal of men as emotionally clumsy and inarticulate

· the portrayal of women and men who challenge dominant gender constructions as eccentric, marginal, humorous or simply out of line.

'Positive' male images too often emphasise the successful male as competitive and centred within the economic sphere, while the successful woman is portrayed as either Superwoman, managing a paid job and a household, or as the skilled domestic manager, with a traditional family and no paid job.

Popular culture

Neither teachers nor parents can insulate young people from popular culture, nor should they try to. The creativity and dynamism of popular culture can be a resource for educators and it is a major site in which social values can be explored and contested. However, popular culture makes a major contribution to constructions of gender and it is the school's business in curriculum to teach girls and boys how to identify, challenge and rework bias, stereotyping and gender construction as they are represented in popular culture. It should also be the goal of home-school collaboration that young people can engage intellectually and critically with all aspects of the world in which they live.

Parents can support classroom work by examining with their children the ways in which popular culture is represented in the media. School systems and parent organisations can publicise 'ways in' for family discussion of media issues. An important element in this is awareness of the links between representations of gender and violence in popular culture. Both parents and students need to be aware of the ways in which ratings are given for videos and television programs, and of forums for consumer comment about the media.

Interactive technology

The portrayal of women and men in popular computer games, on the Internet and in other interactive technology, is an emerging cause for concern. Pornography and violence in interactive technology are attracting media attention and parents and teachers need to identify these and other areas in which intervention, supervision and management strategies may be appropriate. These strategies could include software review, and guiding children's access to networking. School systems and parent organisations can develop and publicise ways in which parents can usefully evaluate popular media and interactive technology with their children.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

Many gender equity issues have emerged from the interaction of schools and industry. Those which relate to work placement and skills formation have been discussed in the accompanying paper, 'Post-School Pathways'. However, schools interact with small and large businesses in many other ways.

One area which needs review is the involvement of schools and local businesses in sponsorships and promotions. In comparison with the advertising industry, there are no well-established self-regulation guidelines.

Schools may be faced with dilemmas when weighing up the benefits and disadvantages of pursuing particular sponsorship arrangements—for example, a national magazine, in collaboration with a major modelling agency, inviting schools to participate in a sponsorship program through a question for the 'Model of the Year'. The benefits of much-needed financial support need to be balanced against supporting a concept which pits girls against each other on the basis of body image.

In the era of self-managing, entrepreneurial schools, such dilemmas will become more common. While examples such as this may create tensions between schools and their communities, they are also opportunities for carrying awareness of gender equity issues into the community at large. It is important that schools and parent councils have a clear understanding of the reasons why such proposals are in conflict with good educational practice, so that they are well positioned to judge the merits of each proposal. Schools need to work cooperatively with parent organisations and business councils, to develop and publicise clear guidelines for sponsorships and promotions which involve students, and which may affect the public positioning of the school in relation to gender equity issues.

Schools also interact with local businesses in relation to work experience placements, and schools can build up a 'compact' or mentoring relationship with their local industries. As schools struggle to find placements for students, they should give special acknowledgment to employers whose practices and workplaces are 'girl-friendly'.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

Schools also regularly interact with other community bodies, public and private, in providing for students with special needs and students at risk. These services and agencies include social work, employment and child and community health services, the police, family services, child support agencies, family planning agencies, ethnic community councils, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support groups, special schools, family daycare centres, remand centres, refuges and shelters. However, the definition of 'risk' varies across these sectors, and there is no shared understanding of the ways in which gender intersects with different categories of need, disadvantage or risk.

This document, *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools,* bases its concept of 'risk' very broadly, and places great emphasis on effective liaison with support agencies across a wide spectrum. In this context, students at risk include:

· students at risk of physical or sexual abuse

· students who are neglected or who are living in poverty

· students involved in substance abuse

· students who are pregnant, or teenage parents

· students who are homeless

· students involved in violence, risk-taking, juvenile crime or anti-social gangs

· students with gender-related health problems, including eating disorders

· students who are depressed or withdrawn, or who are at risk of suicide

· students whose geographic isolation or lack of mobility makes it difficult for them to benefit fully from education and community services.

It is vital that shared understandings be reached about the intersection of gender and different categories of need or disadvantage. How do different groups recognise 'risk'? How is it defined differently for girls and for boys? How do agencies target their services for

different groups? How does gender affect the ways in which services are delivered? How do agencies set goals and evaluate their services?

Improved liaison between associated bodies can lead to a clearer understanding of students' special needs within a wider context. In particular, all community partners need to understand the ways in which gender affects risk and the implications for the design and delivery of service in each sector.

C: REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The education sector must account publicly by reporting to the community on the efficiency and effectiveness with which the education systems are carrying out their responsibilities. An adequate reporting mechanism for public accountability purposes involves the collection and publication of two main categories of information:

- financial data, which describes the level and distribution of expenditure on a particular activity

- educational outcomes data, which displays the impact of government policies on students or groups of students.

These categories should provide essential tools for policy development and for evaluation of government programs. The establishment of adequate reporting mechanisms provides the basis for a dialogue between administrators, school communities and practitioners about the impact of their policies and programs. Adequate reporting arrangements are also necessary to provide the level of detail necessary to meet Commonwealth and state legislated requirements for public accountability.

Issues for systems and schools

Research surveyed by the Gender Equity Taskforce highlights the importance of recognising that girls and boys are not homogeneous groups within the student population. Significant differences in educational outcomes for female and male students are clearly displayed when they are grouped by socio-economic status, or by urban/rural location. It is important to monitor the educational outcomes of these sub-groups, in order to obtain a measurement of the performance of education systems in meeting the needs of all girls and all boys.

If educational outcomes data for girls and boys is not disaggregated to this level, it is very difficult to interpret the effectiveness of gender equity strategies in schools. It is possible, for example, that improvement measured on a global indicator such as Tertiary Entrance Scores may reflect improvement of only one group, while other groups may have made no progress, or possibly fallen behind.

The following principles should be applied to the development of reporting and accountability frameworks, if there is to be improvement in policy and practice in the area of gender equity, at the school level.

(a) Data on educational outcomes

· Data on participation, attainment and post-school pathways for both girls and boys should be collected and reported.

· Data on the hours of funded professional development time allocated to teachers on gender equity issues should be disaggregated by gender, age and location.

· Policies and practices in the areas of:

  – curriculum and assessment

  – promotion and professional development, including mentoring and

  – teacher recruitment

should be described and reported.

(b) Data on school processes for promoting gender equity

Schools should be required to collect information and provide data on expenditure of resources and establishment of processes which promote gender equity, which should include the following:

· needs assessment practices

· student empowerment strategies which develop girls' and boys' skills in negotiation, for example:

  – student-negotiated curriculum

  – Student Representative Councils and other student committee work

  – promotion of mutually responsible relationships between students, and between students and teachers

  – students' work with the community

  – middle-school initiatives on the needs of adolescents

· gender equity initiatives in curriculum and assessment

· policies and practices relating to behaviour management, discipline, violence and remediation

· mechanisms for measuring achievements in gender equity policy objectives

· relationships with the community

· level of parental involvement in gender equity initiatives.

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BOYS AND GIRLS AND THE COSTS OF GENDERED BEHAVIOUR

EVA COX

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Keynote address delivered at the Promoting Gender Equity Conference, Canberra, February 22–24, 1995. Reproduced with permission.

This session is about the costs of discrimination and sexism, so I thought I'd start by pointing out the costs of a certain kindergarten teacher some 55 years ago refusing me the option of having a drum, saying that 'Girls only get the triangle'. This probably set something in train that they should never have done! It was very much imprinted—I can really remember thinking, 'Why would I get the triangle and the best I could hope for was the tambourine, and the boys get the cymbals and drums?' So you've got to be really careful about what you do to three-year-olds because it can come up a lot later in a very costly way!

What I want to do today is probably something rather different to what Christopher McLean has done, and give you a lot of mixed messages about what I think is happening at the moment—because what I think is happening at the moment *is* a set of very mixed messages. And out of this I am hoping you will get a sense of where we go.

I am really concerned that we don't get into what I've often defined as 'your statistics against my statistics behind a cathedral at 6.00am'. This seems to be the way that some of the debates have actually been going for the last few months, at least from my perspective with my phone ringing with calls from journalists. I've got a whole screed here from something I've been writing. It's called 'About Men*'* and it starts off with the term 'Men Who Want to Be Victims Too*'.* I've got a lovely collection of things there that could make you all laugh and thoroughly have a nice time, apart from the men in the audience who would cross their legs and wonder why they were still sitting here! But I don't think that's the name of the game. I think it is the sort of thing that gets us into trouble, because everybody gets themselves into a bunkered position.

Looking at the material I have had sent to me from the conference organisers and some of the other material that is out there, it strikes me this whole debate is getting into what I call the 'competing victim syndrome'. This is basically about trying to claim that 'I'm worse off than you are, because there are limited resources and if I can prove I'm worse off than you are and *look at my scars,* look at my pain, look at my misery—I can have more of the existing resources than you can'.

This is something that's become a very common phenomenon in most of the areas which might be loosely called 'social justice', to the point where I have actually started using 'competing victims' as an alternative to 'social justice'. I think the particular climate of finance and policy-making over the past few years has meant that instead of assuming that one can make claims on the available resources on the basis of *putting forward a good case*, what you have to do is prove you are *worse off* than anybody else and this is your 'good case', because the resources are so limited.

So we've had this rather dreadful situation with the so-called 'social justice groups', as they are even being referred to in documentation. (What a 'social justice group' is, I don't know—social justice is an over-arching concept.) 'Social justice groups' appear to be people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, people with disabilities, women, Aboriginal groups, any other groups you can claim as disadvantaged. So in a sense 'social justice' is becoming one of those 'boo' words which refers to those people that we consider the Other, who aren't real people, who have to sit around competing for the resources by proving they are worse off than anybody else.

Competing victims is a really dangerous game. I acknowledge women's groups have been doing it and I can do it with the best of you! You know, I've got a great pile of ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) statistics at home. I can quote them, I even get them for free from the ABS (which is a really hard task to do because I am defined as a journalist as far as they are concerned).

I can talk to you about areas where girls are worse off, and people in the audience can stand up and tell me that boys are worse off there too and we can sit there; then other groups turn up and say how they're badly off too. I am not denying inequalities, I am not denying power: I think it is a very potent part of this whole process. But I think that fighting for the most disadvantaged group' position so that you can get hold of the resources is a problem. It creates a whole lot of really problematic reactions when you start talking about what you are trying to do, whether it is within the school or whether it is within the wider community, because *you create real divisions*.

In philosophical language, in order to create yourself as a victim, you often have to create an image of 'the Other'—the person who isn't really the mainstream, the outsider, the different person. You then have to start pulling strings on compassion. In theory it should be about *justice* but justice is one of these vague terms that nobody is quite clear on. So you move into the compassion arena. You encounter what the aid agencies call 'compassion fatigue'. After a while, because the people that you are talking to don't see your problems as relating in any way to the sorts of problems *they* have or the problems that *they* recognise as important, *they stop recognising you as part of the wider world*. You become a cipher, a different sort of person, an object rather than a subject. They can make a decision about you which doesn't in any way involve them because they are making a decision about you as *something different*.

There is a social welfare writer I am very fond of called Richard Titmus who wrote in his concept of social policy about what he called 'the stranger'. He said the ultimate in social policy is to give to the stranger *because you recognise that she or he is the same as you.* You don't give to the stranger because they are hungry or because they are tired but because you recognise the problems of hunger and tiredness. In other words you see them as part

of yourself and part of what you are responsible for. If you see them as 'the Other', you don't get that sense of responsibility.

Another writer John Rawls, who talks about justice, also uses a similar sort of model by saying that if you punish other people you always have to work on the basis that *it might happen to you*, which is another formulation in a slightly different format.

By getting into a debate within the competing victim syndrome, the groups that do so get caught up in 'the Other' dilemma. I know it is necessary to point out disadvantage, I know it is necessary to look at the inequalities, I realise that. But I think this particular issue of gender becomes a competition between stereotypes of masculinity and stereotypes of femininity and 'my pain's worse than your pain', and who's the most disadvantaged—is it the boys that get bashed up or is it the girls that get harassed? Can we find some universal measure about *who's in most pain?* The very small amount of money that is available in gender programs ends up being distributed too thinly across these little bits of this and little bits of that. Basically we're not going to do either side any good. We are going to fall squabbling amongst ourselves and really we miss the issue.

I want to go back to what my memories were. I wasn't involved heavily in the education area though I've drifted into it and out of it at various stages—I was involved in writing some of the first *Girls, Schools and Society* reports and I have had some involvement in education on and off in varying ways since then but it's not been one of my mainstream areas.

I think that what has happened in education is very similar to what has happened in other areas. We started saying that schools don't work very well for girls for a whole range of reasons and we had a lot of statistics to prove it—girls left earlier, they didn't do lots of the high level subjects and so on. In the year I left school, in the 1950s, a whole lot of girls out of a selective high school came in the first 100 in the state in NSW. I think most of them went off and did pass Arts degrees or pharmacy while they were looking for husbands. That was the environment that many of us came from and there are some people in this room who will remember it. But it was a situation where girls did not see themselves as taking on education in any major way.

So we did have a lot of material in the early 70s that said 'the system doesn't work.' It doesn't work for girls, and girls are not reaching their potential. But the system basically said, 'Yawn, here they go again, what are they carrying on about? Here are some little bits of money you can use for girls' programs'. And it didn't happen easily. There were huge fights, as I am sure some of the people here remember, to get any sort of programs into schools that were aimed at girls. And it was done on what is generally called a *deficit theory*. 'Look, we really want to get girls to do the same things as boys so let's push them into maths and science, let's push them into the manual arts, let's make sure they get the same chances as boys do for what seem to be the good ideas, the technical and apprenticeship jobs.' A lot of these jobs have since gone out backwards which creates another sorts of problem in terms of that model.

But what we were trying to do at that stage was to do what a group on the outside can see as its only strategy. Here is a system which fails nearly half (because we were then only half of the people within it). How do we fix it? Well, because we were on the outside,

because we were little lobby groups and a few teachers and a few ratbags who were running around trying to get into these things (we can occasionally manage to make a little bit of a fuss brandishing our statistics), *we added things on the side*. We created these marginal strands of programs called 'girls' programs'. You dragged in a few women that you managed to find in apprenticeships, you talked to the girls about that, you tried to fix the career-planning process. You tried to organise various things that were 'girls' programs' (and you'd know more about those than I did) through remedial approaches with maths, science and so forth. You tried a little bit to tinker with some of the worst aspects of the overall school system but that had very little effect because very few women were in a position where they could actually implement anything about the system at large.

So here we are some 20 years later and guess what? *They've discovered the education system doesn't work terribly well for boys either.* Surprise, surprise! If they'd listened to us in the early 1970s, they'd have noticed we were actually producing critiques of the education system at large as part of the processes of deciding why it didn't serve girls. We knew there were things wrong with the education system then. We knew boys weren't doing very well—we haven't suddenly had an influx of illiteracy amongst boys. They've been having problems, literacy and behaviour problems, for a long, long time. In fact somewhere amongst all the papers I've read I did note there were some statistics which indicated that actually the situation for boys has improved over the past 20 years. Unfortunately it hasn't improved as much as it has for girls in some of these areas so the gap has suddenly appeared and girls seem to be doing better than boys on those things that every school teacher knows are a perfect indication of success, which are their grades and exams. We seem to have a terribly strong focus on the fact that girls must be doing better *because their grades are improving*. Well, I am delighted their grades are improving, it opens up all sorts of options, but I still find most of my daughters' friends are still going off and doing degrees in fine arts and French and will not be able to get themselves jobs when they finish. But that is another issue that we still have to tackle.

But somewhere along the line we've forgotten about the fact that there is a *system* out there that has built into it all sorts of presumptions about gender, about hierarchy, about power, about race, about culture *and it doesn't suit a lot of people*. It's certainly no good for Aboriginal children, it brings in with it all sorts of competitive and hierarchical issues which for a lot of those children are very uncomfortable and contradictory. I am not saying that is necessarily a failure of the system. I am saying there are a lot of different demands and ideas about the system and how it should work.

If men are serious about saying that the current system fails boys (and I have yet to see the men that still basically run most of the system standing up and saying it) but if we've genuinely got evidence that the education system doesn't work for boys and we've still got the evidence that it doesn't work for girls—although it's working better in some ways —*maybe we need to change the system*. There are all those resources out there which are not in the gender equity programs and they are really what the education system is about. So maybe we need to form a compact to actually change the system and I think that is where the debate has to move to.

We actually have to ask 'What is there about this system that reinforces some of the points that Christopher made?' Is it any use having withdrawal classes for boys about violence and rape and various other things and teaching them to be warm and caring and then letting them loose in the sports field where they are promptly told that have to bash each others' brains out in order to be the better footballer? They mightn't be told overtly, but certainly that is the hidden message in a lot of contact sports!

Do we need to actually look at how we use very rigid systems, in the school system generally, to create compliance and obedience (which boys probably find harder to deal with than girls, who tend to be more socialised into being obedient)? Maybe if we loosened some of the systems and removed aspects, it would be good for both girls and boys.

Maybe it is time that we actually started taking a look at certain attributes of Anglo-Saxon, Western European masculinity (because we must remember that this is the only form that we are really competing with). The other forms of masculinity barely get a look in. But we have to ask 'What has this done to the school system which makes it inappropriate for a very large proportion of kids that go there, whether they be working class, whether they be NESB (non-English speaking background), whether they be girls, whether they be boys?' Does it only serve (and some of us have been saying this for a long, long time) upper-class white Anglo-Saxon males (who seem to be claiming they are the most disadvantaged group in society at the moment because they can't claim any other disadvantage status). Does the education system actually work extraordinarily well for them, as it seems to do so in some ways, given the fact that they still appear to be running the place as far as I can see. I haven't noticed that the big place up on the hill here is actually suddenly full of radical feminists making radical feminist policies.

If the education system is so inept, isn't this really the beginning, to say 'Let's start disentangling some of those elements and look at how we can actually change the whole system in a way which doesn't make boys resist by becoming difficult'. (Girls often resist by getting depressed, miserable, quiet and compliant, but still not actually having enough of a sense of self-confidence to go out and deal with the world.)

I think we've got to seriously work out whether or not what is happening in these gender debates at the moment is at all helpful—there's been a lot of 'slanging off'. I've got some lovely stuff here: I could do my 'feral feminist' act at the drop of a hat. I left my horned tails and pointed teeth behind but I can bring out the witch's hat and do all the sorts of things that people manage to stereotype me into doing. We could all walk out of here with that really glowing feeling you get when you've climbed into a bunker with all your friends and sat there singing patriotic songs of varying sorts. Like the RSL, we can go on reliving our own battles, counting our wounds, feeling good about the fact that here we are with every other sort of feminist educationalist in the bunker making sure 'those bloody men' don't storm the battlements, if you'll excuse the mixed metaphor.

But in the long run it is actually not going to get us anywhere. So I don't quite know where we go from here and how we deal with it. But I would suggest that some of the men who are busy putting together conferences on *how disadvantaged boys are* (and banning the mention of feminism and women in the process) take a look at what *other men* have done in the process to you, rather than assuming that I am the one who is more powerful. I can assure you I am not!

I wish that some of the power that was attributed to the radical feminists (who apparently are running the system) actually existed, because I tell you what, we wouldn't be in nearly the mess we are in today if we were in control. For example, have a look at the National Board of Employment, Education and Training. What is there, one woman on there? Have a look at every other structure in the system. Yes, of course there are a few senior women—but one of the things I have noticed over time is that when you get a few women into senior positions, *we grow, like coat hangers, we multiply in corners*. If you ask 'How many women are there?', men say 'At least half'. But when you go and count you find there is somewhere around 20–25%. This percentage of women in any area is enough to convince most men that we have taken over. By the time we get to 30%, men feel they are the minority. It's true! Have a look at some of those counts that they've done on committees where you ask how many women there are on a particular committee. 'Oh, yes, there are more women than men.' But when you go in you find this is not the case. Dale Spender has done some counts of this type and I've seen other accounts of it too.

So we are seen as absolutely ferocious, which actually I suppose is a compliment to the fact we've occasionally been able to do something! But we are not there in the majority, we are not there in the positions of power, we don't have the resources. *We are not the enemy!* So I do suggest that the men who feel like getting into the 'competing victim' syndrome, who might wrench out at the school base some few resources from the minimal amount that go into gender programs that are labelled for girls, think seriously about what you are doing. If you want to go down a path which I think basically is about competing and about misogyny, then I think, be it on your own heads. But I think the women themselves also have to take some responsibility for taking on that particular combative role. Try and work out whether or not there are some things that can be done!

It struck me when I was in one seminar yesterday afternoon, somebody was pointing out how much money goes in boys' programs versus girls' programs (except that the boys' programs aren't labelled 'programs'). I looked at them and I was listening to the language. I thought: the girls' programs are positive and enhancing and the boys' programs are punishment ('You will go into the withdrawal space; you will go into the truant room; you will go into remedial English.') Maybe we need to change the way we conceptualise some of those things so that the boys aren't punished for being bad and the girls rewarded for being quiet. Quite apart from anything else I think we need to recognise that *girls can be bad too*, because that is one way that you get leaders.

One can use statistics both ways. On the one hand, if you assume that all the things that are being said about men are correct—that they've got a short attention span, that they have trouble reading, that they tend to be prone to illness and accidents and also criminality—you really wonder why they are running the country! The other comment on a similar line is that those qualities do seem to be the ones that fit you for leadership positions because it is obvious that girls don't get into those. (As you can see, I can play with the statistics as well as anyone else.)

But I think it is really important that we actually start thinking through (and the women are going to do some of this because the men can't do it without them and vice versa). It would be very interesting to take a whole review of the school system and take a look at which particular parts of the system reinforce the *wrong* sort of messages, what reinforces competitiveness, what reinforces calling out, shouting out, moving, pushing, anything like that. On the other hand, what processes do we have that actually create positive reinforcement for good behaviour, which work for boys as well as for girls? Girls want to be liked, want to be loved, want to be cared for, so in a sense they are much more likely to be compliant. If boys are socialised out of that by the time they hit school, maybe we need to look at ways of resocialising them. Maybe we need to look at what happens to them before they go to school. Maybe we need to look at sexism in preschools and child-care centres, and the home, god forbid.

We do need to look at times when boys have got away with things because 'boys will be boys', when maybe they needed to be quietened down and given alternatives at a much earlier age. So that by the time they start school, they are not already socialised into thinking that physical bouncing up and down and pushing around is an acceptable form of behaviour in a group as a way of getting attention.

There are many things we can look at, which are about the way that we treat things generally within the system; I think we could make a better system out of it. I am not holding my breath for the fact that this will start from the top, because I think at the top there are those white Anglo-Saxon males who have actually benefited by the system and it is extraordinarily hard to point out to somebody that the system that has benefited them is something they should give up. When they do occasionally carry on in the media about the fact that they die of heart attacks and various other diseases, I have offered to swap places, but none of them has yet taken up the option! I said 'Give me a go at a senior executive position and see if I die before I am ... whatever it is.' But somehow or other that's not taken up.

We've got to generally start looking at how we trade off and how we work it out without setting ourselves up in opposing camps. It is comfortable being a victim, in a funny sort of way, because you are not responsible for what you do.

It is important that we actually get together and try and work out what the things are about the system that both reinforce dependency and compliance in girls (praising girls for being good girls when they are helpful might be part of that process) and also reinforce aggression and pushiness in boys. I don't think we solve them by running special programs *on the side*. I think we solve them by changing the way that we deal with classroom behaviour: the way that we deal with playground behaviour, the way we deal with what's taught to kids in sporting activities, the way we deal with all of the courses, all of the structures within the schools. I think that a few schools might get up the energy to start looking at a positive program for trying to change schooling so it meets the majority of kids' needs, not just on gender grounds. I think some schools are moving in that direction, but if it becomes a general thrust that we should be doing a *gender audit* of what is happening in a school, that schooling can be changed to make it a more positive and encouraging and self-developing experience for both the boys and the girls, then we might be getting somewhere.

But if we go down this track, if those who attack the girls' programs, feminists and equity strategies, see this as the main thing; if it is picked up by other men who have been feeling a bit uncomfortable about it and think *this is going a bit too far*, and push that by; we are only supporting the status quo. In fact we are reinforcing the status quo because we are removing the legitimacy from those of us who act as change agents. We started the process of change, it is now up to the men in the system not to fight us but to join us in trying to change the system so it suits us both.

THE COSTS OF MASCULINITY: PLACING MEN'S PAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF MALE POWER

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In my paper today I want to make it clear that I am not distancing myself from my subject. When I refer to 'men' and dominant masculinity, I am including myself well and truly within that group. My paper is not a finished position, but part of my struggle to understand my own life and world, and I hope you will take it in that way. I will be keen to hear your feedback.

The claim that masculinity and its associated practices are bad not only for women, but for men too, has been one of the central planks of the men's movement in recent times. We are being bombarded in the media on a daily basis with evidence of how badly off males are—in their health status, in their emotional lives, and most importantly for us today, in their educational achievements. A lot of seemingly factual information is presented, but rarely is the question asked—'What does it all mean?'.

The theme that I will be advocating today is that if we want to implement policies to change boys' behaviour, then we have to pay attention to the question of meaning—and that means theory. We need to develop a theory of masculinity that makes sense of men's experiences and behaviours—not only to the theory-makers, but to the men themselves, because the crucial task is to get men and boys actively involved in the project of change, in cooperation with, rather than in opposition to, women and other groups who are experiencing the real negative effects of dominant masculine culture. We need a theory of masculinity that speaks to men's experience of themselves, while enabling them to honestly acknowledge their complicity in the collective structures of dominant masculinity and gender injustice. We need a sense that change is possible, and that it is going to be good for us, as men, too.

A lot of the recent writings on masculinity focus on the pain and suffering that men allegedly experience as a consequence of growing up male. This understandably often arouses impatience, frustration or outright hostility from those groups who have experienced the consequences of men's power. There is nothing quite so offputting as listening to someone moan about how hard it is to be privileged.

However, I believe that a theoretical understanding of men's pain is central to any meaningful theory of masculinity. The subjective experience of personal suffering is very real to many men, and the way that this pain is explained will largely determine the action they take in an attempt to improve their lives.

Now, we are often told that analyses that talk about male power are a guaranteed turn-off for boys and men, that if we encourage boys to recognise and take responsibility for their gender privilege, we are simply 'laying a guilt trip' on them which will inevitably be

counter-productive or even dangerous to their 'self esteem'. I don't believe at all that this is necessarily so. It depends entirely on how it is done. It certainly does not involve making boys feel that there is something psychologically wrong with them as individuals, or innately wrong with them as males. It means getting boys to recognise the abuse of power which characterises masculine culture.

Boys have themselves experienced the negative consequences of masculine power in numerous ways—particularly at the hands of adult men and older boys. Often, however, they do not question this abuse, seeing it simply as 'the way it is'. Getting boys—or indeed men—to recognise the injustice they have experienced themselves can be the first step in enabling them to empathise with other people's experience of injustice, and to recognise the ways in which they have themselves participated in perpetrating injustice. This then needs to lead to a willingness to change both personal behaviour and collective structures. This, I believe, is the opposite of a 'guilt trip', and rather than encouraging boys to see themselves as victims, it challenges boys to be more self-aware and socially active. It is also potentially a very direct challenge to schools. A great deal of injustice is perpetrated on students by teachers, administrators and school systems, and if we want boys to accept responsibility for their behaviour, we will have to take the lead ourselves. Young people have an unerring sense for any hypocrisy in the demands we make upon them.

I would like to suggest that three factors are central to a productive analysis of masculinity that speaks to men's and boys subjective experience of themselves and their world, while placing this experience firmly within the context of gendered power structures. These factors are:

- the central role of power relationships in our society as a whole, and in masculine values in particular

- the gendered nature of emotion, and its role in maintaining power differences

- an understanding of the implications of the terms 'disadvantage' and 'oppression'.

Numerous Western scholars have identified the pursuit of power for its own sake, as the supreme value of patriarchal culture (French, 1991, p354; Miles, 1991, pp200–205; Middleton, 1992, p213), and it is certainly a regular theme among philosophers. According to Nietzsche, 'joy is only a symptom of the feeling of attained power. The essence of joy is a plus-feeling of power' (Miles, 1991, p200). Hegel attributes the emergence of human consciousness itself to the 'fear of annihilation by other men. To know yourself as a man is to know that other men may enslave and destroy you' (Middleton, 1992, p215).

For men, two things seem to go inextricably together—the desire for power and the fear of failure. No other alternative seems to exist. The authors of one study in Britain concluded that 'to be a loser is to suffer a terrible fate. In the course of therapy with men, we find that no matter how great their success, they are haunted by the spectre of failure. Indeed it is our impression that men are driven much more by fear of failure than by the desire to succeed' (Miles, 1991, p205).

'To be a man it is not enough simply to be: a man must do, display, prove, in order to establish unchallenged manhood' (Miles, 1991, p205). All of the major signifiers of manhood are continually under threat or intrinsically transitory—money, political power,

physical strength, sexual performance. Lynne Segal notes that men's oppressiveness comes from their 'wretched fear of not being male-enough' (Segal, 1990, p317). 'Making a man out of a boy' means teaching him that the human sacrifices of the power struggle are essential to the process of becoming a man. Institutions that make men out of boys have historically involved brutalisation, physical and emotional abuse, emphasis on hardness and strength, contempt for sensitivity, delicacy and emotional intimacy. Not all boys experience such treatment, but they are all aware of its existence. Marilyn French notes that 'no boy escapes the knowledge of the severities of 'manliness' in our society, and those who feel they have not achieved it live with lingering self-doubt, self-diminishment' (French, 1991, p578).

Masculinity is often most clearly defined in terms of what it is not—what it is afraid of being—and what men most definitely are not is women. Men are men because they don't cry, don't feel, and don't need, and contempt for women is a deeply ingrained characteristic of our culture. Ever since the story of Eve and the apple we have been extremely good at blaming women for all our problems. There is the ever-present blaming of women in cases of domestic violence and rape, blaming mothers for their sons' 'hypermasculinity' and blaming unemployment on working women. It is not such a surprise then that we are seeing women and girls blamed for boys' poor performance at school.

The contempt for women implicit in masculinity is demonstrated in all sorts of ways. Where men are ridiculed in cartoons and on television, it is usually because they are under the control of women. To diminish a man it is only necessary to depict him doing the dishes, sewing, or wearing an apron (French, 1991, p312); and most of the worst forms of ridicule and abuse applied to men involve comparisons with women. 'Mummy's boy' is an insult that most boys will do almost anything to avoid, and sports coaches routinely tell boys that they are playing 'like girls' to urge them on to greater efforts (Frank, 1993, p53).

This need to define themselves against women fuels a basic masculine inner conflict. This begins with the requirement that boys separate themselves from their mothers, who have generally been the source of almost all the love and security in the boys' lives (see Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994). The breaking of this emotional connection between boys and their mothers produces a deeply dehumanising split which is maintained by dividing men amongst themselves as well as against women. Women are defined as inferior, and men are defined as competitors, rather than as allies. A 'real man' stands alone—apart from women and from other men. He is independent and self-sufficient. Above all, he copes without complaint.

The inner split within the male psyche is enforced largely by other men. Fathers brutalise sons, in the interest of toughening them up to survive in a harsh world. Groups of boys turn on those who are different, and instil in them a fervent desire not to stand out from the crowd. Team sports and military service continue to be widely valued as ways of turning boys into men. They provide the essential ingredients of violent competition, the willingness to inflict pain on others in order to win, and obedience to the 'captain'. They are both about toughening men so that they learn to ignore pain and emotions, and both use being 'like a girl' as the ultimately humiliating reprimand.

This toughening plays a direct social function. Peter Lewis, discussing his time in the army, argues:

> *Under that regime women stood for emotions and feelings that might, unless they were outlawed, impede discipline. In the end, a trigger had to be pulled, a button pressed and it took 'men' to do it because only men were capable of surrendering all compassion.*
> (Lewis, 1991, pp185–6)

Male camaraderie or 'mateship' is founded on sharing the rituals of masculine identity. The exclusion of women is an integral aspect, and many of these rituals turn out to be destructive or oppressive. Binge drinking, gambling and violent sports are obvious examples. Men become close through the experience of battle, through conquering the wilderness, hunting, breaking the law and even through the ritual of pack rape (Ward, 1992, p31). This kind of male friendship, however, is extremely fragile. If unspoken limits are transgressed or rules broken, then the full fury of male condemnation rapidly descends upon the head of the guilty party.

Probably the most crucial way of dividing men amongst themselves is through the taboo against homosexuality. Homophobia is a powerful weapon for preventing challenge to masculine ways of being. Theorists of masculinity have shown how:

> *the homosexual –heterosexual dichotomy acts as a central symbol in all rankings of masculinity. Any kind of powerlessness, or refusal to compete, among men readily becomes involved with the imagery of homosexuality.*
> (Carrigan et al, 1987, p86)

Most men know full well the fear of being labelled a 'poofter' at any sign of difference, particularly in the expression of affection or weakness. I believe that dealing with the issue of homophobia is central to the whole area of work with boys around issues of masculinity.

One of the central paradoxes of masculinity which is of direct relevance to boys' education and the current debates is that while men as a group clearly hold the reins of power, the majority of men experience themselves as powerless (Segal, 1990, p214; Connell, 1991, p165; French, 1991, p306). Most men, if they are lucky enough to have a job, work in some sort of institution which is hierarchically structured and which generally allows them little sense of personal agency. According to Marilyn French, 'institutions are created to centralise, harness and manifest power over others' (French, 1991, p323). They appeal to individuals by promising personal power—but these promises are largely illusory. The power is lodged in the institution, not in any particular person. This is clearly the case in schools, where we will have to deal realistically with boys' sense of powerlessness in the face of the education system and the adult world, if we are to expect them to accept that they are part of a powerful and dominant group.

This is particularly important in dealing with boys from different class and cultural backgrounds. Telling working-class or Aboriginal boys that they are members of a privileged and dominant group is likely to be met with, at best, disbelief. This points to the need for a sophisticated understanding of the ways in which masculinity interacts with class and race, if we are developing programs for working with boys. For example, it seems likely that the hostility that many working-class boys exhibit towards schooling is not a

direct product of masculinity. Rather, it comes from a recognition that the class system is actively barring them from the success that is so crucial to masculine status (Connell, 1989, pp291–4).

While it is obvious that many men experience significant amounts of suffering in their lives—through poverty, class and racial oppression, and homophobia—we also have to ask ourselves whether even those men and boys who appear to be most privileged also suffer as a result of dominant definitions of masculinity. This is a strategic question, as much as anything else, because it determines whether they have something definite to gain by relinquishing their power and changing their ways.

According to Marilyn French, who looks at this question in some detail, 'the ironic truth is that a religion of power is a religion of fear, and that those who worship power most are the most terrified creatures on earth' (French, 1991, p357). Power is personally costly in that it narrows the experience of life into the pursuit of something that can never be achieved. No-one ever has enough power because no-one is ever secure from threat —particularly from one's closest associates.

All of the institutions within which men lead their lives are implicitly or explicitly hierarchical. From the family, with the father as the (at least, nominal) head, through schools and sporting teams, the church, business, industry, trade unions, politics, law, crime, prisons, hospitals, medicine—they all encourage striving for success, which may involve stepping on the shoulders of one's friends and associates. The struggle and the structure tend to become all-absorbing, and men are encouraged to regard all other parts of life as secondary (French, 1991, p579).

The pursuit of power and control denies men love and sensuality, and leaves only desire and the excitement of conquest. Men are generally distant from their children and partners, and their working lives are dominated by competition and mistrust. The higher men go on the ladder of success, the harder it is for them to trust other men and to make real friendships (French, 1991, p339).

Men's working lives are a permanent battlefield, with countless casualties, whose failure only serves to increase the prestige of those who succeed. The myth is maintained that everyone can be winners if only they try hard enough, and every man who fails believes it is because he is not good enough, rather than because the system is inherently wrong. Clearly, not every man is a winner, and many men's lives are ruled, not so much by an active desire for power and success, but by the inner knowledge of having failed as a man, and the determination not to be discovered.

This observation is of particular importance in schools, which are based overwhelmingly around the competitive academic curriculum and competitive sports. Connell has noted that the competitive curriculum is a central aspect of the production of masculinity in schools, and that no attempts to deal with the most obviously negative aspects of boys' behaviour will succeed without confronting this basic fact (Connell, 1994, p10). I think that we have yet to really deal with the ethical dimensions of competition. The 'win at all costs' mentality which is drummed into boys makes a mockery of relationship, caring and empathy, and sets the scene for what lies ahead of them as adult males.

One of the real problems of dominant masculinity is that it is riddled with contradictions. It is made up of a host of stories and expectations, many of them quite incompatible. On the one hand, we are taught to regard power and success as the supreme value, but on the other hand, when we leave work, we are expected to be able to go home and enter into happy, equitable relationships with our partners and children. We are taught to despise women and to desire them. We are taught to fear other men as competitors, but to worship the idea of mateship. The attempt to integrate these contradictions requires men to perform bizarre operations on their lives, and to develop a form of splitting that has high personal costs.

It is, in fact, this process of 'splitting' which forms one of the fundamental characteristics and costs of dominant masculinity—that is, the ability to maintain discrete islands of consciousness which are mutually incompatible, while being completely unaware of the contradictions involved (Middleton, 1992, p152). We can see this around us all the time in men who insist that they love their partners and children, but continue to abuse or neglect them.

This brings us to the question of emotion. Much of the 'men's movement' literature on masculinity focuses on men's emotional illiteracy. We are, apparently, out of touch with our feelings, which we need to reclaim and celebrate (Middleton, 1992, p119). Men are not allowed to express their vulnerable and nurturing emotions, and are consequently psychologically and socially deformed. This is often viewed as the mirror image of women's experience, which is characterised by a prohibition on those emotions associated with personal power and assertiveness. This model actually allows men to be defined as worse off than women, as the 'feminine' emotions are defined as most conducive to the experience of fulfilling human relationships, which are themselves assigned the highest possible value.

This may seem very similar to what I have been saying. However, it leaves out a crucial part of the whole picture. There generally seems to be little awareness of the gendered power structures within which emotions are constructed and expressed; and this model also lends itself to the belief that all that is needed is personal, internal change by individuals, probably through some form of therapy.

It is certainly true that the public display by men of any emotions other than anger is generally judged very negatively in our culture. The process of turning boys into men has, historically, been one of systematic abuse, both physical and emotional, designed to teach boys not to show most emotions, except in certain ritually prescribed circumstances. Boys are taught to fear intimacy and self-revelation, as the consequences are generally pain and humiliation at the hands of other boys, and to hate whatever causes them to experience fear (French, 1991, pp292–3). From the interviews I have done with boys, this seems to be as true today is it was when I was at school.

However, it is crucial to recognise the function that this emotional brutality has in the maintenance of power structures—whether based on gender, class or race. Emotional numbness or indifference is a powerful weapon—it allows a person to inflict pain on others without being affected or swayed. Some important studies have shown how the power wielded by soldiers stems from their lack of self-reflection and empathy, while their training involves dehumanising and demonising the enemy. It is important to recognise that

this is only an extreme form of general masculine training (Holloway, cited in Middleton, 1992, p190).

Men, I would argue, are not simply victims of distorted emotional roles. Their pain and suffering are real, but they also hide feelings in order to withhold information which might give others power over them. The point I am making is that we should not down-play the importance of emotion, or the reality of men's subjective sense of emotional deprivation and suffering. I think that these experiences are real and of enormous significance. They do, however, need to be put in context.

The simplest way of expressing this is to say that men's pain is not the cause of their abuse of power, but that the structured abuse of power requires men to be emotionally abused and desensitised. Masculinity consists of those personality traits that are necessary for the preservation and perpetuation of an unjust and oppressive system. It creates the emotional splitting and illiteracy that then allows men to abuse others, as well as making them susceptible to emotional manipulation by those in positions of power. While not all men benefit equally from the system, they do provide its shock troops and rank-and-file enforcers, as well as its generals. They provide cannon fodder for the factories, offices and unemployment lines, and without their participation and compliance the system could not continue.

If this analysis is accepted, then it is clearly not enough to try to change the problems associated with dominant masculinity through personal, emotional change. Personal work is clearly necessary to enable men to recognise what is happening in their lives—to own the pain they feel and are inflicting on others. However, without a recognition of the ways in which many of our fundamental cultural values and institutional structures are perpetuating this pain, and that particular social groups are profiting from it, then the potential for truly productive change is very limited.

This finally, brings me to the problem of disadvantage and oppression. It is clear—at least to me—that men suffer as a consequence of conforming to the values of dominant masculinity. Even those who seem to benefit most do so at enormous personal cost. To argue otherwise is to accept patriarchy's lies—that the pursuit of power, to the exclusion of all else, can lead to happiness and a sense of personal fulfilment. I don't believe it, and all the studies I have seen indicate the opposite. But does the recognition of this fact entitle males to regard themselves as disadvantaged or 'oppressed'? My answer is a definite 'No'!

It is useful in this context to conceptualise power as 'the possibility of affecting others, effects that can be bodily, emotional, or cognitive ... Power is a network of possibilities into which any individual may be able to place him or herself, but the entry restrictions are complex and exclusive' (Middleton, 1992, p151). In this context, 'advantage' involves the occupation of strategic points in this network of power by a particular group. Oppression involves the use of this position of dominance to exclude, exploit and demean people who do not conform to its entrance requirements.

'Disadvantage' and 'oppression' refer to a relationship between groups, and institutions are those bodies which structure and control the crucial points in the networks of power, where people meet and interact with each other. There is no doubt that the most powerful institutions in our society are occupied, at the highest levels, almost exclusively by men.

Where women are included, it is only after they demonstrate allegiance to the institution's values, and as a rule of thumb, it is true to say that the more women there are in an institution, the lower its status in the overall hierarchical structure of society (French, 1991, p316).

For men who baulk at the idea that they are in a position of power, I would ask them to consider this. While individual men may not possess much power, by the mere fact of their gender, the possibility of power exists. It is a fundamental entrance requirement of the elite levels in our culture. Each man, if he decides to play the game by its rules, has at least some chance of making it to the top—he may be barred on the grounds of class or race, but he is not barred by his gender. For every woman, her gender alone makes it considerably more difficult to even get through the door.

So it is meaningless, I believe, to argue that men or boys are disadvantaged or oppressed on the grounds of their gender. The reason that this question arouses such strong feelings is that it involves questions of identity and moral value. The ability to claim membership of an oppressed group gives moral weight to one's claims, and confers an identity and history of which one can be proud. However, I don't believe that men need to see themselves as oppressed to have their experiences validated.

I would argue that there is an ethically powerful and just position in which men from the dominant culture can stand, and from which action can be taken—and that position is based on the willingness to listen—to enter into relationship with those who have suffered at the hands of male oppression, to listen and to find out how one's actions have, and are, affecting them, and then to take action from this understanding.

Unfortunately I don't have time to examine in detail the specific implications of this position for schooling, but I would like to make a few points.

First, it is the responsibility of adult men to demonstrate to boys that masculine culture needs to be changed, and that they have something to gain by changing it. It is hypocritical and unjust to expect boys to change when adult men have as yet taken so little responsibility for changing the system which boys are trying to enter. Adult men need to seriously examine their own participation in dominant masculine culture, and then put those lessons into practice with younger men and boys.

This does not mean, however, that men have to 'go it alone', or that boys need male 'role-models'. Much of the men's movement literature on boys' education focuses on so-called father hunger and father absence as the source of men's pain, while ignoring totally men's relationships with their mothers and other women, except as a negative presence. It seems to be a taken-for-granted truth that boys can only learn to be men from other men, and that school programs for boys need to include a major emphasis on male role-models and mentors (for an excellent critique of the role-model argument, see Silverstein & Rashbaum, 1994).

I think that this is a highly dubious and quite dangerous proposition. It places little responsibility on adult men to question their own behaviour—it is their gender presence that matters, not what they do and how they do it. I believe that boys need to learn to be ethical human beings, not 'men', and women are perfectly capable of teaching this. Of

course men need to be involved as well—but their gender does not give them some magical genetic start which is forever unavailable to women.

Some men argue that, just as women had to form their own women's groups to free themselves from gender stereotypes, men need to do the same. The push for separate boys' programs is largely based on this position. This fails to recognise that men in our culture have always been separate from women, and that this separation is fundamental to traditional masculinity. Male bonding has always involved the exclusion of women, and this exclusion has been based on superiority, exploitation and a deep, unspoken fear of women's difference.

In the debates over boys' education, women are still being defined as the enemy. Certainly, boys are suffering, but it is important for men to recognise that this suffering is, in its social context, quite different from that experienced by girls. Boys are brutalised, desensitised and pitted against each other in order to turn them into oppressors—and girls are the target of much of that oppression. Men and boys need to seek reconciliation not only with their 'metaphoric' brothers, but above all, with their sisters, who have been abused for so long.

The greatest possible threat to systems of gender injustice would consist of men being willing to truly listen to women and to learn from them. The current wave of the women's movement has been engaged in the struggle against sexism for the last 20 or more years. Women have been exploring the meanings of masculinity and femininity and thinking deeply about a whole range of associated issues, in education as well as in many other areas. For men to think that they should start the process right from the beginning, rather than being willing to follow women's lead, is an act of arrogance or blindness which repeats the traditional masculine denial of women's knowledge.

This does not mean simply 'handing over control', or that women already have, fully formed, all the answers to the dilemmas confronting us. It means forming relationships which are not based on control, but on a desire for mutuality and understanding. This will then allow us to share our various knowledges in a context of equality and cooperation. Men's fears in this area are very real—we have been taught that we are either winners or losers—if we are not in charge, we are under the thumb, and the result is humiliation and abuse. Letting go of this can be a very scary business.

But my experience has been that when one demonstrates a willingness to listen, then the response is usually favourable. What this means in schools is to find ways of listening to students—boys and girls—to understand their realities, enter into them, and find ways of facilitating positive movement. If we want boys to listen to others, we will have to be prepared to listen to them in a respectful way. This listening, however, needs to be done in an environment that places overriding importance on creating safety for those who have historically been the targets of boys and men's abuse.

There is, I believe, an important role for 'boys only' groups here—it would be unfair to girls to expect them to listen to the anger and hostility that is likely to emerge when boys are first invited to say what they really think. However, the real progress will occur when boys are able to enter into respectful relationships with girls and women to explore the complex dynamics of gender. I would also add that men running boys' groups have a

responsibility to develop processes of accountability to women, so that everybody can be sure that these groups are not unwittingly replicating negative aspects of masculine culture.

So, to sum up. I have argued that there are costs to masculinity for men and boys, and that these can potentially provide points of entry for facilitating change. However, this awareness needs to be brought together with an analysis of gender-based power structures which place men as a group firmly in control. These two things are not contradictory, but rather, closely interrelated. To believe that men and boys are not capable of grasping this is to underestimate them grossly and unfairly. It is, however, our responsibility to present these concepts in a way which relates to their experience and makes movement possible.

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GENDER ISSUES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GIRLS; EXPLORING ISSUES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOYS

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I have been asked to explore the intersection of gender, race and disadvantage. I cannot do that because I prefer not to associate the word 'disadvantage' with examining issues in the context of indigenous people. It seems to me that the term 'disadvantaged' is often used to categorise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While there is no denying that many indigenous families are disadvantaged—by poverty; by long-term unemployment; by the racist attitudes of the wider community—they are not disadvantaged by being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander!

Many teachers view indigenous people as disadvantaged because they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander—part of the 'indigenous problem'. I prefer to examine the intersection of gender and race because I believe, in this way, you as participants in this workshop will gain a valuable insight into the cause of so much disadvantage. We will develop these understandings through reflecting on indigenous viewpoints.

This workshop will focus on the issues of gender and difference to determine how successfully the priority areas of 'Addressing the needs of girls at risk' and 'Improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling' have addressed the needs of indigenous students. These are two of the eight priorities in the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97.* These perspectives have been obtained during the recent national consultation on gender and violence. This consultation took place in ten school communities in rural, remote and urban locations in Queensland, New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, across the government and non-government systems and included Torres Strait and Aboriginal students across the preschool to Year 12 range. Approximately 300 students and parents participated in the consultation. While such limited consultation should not be seen as providing a definitive indigenous perspective, it can be seen as a representative sample.

It was argued, in a number of groups, that gender is not a key issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The majority of respondents identified racism as the major barrier to indigenous students achieving more equitable educational outcomes.

Despite the overall diversity of life experiences which exist within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it would seem that exposure to the racist attitudes of the broader community is an experience common to all groups. Even where individuals tried to

ignore racist actions and comments, most agreed that such experiences do impinge upon the way in which they are able to operate within different groups:

Racism goes on all the time, miss ... even when they don't say anything, you know!

It's not so bad when it comes from other kids ... if a kid calls you a racist name, you can drop 'em ... doesn't stop you feeling hurt but it helps to get rid of the anger ... it's when the teachers make some sarcastic comment or just give you that look ... that's when it really hits you in the guts.

While racism is directed at all indigenous people, educators need to acknowledge the special significance it has for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, for as Hope Neill (1989) stated:

Aboriginal women are likely to be triply oppressed on the basis of class race and gender, though for many their major struggle is still against racial oppression and its effects, both at a personal and institutional level.
(Gilbert & Taylor, p12)

The committee which examined violence in Australian schools indicated that:

The Victorian Community Relations in Education project, working in the area of racism, identified a lack of understanding of what constituted racism, as one of the main obstacles to countering its effect. The lack of knowledge of the extent of racism in schools, the perceived lack of support available to those reporting racism and a lack of will by principals and administrators to deal with reported incidents, compounded the frustration and aggression of those being victimised. (Sticks and Stones: Report on Violence in Australian Schools (1994), p13)

It's not worth telling the teachers ... most of the time they don't believe us 'cos we're black.

While it may be argued within some groups that gender is not the most important issue for indigenous groups, it is obvious that some issues of gender are impacting upon girls within the education system, for as girls said:

Boys are like they are now because education has changed. Boys are influenced by what the media put out—they see a lot of violence and movies where men have power over women, men earn big money for playing football, etc. That's all they see and so they think that's how it should be for them. Boys are right into sport.

Girls are supposed to be the smart ones whose job it is to do the work. The boys tell the girls to do the work the teacher wants because they have to go off to sporting things. Teachers think like this too. When a teacher tells a boy to do something, he says 'Tell the girls to do it!

There is always more praise for the boys' achievements in sport than there is for the girls' achievements in school work. Teachers don't see girls' sport as important as boys' sport either, so if the girls won the netball final, that would not receive as much attention, in the school, as if the boys won the football grand final.

All girls agreed with these sentiments, saying that:

> *... the teachers say they have our interests at heart, but their actions don't demonstrate this!*

Girls also indicated a strong preference for separate classes when dealing with issues such as gender. It was suggested that:

> *... It is easier to talk about these things than to write about them but you often feel embarrassed about talking in front of boys.*

> *... they laugh and tease you. When you are talking about something for the first time, it would be better if girls could work with a woman and boys could work with a man, because you'd feel more comfortable this way and it would give you a chance to get your feelings sorted out. After you had talked about the issues in separate groups, you could come back to your class group and talk about the things you had just learnt with the boys ... in partners with a boy you picked yourself.*

This request from indigenous girls, for some separation of the sexes, would seem to be supported by Recommendation 31 of the *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* which states, in part:

> *That agencies and organisations providing secondary education for male Aboriginal an Torres Strait Islander secondary students: ... adopt school organisational practices (such as separating male and female students for particular subjects or at particular times) which give appropriate respect to the status of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in their communities.*

A critical issue for schools attempting to address gender issues for indigenous girls is that these girls are faced with a dual struggle. On the one hand they are trying to deal with their femininity in the context of intracultural values and beliefs while, at the same time, trying to position themselves within a cross-cultural situation. Other issues which impact upon the success of these priorities, in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, include the following.

· **Dealing with diversity.** Consultation with girls across the P–12 range revealed considerable diversity in terms of lifestyle. According to some respondents, parents maintained a high level of control over their lives; others indicated their father dominated decision-making in their family; while others obviously enjoyed high levels of freedom and autonomy. To cater for the needs of individuals from such complex backgrounds schools need to be highly flexible in terms of their overall operation and the thinking of all personnel who interact with students.

· **Valuing difference.** It was suggested that to cater for individuals is not enough. The social context is critical and students need to develop the capacity to understand both the group and the individual within the group. Developing such insights is a critical factor in understanding, for example, the value of peer support, from an indigenous girl's perspective. Most teachers do not appreciate the support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls provide for one another and their considerable influence in terms of whether or not individuals remain at school, what courses they take, etc. The consultation revealed that, regardless of their diversity of cultural background, life

experience, language, etc, most respondents had four main areas of concern in relation to gender issues. These were culture, language, relationships and personal issues. The following factors were considered significant.

1. Schools do not value indigenous cultures and languages. As culture and language are seen as key elements of a person's identity, there is a general feeling that if schools do not value these things they cannot value Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people (including students).

2. Teachers' obsession with process prevents them working effectively with indigenous students whose focus is people.

3. Indigenous groups value age and knowledge while many non-indigenous groups appear to value youth, physical beauty, being white, and material goods. The desire to establish a recognised and acceptable identity, through the implementation of relevant culture and language programs, was a feature of every consultation, although it must be said that it was usually boys who were most vocal about culture and language issues. While girls were outspoken about the need for boys to change their behaviour in terms of teasing and swearing, they tended to support what they perceived as behaviour based on aspects of 'culture'.

· **Teasing.** As the issue of teasing was raised by all groups of girls and women and by some groups of men, it would seem to be causing considerable concern. Girls pointed out that: ... 'We try to tell the teachers, miss, we try to tell them when the boys are teasing or hitting us, but most times they just ignore us. The boys get worse then because they know they can get away with it. We know the teachers are really busy and don't have a lot of time ... but it makes it very hard. We try to put up with the teasing but when we can't take any more we just have to stand up for ourselves. When this sort of thing keeps happening, it makes us feel sad and angry, and then we can't do our best work'.

· **Self esteem.** Many indigenous girls suffer from low self-esteem as a result of the racist and sexist attitudes to which they are exposed in the school environment. For example, girls revealed that being exposed to name-calling which includes 'coon', 'abo', 'black bitch', 'prostitute' etc doesn't make them feel good about themselves. Parents suggested that one of the reasons indigenous students exhibit low self-esteem at school, but not at home, is the result of the racial discrimination they experience within the school environment. For example, parents stated that their children are referred to as 'coons, boongs, little black bastards, and so on' by non-teaching staff such as groundspeople, cleaners, tuckshop personnel, etc. Such behaviour is seen as a reflection of mainstream community attitudes. In some groups, it was suggested that there is a growing tendency for white girls to date indigenous boys. Added to the effects of racist and sexist name-calling, this trend appears to be increasing the low self-esteem of some indigenous girls.

· **The quality of career guidance.** It could be argued that, in terms of the improved retention rates of Aboriginal girls in Years 11 and 12 in recent years, that schools have developed effective means of supporting indigenous girls at risk but how does this relate to learning outcomes? Unemployment statistics prove that few indigenous

women enjoy permanent employment and personal observation soon reveals Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not working in jobs which have visibility, such as checkout operators, bank tellers, etc within the community. Why is this? Is it that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls, exiting the school system, do not have what employers want? If this is the case, what implications does this have for the school in terms of: (a) the usefulness of the subjects these girls are studying in Years 11 and 12, in the context of employment? (b) the quality of the career guidance they receive prior to making their choices? (c) the commitment or capacity of the school to empower these students in such a way that they are able to achieve realistic goals such as obtaining employment? What is the point of students remaining in school until Year 12 if they remain unable to access further education or employment? While the value of the social aspect of schooling cannot be overlooked, was this what the National Action Plan priority 'Improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling' really intended?

- **Gender issues which affect indigenous boys.** As the issue of racism was the key issue for all indigenous students, schools need to give priority to programs which address attitudinal change, for all staff and students. As misuse of power is a critical factor in maintaining racist attitudes, it would appear that the National Action Plan does provide schools with strategies for dealing with the issue of racism. It would be a simple matter for schools, through consultation with indigenous parents and students, to develop appropriate anti-racist programs using key strategies provided in Priority 1 'Examining the construction of gender', Priority 2 'Eliminating sex-based harassment', and Priority 3 'Improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling'. The major obstacles would, as pointed out in the Victorian Community Relations in Education Project, appear to be ignorance and the institutional racism which ensures that principals and administrators will continue to have a 'lack of will' in dealing with racism within their school environments. Another issue schools must address in dealing with gender issues in relation to indigenous males, is to examine the historical and social contexts of gender within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Such understandings are critical to recognising and accepting the tensions that exist within groups, in regard to this issue. If schools are to develop meaningful cross-cultural relationships within their school communities then there has to be some empathy for what has happened to others and some understanding of the long-term effects of past policies, for example, the destruction of their traditional male role has resulted in total devastation for many Aboriginal men and many communities are still trying to deal with the aftermath of that process. In Priority 3 'Improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling', Priority 5 'Reforming the curriculum', Priority 6 'Improving teaching practice' and Priority 7 'Broadening work education', there are a number of strategies which could be used to increase awareness and understanding of cross-cultural gender issues across the whole school community. The issue of partnerships with the indigenous community would be particularly important in addressing this issue. Boys indicated that they would like to have more knowledge about a lot of gender issues. For example, they wanted to be able to discuss issues of masculinity and the construction of gender, with men—preferably indigenous men—and they also wanted to know the legal implications of various issues, such as sexual harassment, within

both the school and the work environment. They did indicate that schools should make more use of Aboriginal organisations, within the local community, such as Aboriginal Legal Aid, which could provide indigenous perspectives and specific knowledge and understandings of many of these issues. Such partnerships could be critical in achieving improved educational outcomes for all indigenous students. As the National Action Plan provides a focus on ways to increase community awareness, improve girls' self image and to develop a greater valuing of women and girls within society, the strategies contained throughout the document could provide a sound basis for working with indigenous boys and their community.

The key to achieving more equitable outcomes for all indigenous students

In considering the responses gathered during all group consultations, indigenous people are looking for schools to provide more relevant education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. To do this schools will need to become more innovative in including indigenous parents and students in the decision-making processes that determine the content of such programs. There is little doubt that parents do not feel welcome in schools. This sense of exclusion is the long-term outcome of past education policies but, if education systems are serious about improving learning outcomes for all students, then the onus is on schools to take responsibility for making Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel valued. The general consensus of opinion among many indigenous people is that:

> *Nothing will change until State and Commonwealth governments make a commitment to implementing compulsory pre-service and in-service training programs, in self-awareness and cross-cultural awareness for all teachers and decision makers. This could provide the catalyst which is needed to begin the process of changing community attitudes.*

From a woman:

> *Education systems are not designed to cater for different cultures ... it's all mainstream! We're not worried about 'gender' so much ... it's our way to work together. That's what needs to happen in schools. It can't happen until you change teacher attitudes and the only way to do that is to get serious about training programs. We need every teacher training course to include compulsory Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait lslander Studies programs which run right through the whole course. Don't forget about those who are already teaching—there should be compulsory cross-cultural programs with a special focus on decision makers!*

Attitudinal change will enable schools to recognise and accept differences in the way gender impacts on the lives of male and female students from different cultures and with different needs.

CULTURAL BRIDGES OR WALKOVERS? IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES FOR GIRLS WHO BENEFIT LEAST: A SPECIAL FOCUS ON GIRLS EXPERIENCING CULTURAL CONFLICT

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Introduction

The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* clearly addresses the need for schools and systems to respond to the educational issues of girls from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) 'which acknowledge the complexity of the interaction of group and gender' in research, policy and practice (p15).

This paper will examine what have been the successes in developing and implementing this priority and what are the areas of outstanding need. In doing the latter, it will examine the ways we need to revision our theoretical frameworks and practices in order to improve implementation. Part of this forward-planning is to consider the implications for the education of boys from non-English speaking backgrounds.

The National Action Plan and students of non-English speaking backgrounds: theoretical concerns and the need for clarifications

In a cartoon drawn by Lucia Parrella (1992), an interviewer asks a woman born to migrant non-English speaking background parents if she sees the second generation as being 'bridges' that 'link cultures'. The interviewee replies that 'a bridge is something that people walk over'.

At this point, I must explain two concerns I have in dealing with this issue. Both concerns are exemplified in the language of this workshop title.

First, using the terms 'non-English speaking background' and 'Anglo-Australian' are problematic as both homogenise a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds and influences, as well as constructing an either/or barrier that only feeds the cultural conflict and ethnocentrism that we need to transcend in our schools. Thus, a variety of terms are used in this paper and the Action Plan needs to develop its own theoretical framework that addresses the potential misrepresentations inherent in such simplifications.

Second, using the term 'cultural conflict' is problematic as it tends to construct a deficit model, a picture of all students of ethnic backgrounds as experiencing psychological and emotional difficulties due to their being 'victims' of a disadvantaged ethnic upbringing This may tend to situate the school in either patronising saviour/protector mode and/or permit the ignoring of how schools actually contribute to the conflict some students may be experiencing.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) present the above-mentioned difficulties in the National Action Plan's emphasis on access, retention, participation and attainment. Although important in 'demonstrating the existence of disadvantage, it offers few insights into how this disadvantage operates'. Hence, they also point to the need for clarification in theory and terminology in order to better understand the operations that construct this site of disadvantage. Indeed, the 'group indicator approach can be a definite barrier to understanding' for the following three reasons (1994, p2).

1. 'It can disguise the complexity of intragroup and individual experience by focusing on potentially stereotyped characteristics.'

There is a tendency to deal with groups defined by a single criterion. Essentialism, (that is, constructing culture and ethnicity by birth rather than by construction by life contexts), and stereotyping are the defining characteristics. The neglect of diversity within the groups categorised as NESB is also a problem. Also, the diversity of forms of disadvantage and how they are related in social contexts are not adequately considered. Therefore, 'this model of disadvantage is typically institutionalised through funding programs, staffing and school administrative practice, creating additional problems of how the complex connections among the forms of disadvantage can be dealt with' (pp2–3).

2. 'It can be seen to blame school failure on some kind of group pathology rather than on the relationships among family, group culture, social and economic conditions and the school.'

Gilbert and Gilbert label this the 'blame the victim syndrome'. A focus on cultural difference can distract attention from problems groups face in the wider community such as racism and sexism. Issues of class, the wider social and economic conditions, may be overlooked. Finally, the term 'disadvantaged' itself is problematic as 'it carries patronising connotations, and can distract from the fault of the system which produces the disadvantage'. The term also carries a stigma students may not wish to identify with, and thus they may conceal issues of concern in order to avoid classification under this heading. And of course, using such a term means that the strengths and resources of the students are overlooked (pp3–4).

3. 'It rests on an explanatory model which fails to deal directly with practice in a way which is oriented to action.'

The explanatory model may be 'abstract, deterministic and static', in the way it examines how the dimensions of race, gender, class intersect or interact, thereby not reflecting the processes of change, conflict and negotiation, and the way disadvantage is 'discursively constructed as an experience by those who suffer from it' rather than as a state of being. Analysis cannot assume a predetermined framework and apply it to any situation. The ongoing material circumstances and historical junctures at which they occur need to be analysed. 'Understanding must be specific to each situation, testing the relevance of general

concepts for particular people, times and places.' Emphasis on difference and change must not extend into individualism which may ignore the institutionalisation of the processes of 'exclusion and alienation' in historically reproduced sets of relationships. They cite Pettman (1992, pp4–5) who calls for the balancing of structures and difference in her discussion of race, ethnicity and gender. Categories and boundaries need to be contested without denying the validity of identities based on shared experiences and common social location, and the discursive power of individuals to challenge such situatedness.

4. 'It ignores the subjective concomitants of disadvantage—how girls make sense of and respond to the exclusions, domination and constraints which constitute disadvantage.'

The standpoint of the students needs to be taken in order to 'understand how the group characteristics and outcome criteria are manifest in the lived experiences of the girls themselves'. Objective indicators of success cannot grasp the subjective experience which goes along with them, how students learn to accept gendered and other positions in the construction of social space which disempower them and/or prevent them from using their learning in socially powerful ways (Pettman, 1992, p6).

Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) proceed to explain the effectiveness of discourse analysis in coming to terms with the above difficulties by dealing with the complexities. Discourse analysis examines the connections among meaning, social practices and social relationships: 'how the things we do and the patterns of everyday life are related to the ways in which those actions and events are represented' (p7).

In relation to students from culturally diverse backgrounds, we can ask:

· What are the meanings through which the world is represented for them?

· What are the practices in which this process of representation connects with social relations, including rules and conventions of interaction, and structured patterns of discursive practice which reproduce meanings and social relations over time as institutionalised practices?

· What are the categories and distinctions by which they construct their identities, their subjectivities?

Schools 'are sites in which social relations and people's sense of themselves are constructed in a range of discourses and other environmental conditions which are already there ... The diversity of discourses and contexts means that the terms within which one operates and the sense of the self constructed in the process are also diverse, and usually contradictory' (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1994, p8).

Such an approach would focus on the meanings girls and boys of culturally diverse backgrounds attribute to the process of schooling: how these processes relate to their developing sense of themselves; how the various group characterisations and the outcomes criteria are experienced and made sense of by the students themselves; how they are woven into the stories they construct to interpret present experience and its significance for their futures; how these stories form a base from which girls and boys construct their sense of themselves, and present and project this sense into their developing relationships with others (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1994, p8).

Hence, Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) also call for the deconstruction of the homogenising group category of NESB and the 'conflict', 'deficit' or 'disadvantage' model used to frame the experiences of students from ethnic backgrounds.

> *Given the diversity, contradiction and change ..., the construction of subjectivity and the negotiation of resources, relationships and personal situation is inherently diverse for each individual. However, the challenges individuals face, the discourses with which they interpret and construct them, and the resources they use in the process are not infinite and random, but are to a significant extent systematically patterned ... [and] to try to analyse these processes through a static group analysis, or by focusing on distributional questions alone, loses sight of the meanings and relations which are central to the practices which produce the group differences and the distributional inequalities. A discourse approach which connects the elements of meaning, social relations and subjectivity provides a crucial perspective on the practices of gender [and other] disadvantage in education.*
> (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1994, p12)

I will now provide some brief framing information, some of it based on my own research, that leads to the contestation of the 'disadvantage' or 'conflict' model.

The cultural conflict (walkover) and cultural synthesis (bridging) models

Well into the early eighties, many educators and researchers were working within the cultural conflict paradigm which situated bicultural girls as experiencing trauma and unhappiness because of the contrasting values of the home and ethnic minority community, and the wider Australian society, as typified in the workplace or school (Singer, 1988).

Hence, the 'solution' for these girls, constructed as victims of culture clash, was to assimilate to Anglo-Australian socio-cultural values and deny or minimise the effect of their ethnic background. The culture conflict model had become a filter for the experiences of bicultural girls, a type of whole truth that individual experiences were slotted into (e.g. Bertelli, 1980; Bernardi, 1982). The model was so powerful that it was not just used by others but also by second generation women themselves who internalised the model and filtered their own experiences and research through it (e.g. Greco, 1975; Vasta, 1975).

Since the mid-eighties, this model has been challenged. Without denying the reality of cultural conflicts in the lives of some bicultural girls and boys (e.g. see Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1989a; Pallotta-Chiarolli & Skrbis, 1994; 1995), studies reveal that these dilemmas were due not only to the insularity and traditionalism in some migrant families and communities, but were also due to the monoculturalism and assimilationism of the Australian host society. Indeed, even Australian feminism, with its universalist notions of sisterhood, often defined 'liberating girls' as 'Anglicising' them, thus also acting in imperialist and assimilationist modes (Kelly & Ciccarelli, 1984; Noble, 1986; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1990, 1992, 1993).

Research within the cultural synthesis paradigm has found that with an increasing emphasis on multiculturalism, cultural pluralism and what I call 'pluralist feminism' in the Australian host society, and increasing familiarisation, establishment and confidence to change in migrant families and communities, second-generation girls are able to negotiate 'both worlds' based on an understanding of the 'whys and wherefores' of both worlds. Indeed,

bicultural girls often speak of being able to select the best from both worlds and integrate these values into a personal identity system (Gucciardo, 1987; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1989a, 1989b, 1990).

My study with twenty-five 16-year-old girls of Italian background from two South Australian single-sex Catholic schools found the following.

1.   The girls were not becoming assimilated to the 'Australian' way of life nor did they see themselves as fully 'Italian' but preferred to be identified as 'Italo-Australian'. Far from seeing themselves as disadvantaged and inferior, the girls perceived their bridging position to be positive and fulfilling.

2.   The girls were not torn between two worlds but were negotiating the two, embracing the values from either while rejecting others that were inappropriate to their personal identity. There were elements of contention in parent-child relationships but these appeared to be moving further toward intergenerational rather than intercultural tension, and did not prevent the girls from participating happily and proudly in their Italian socio-cultural and Australian socio-cultural milieus.

3.   The girls were familiar with their family's history including pre-migration and the experiences of migration, and this knowledge allowed them to understand the background to their parents' values as well as being able to identify the cultural changes or shifts in values in their parents over time.

4.   The girls had incorporated many of the ideas of liberal feminism into their current lifestyles and objectives for the future such as the need for education, a striving for careers and economic independence, wanting to travel overseas (usually to Italy) before marrying, maintaining their careers after marriage as well as establishing equitable domestic work arrangements with their partners.

The situations may be different for students in recently arrived migrant families and community groups. Also, intersecting factors such as religion, sexuality, educational level of parents, need to be considered. Hence, again, the need to locate and frame the Action Plan's specific strategies within a more diversifying rather than homogenising model.

Specific schooling (walkover) issues for second generation girls and boys

Having deconstructed and reconstructed the discursive framework within which to undertake gender and equity strategies with students from NESB, I will now draw from both my professional and personal experience, and academic research, to explore the issues affecting girls and boys from culturally diverse backgrounds in educational institutions. These are addressed by the strategies and questions the National Action Plan asks and reasonable success is occurring. Again, the dilemma is not so much with the specific strategies and focus questions, but with the thinking or model within which these strategies are undertaken, thereby affecting their relevance, significance and success.

In order to make our schools places where the cultural negotiation and integration processes can occur, we need to be aware of seven issues that students and staff from diverse cultural backgrounds may be dealing with (Tsolidis, 1986).

a) Stereotyping by educators and other students

As discussed earlier in this paper, bicultural girls may be stereotyped as being victims of repressive ethnic families and communities. The positive elements of these cultures may be completely overlooked. Also, girls may be assigned labels and circumstances based on a simplistic, homogenised picture of a culture rather than acknowledging the diversity that exists within a culture. It prevents the recognition of the continuum of experiences, as individual experiences are subsumed into a stereotype and if the experiences do not fit the label or stereotype, the girls are labelled as 'exceptions' or 'unusual'.

When I was being a 'naughty' girl in a single-sex Catholic girls' school in Adelaide in Year 10 and my father was called up to speak with the principal, the whole conversation was based on the premise that my father had beaten me the night before as she knew that 'Italian fathers beat their daughters' and this stereotype of violent fathers humiliated both my father and myself. Indeed, that evening, my father demanded I behave myself in school not so much because my misbehaviour was distressing but because he did not want to have to 'face that nun and be made to feel like some monster again'.

As a teacher at a single-sex boys' school, it was both amusing and frustrating to see how the boys carefully selected which teachers to 'play out' or exploit their ethnicities with. Those teachers who referred to the boys' cultural backgrounds in negative and/or stereotypical ways, particularly linking boys' academic ability and behaviour to supposedly culturally inscribed traits and expectations, were 'rewarded' by a greater perpetuation of that behaviour and resistance to learning, and further well-rehearsed demonstrations of their 'Italianness' or 'Asianness'. So Italian boys would become more hot-tempered and macho because that's what the teachers expected. Vietnamese students were less likely to be active in classroom activities because they were not expected or encouraged to, and if they were, their 'difference' or 'unusual' behaviour was embarrassingly announced.

Teachers who positively acknowledged cultural backgrounds without stereotyping and who did not categorise certain behaviours and abilities according to ethnicity were 'rewarded' with individual, positive responses.

Stereotypes and statements that assume to know our experiences without first allowing us to explain or present our experiences are uncalled for. The National Action Plan's dot-points 2, 3 and 5 (p16) address these issues in relation to girls.

b) Devaluing/ignoring bicultural/bilingual skills, experiences, knowledge

The many skills and knowledge, linguistic and otherwise, that bicultural children and educators bring to our schools can be very productive and enriching in the classroom and school community. I began Year One in 1965, along with other Italian children, with no knowledge of English. However, we were forbidden to speak Italian and yet as a group of children, we could have assisted each other and in the process assisted our teacher, if we had been allowed to speak our home language. The National Action Plan does not adequately address this encouraging and supporting of bilingual and bicultural skills and knowledge. It arises in the last 'questions for schools' and as a phrase in an extensive dot-point 3. The Action Plan focuses more specifically on improving 'the literacy/language proficiency' of NESB girls, and the way it fails to specify which language is intended (assuming the reader will immediately think of English), illustrates the failure to acknowledge the significance of 'home languages' for many students. I would say part of

the reason for this is the 'disadvantage' model that obscures an awareness of the advantages of being NESB, and how these advantages are useful in addressing disadvantages.

c) Inappropriate classroom practices

As educators, we need to be aware of the religious, cultural and educational expectations of students and their families. We need to find ways to negotiate and integrate the various educational objectives and familial expectations through consultation processes rather than adopting an imperialist, coercive stance. I remember a Year 12 Geography camp that required consultation and awareness of individual familial differences on behalf of our teachers. Some of us were allowed to attend without any dilemma, other girls' situations required negotiations and explanations of activities and supervision rules with parents, while the few girls who were not allowed to attend at all required the devising of projects that fulfilled the necessary requirements without necessitating a camp. However, the diffusion of conflict at this stage led to easier negotiations when a similar situation arose later.

Dot-points 7 and 8 in the National Action Plan address the above issues.

d) Lack of role models

Both bicultural students and educators need to read about, learn about, discuss with, and perceive in action, how other women have successfully negotiated and integrated personal, familial, societal, educational and workforce expectations. Resources such as *Interweaving: A Gender and Culture Inclusive Annotated Bibliography* (1993) are becoming more readily available for educators and students to access audiovisual, fiction and non-fiction material on Australian experiences of migration and cultural diversity in issues such as health, education, employment, sexuality, literature.

I remember my confusion and the confusion of other children of Italian background in Year 5 with our teacher. Our parents had told us she was Italian but had an Anglo-Australian surname due to marriage. When she appeared at school dressed in mourning black and without make-up, we all knew about the tragic deaths in her family and dutifully and secretly explained the significance of her appearance to the non-Italian children. When meeting our parents, some of whom she knew through her parents, she never acknowledged the connections or spoke a word of Italian. It was as if she was embarrassed or considered it unprofessional. A few words, a reference to a cultural event we knew she knew about and would have loved to share with her, would have made a difference. Instead, her ambivalence worried us about our own cultural identities and we adopted her stance of editing our own 'Italianness' in the classroom.

Role models do not need to be of non-English speaking backgrounds, nor do they need to be women. Two of my best role models in senior secondary school was an Italian male teacher who questioned the chauvinistic attitudes displayed by some Italian men, particularly some of the Italian boyfriends of the girls, and encouraged us to study and become independent. The other was an Anglo-Australian female teacher whose blue eyes, thin body and long blonde hair we adored! However, she would compliment us on our physical appearances, and without using cultural put-downs or denying the positive realities of our familial and communal situations, would introduce alternative ideas, provide us with knowledge of options, planting seeds in our minds that some of us could take up

later as adult women when we were in more control of our lives. She did all this subtly, while simultaneously encouraging our maintenance of our cultural identities.

As a teacher of Italian background, I found I was very important to boys of Italian background in discussing shared community and social experiences and knowledge, as well as challenging any sexist perspectives on Italian women. Some of them did not know any other young Italian woman who defined herself as a feminist in relation to her marriage and mothering, and there were endless discussions on the boys' relationships with Italian girls, with their mothers, and about themselves in relation to masculinity. The fact that I was from a similar background and proud of my Italian heritage heightened the communication and the effectiveness of my gender work with them. It also meant that if they adopted certain behaviours and constructed certain stories about their families, such as themselves as male in relation to women in their families, especially to teachers and students who expected such stereotypes, I was able to challenge them due to my insider knowledge. The Action Plan adequately reflects the above issues for girls without specific reference to the issue of role modelling and to the construction of masculinity.

e) Invisibility/assimilation
Students and educators of diverse cultural backgrounds may feel that they need to conceal, repress and edit aspects of their home lives in order to fit in. They may also feel that in the culture of the school, their differences render them insignificant and invisible, walkovers.

As a junior primary school student, I used to dread the 'Show and Tell' or 'What You Did On the Weekend' speeches we had to give, not only because of my poor English but because I had to consciously edit what was not palatable to the class. For example, I will never forget the day I tried to explain how my family went to a farm to kill a pig, how we hung it upside down to drain the blood so that Mum could make a pudding out of it, and so on. I soon became aware of the squeals from the students and the look of horror on my teacher's face. She sent a note home saying that as a child, I was witnessing events that could do psychological damage to me. So the next time, I stood up and said I had watched television on the weekend. I would have been able to sit down again in my comfortable insignificance except that a boy who lived two doors from me proclaimed that my family did not own a television! The intersection of working class and ethnicity can create further marginalisation.

As a teacher of Italian background, and knowing some of my students outside of the school through family and community networks, meant there was a comfort and warmth in taking home and community experiences into the classrooms. As mentioned above, it also meant that the playing out and exploiting of stereotypes was pointless with me as I knew the 'realities' of their positions as boys in their home lives.

The Action Plan does address these issues in relation to girls. However, I am concerned with the general question, 'To what extent can teachers demonstrate that their expectations of girls from these groups are not less than their expectations of other students?' This more/less binary may conceal the various layers of differences, similarities, and specificities, thus veering potentially close to an assimilationist model.

f) Alienation/withdrawal/passivity as learners

Research shows that while boys from non-English speaking backgrounds may overtly react to racism with aggression and other forms of active resistance, as I have explained earlier, girls tend to become passive and compliant. Hence, they may be behaving like 'good girls' but their learning and involvement in what is occurring around them may be seriously hampered. The National Action Plan does address these issues in relation to girls.

I remember one of the rare passive moments in my primary school days occurred when the male principal stepped into my Year 3 classroom and asked for me. Well, I thought it was for me. I had become so used to the many variations of my name in pronunciation and spelling that I compliantly answered to anything that sounded like my name. He gave me a letter to give to my parents who, as was customary, asked me to translate. I translated the letter as saying that I was reading too much and if I did not stop reading too much I would be in trouble and would need to be placed in a special class. Although this sounded confusing, my parents were not going to question the authority of a principal and actually constructed a scenario around me that fitted my translation of the letter. Yes, I was staying up late reading and was probably not concentrating in class. I decided that maybe I was missing out on other activities in the classroom because I would bury myself in my book whenever I had spare time. For about a week, I agonised over this letter but never once could bring myself to talking to the teacher about it. instead, I trained myself to not read in my spare time but would look out the window, or just watch other students around me, or doodle on paper. It wasn't until the principal again came into my classroom and publicly reprimanded and ridiculed me for taking a letter that was not even mine but meant for a boy who was having difficulty in reading and needed to attend remedial reading lessons!

Also, constructing homogenising pictures of girls and boys from NESB may obscure the marginal within the marginal. For example, what about the girls and boys from diverse cultural backgrounds who may not be meeting both societal and NESB dominant values in relation to appropriate gender constructions? As a girl from Italian background, I was aware that I was not obeying both the wider society's and the Italian community's codes about feminine behaviour. Indeed, my family was sometimes marginalised within the community for its attitudes toward my schooling. Yet, there was only one teacher who actively acknowledged this situation through careful discussions with my parents. Other teachers either labelled my family as 'unusual' without providing support, or maintained the stereotype of Italian families even if my reality and the realities of other girls contradicted to them, or they disapproved of our unladylike demeanour anyway! What was interesting was that our unlady-like behaviour was attributed to our 'lower class loud peasant Italian backgrounds' while any ladylike passivity was attributed to the same background, this time to the 'lower class sexist parenting'.

g) Sexism and racism

The intersection of gender and ethnicity means that the girls may be targets of both sexism and racism within schools.

Only a few weeks into my first year of schooling, I was suddenly pushed to the ground by a blue-eyed, blonde-haired boy who, together with a group of other boys, stood laughing over me. Suddenly, he was sprawling on the ground next to me and a girl who was to become my best friend and who I now realise was part-Aboriginal, had pushed him over. She explained to me that they would get me because I was an 'I-tie' and a girl, and she taught me to 'get him back' by calling him an 'Irish potato-face' and then running for safety into the girls' toilets. Certainly, those play-time gendered and cultural fights taught me to be assertive and kept me physically fit. Nevertheless, the painful reality is that many girls experience harassment because of their gender and because of their ethnic or racial backgrounds.

The National Action Plan needs to develop a more comprehensive approach to this intersection.

Schooling strategies to assist in cultural synthesis (bridging) in second-generation girls

Having examined the issues that girls and boys of diverse cultural backgrounds may be experiencing, how do we deconstruct the stereotypes and assist them in the selection from a variety of values and traits available from cultures, and in working through their personal dilemmas and socio-cultural constraints without discarding other wanted values and cultural traits?

Angelico (1989) describes how the integration of past and present in girls of diverse cultural backgrounds clarifies values into a coherent set of meanings, important for future decisions. This clarification process occurs by identifying meanings, 'letting go' of meanings which are no longer relevant, retaining meanings which are considered to be of value, and incorporating new meanings into the cultural framework. The role of a school is to provide exposure to a broader range of possibilities from which girls and boys have the 'option to choose'. Potentially conflicting situations can also be a stimulus for self-challenge and growth, however, and in some extreme circumstances, schools may need to insist on the recognition and respect of a particular rule or educational objective/activity.

How can teachers ensure that a gradual process of personal integration is occurring? Initiatives such as community languages, multicultural studies and co-curricular events, and home/school links are valuable. The National Action Plan clearly suggests the latter two. Some key areas for consideration by curriculum planners are detailed below.

1) Exploring cultures and cultural change within the broader framework (the political, social, economic contexts), and thus enabling students to see cultures as being continually reshaped and dynamic.

2) Exploring the impact of migration such as identifying adaptation strategies; stages in the process of migration such as grieving, 'culture shock', romanticising the past culture; how and why migrants might retain and cherish the past; and how and why they identify strongly with others of similar background. Encouraging girls and boys to interview parents and conduct family projects can assist in opening communication at home and for girls and boys to understand the background to parental attitudes and behaviours which may seem 'strange' if viewed only from the context of Anglo-

Australian culture. I remember the months of arguments between my mother and myself over why she would not buy me a pair of denim jeans. Eventually, she relented and after my jeans were securely on my body, I asked her again why she had created such a fuss. She told me that in her peasant village, denim was the material for work clothes and she was forced to wear denim. She longed to wear bright materials and pretty dresses like the women who came driving by from the cities. And now that she could afford to dress her daughter in all sorts of beautiful materials, she wanted to wear denim. Hence, my symbol of freedom and modernity was my mother's symbol of economic oppression and a sad youth.

3) Exploring the self of the first culture, the cultural framework of the early years of childhood and the present home culture. This enables students to identify the values that are still relevant to their present lives and/or identify the changed expressions of these deepest values.

4) Exploring the self of the second culture, the contributions and new outlooks, the reinforcement of the first culture perspectives and the points of contradiction and conflict.

5) Exploring the self in both cultures: the self that has continued to be, the self that becomes fragmented, the self that is lost, the self that is imposed, how to enjoy being bicultural and indeed value the psychological and social skills gained in negotiating differences and diverse situations.

Through these processes, students can clarify the core set of values which will inform decisions to be made in their present and future lives, while understanding the need for flexibility and adaptability.

Osborne (1994) states that culturally relevant pedagogy 'aims to build from students' daily lives (cultures) in such a way as to foster ethnic pride and academic success while critiquing society and using classroom processes the students are comfortable with' (p6).

He gives the following five understandings:

Assertion 1
   Culturally relevant teachers need not come from the same ethnic group as the students they teach.

Assertion 2
   Socio-historico-political realities beyond the school often constrain much of what happens in classrooms.

Assertion 3
   Culturally relevant teachers teach content that is linked to students' day to day culture, fosters pride in their ethnic identities, and equips them to function effectively in the wider society.

Assertion 4
  Culturally relevant teachers involve parents and families of children from ethnic groups
  we have marginalised in the schooling of those children.

Assertion 5
  It is desirable to include students' languages in the school program, or at least in
  classroom interactions (Osborne, 1994, p6).

He also adds classroom process assertions such as:

Assertion 7
  Culturally relevant teachers spell out the cultural assumptions on which their classrooms
  operate.

Assertion 9
  Culturally relevant teachers accept that racism exists in schools and employ strategies to
  tackle it (Osborne, 1994, p7).

The Action Plan is addressing most of these Assertions although it needs to further examine
its strategies in relation to Assertions 3 and 5.

The 'too-hard basket' in the Plan: the education of boys from non-English speaking backgrounds

Considering that many girls of NESB will be interacting with boys of NESB at school, within
their own community groups and across cultural, social and professional groups, it is of
great concern to me that there is a dire lack of research, policy and practice specifically
addressing the intersection of ethnicity and the constructions of masculinity. In
conversations with Michael Flood, editor of the pro-feminist men's magazine *XY: Men, Sex,
Politics*, the difficulty of obtaining material in this intersection, particularly in relation to
education, is hard to believe. It is as if this area has been designated as the 'too-hard
basket'.

As discussed earlier in this paper, the life experiences of the girls within and outside school
often contradict or hinder the progress of educational initiatives. In addressing the issues of
boys from NESB, educators will be rendering more effective their work with girls. Also,
stereotyping and speculation applied to boys of NESB is extremely problematic as I hope
my earlier personal and professional examples have illustrated. Hence, I would like to end
this paper calling for the urgent attention to the needs and issues of boys from non-English
speaking backgrounds, not only because of the need for these boys to have access to
materials and ideas that are culturally relevant, culturally positive, and challenge debilitating
constructions of masculinity. If we do not address these issues, our work with girls of NESB
will not be able to achieve optimum success as we are ignoring a substantial reality of the
girls' lived experiences that prevent their agency in making their own choices. Thus, the
National Action Plan's present key strategies for girls of NESB, the current questions it asks
to schools need to be expanded to address boys of NESB, and any future direction and
initiative needs to automatically incorporate boys' education in order to render the Plan a

more effective tool for gender deconstructive/reconstructive research, policies, and practices.

NOTE: This paper draws upon two conference presentations of mine which are available for educational purposes:

· Gender, Culture and Racism Spotlight Seminar, June, 1992. Video available from The Orphanage Teachers' Centre and Darlington Materials Development Centre of the Education Department, Adelaide.

· 'Changing the Paradigms', Audiocassette of Huggins, Pallotta-Chiarolli, Madsen panel sessions on Aboriginality, ethnicity and disability for girls in education at the Australian Women's Education Coalition National Conference, 23–24 April 1994, Adelaide.

I am available for staff inservices and student workshops in the issues of ethnicity and gender, gender and education, AIDS and sexuality in education. I am currently undertaking doctorate studies in the intersections of ethnicity, gender and sexuality and was Gender and Equity Officer for the South Australian Catholic Education Office, responsible for writing and implementing the Gender and Equity Policy for South Australian Catholic Schools. My book, *Someone You Know*, a semi-autobiography on the impact of AIDS on human relationships, is increasingly being used in schools (royalties to Bobby Goldsmith Foundation for People Living With AIDS).

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ASSUMPTION, EXPECTATION AND DISCRIMINATION: GENDER ISSUES FOR GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

ELIZABETH HASTINGS

Elizabeth Hastings was appointed as Australia's first Disability Discrimination Commissioner with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in February 1993. She has been a founding member of a number of major disability organisations and has been a leading writer on disability issues. She worked for many years as a psychologist and counsellor.

Before I begin I'd like you, please, to imagine a classroom full of children, with their teacher ... Now let it be a science class in a laboratory ... Now an art class ... Now a class of children on an excursion to the zoo ... A playground at lunch recess ... The school play ... School assembly ... The school counsellor, with a student ... A sports day ... Health and hygiene class ... The principal's office ... The staff room ... A study period in the library.

I wonder how many of you automatically included girls, and boys, with disabilities in these scenes? How many of you made a conscientious effort to do so, realising that there must be some reason why the Disability Discrimination Commissioner is asking you to do this exercise? How difficult was it? What type and level of disability did you imagine? Was the Principal's office accessible? Were there Integration Aides in your classrooms? Were there any children with disabilities on the excursion? Did any of the teachers have a disability? Was the science lab accessible? The library? The art class? Did the Health and Hygiene teacher feel comfortable with the questions and needs of children with intellectual, sensory or physical disabilities? Were the children with disabilities playing with other children in the playground? Were there any children with disabilities in the school play? As Macbeth or Lady Macbeth? Or in the crowd scenes? Was the staff room accessible? Did the library provide texts in alternative formats? Was the school counsellor giving the widest possible range of choices to a girl, or boy, who had a disability? Were the school literature texts selected and discussed not only to broaden the vision of girls, but also to present a world-view relevant to students who have disabilities? Did any of the parents, friends and relations at the school play have disabilities? What was happening at the sports day?

Were you worrying about the cost of including these children 'who benefit least from education'? Are you worrying about it now?

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) was proclaimed on October 18th 1992 and came into effect on March 1st 1993. The objects of the Act are to eliminate, as far as possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of disability in various areas, including education and the administration of Commonwealth Government programs; to ensure, as far as practicable, the same rights to equality before the law as the rest of the community; and to promote recognition that persons with disabilities have the same fundamental rights as the rest of the community.

In relation to education, the Act makes it unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of disability by refusing or failing to accept an application for admission as a student or in the terms or conditions of admission, or by denying or limiting access to any benefit provided by the authority, or by expelling the student or subjecting the student to any other detriment. All of the foregoing is qualified by the exception provided by the defence of unjustifiable hardship.

Other relevant sections of the Act relate to access to premises used by the public, employment, provision of goods, services and facilities, and sport.

The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97 was, I presume, written in the light of the DDA; which may be why girls who have disabilities feature in it at all. They feature, however, in a list of 'girls who benefit least from schooling', along with girls from a non-English speaking background, girls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and girls who live in remote or rural areas or who live in poverty. The phrase 'girls who benefit least from schooling' veers uncomfortably close to blaming the victim. All girls, and boys, benefit enormously from schooling—if the schooling comes to them in a form which is accessible (and perhaps if 'benefit' is assessed as development from a starting point as well as towards an ending point).

Accessibility includes physical, sensory and intellectual accessibility. It includes relevance. It includes a knowledge that one belongs where one is, belongs to the language one is speaking, to the activities one is doing, to the future for which one is preparing, to the people with whom one is 'community'.

This 'belonging' is absolutely central to the concept of 'non-discrimination', and yet the word is rarely used of people who have a disability, or to describe the basic thrust of any policy relating to people who have disabilities. The words more usually employed are 'inclusion', 'mainstreaming', 'integration', even 'welcoming'. All these words imply their opposite, and put the power of decision, of action, into the 'including', 'mainstreaming', 'integrating' and 'welcoming' committees. What people who have disabilities, children and adults, men and women, girls and boys, want and can now, indeed should now, expect, is to belong where they are. Where they are is in this world, in this community, in this school, kindergarten, university, theatre, laboratory, play, speech night, class, office, playground.

That you most probably are worried about cost, that you may not have automatically envisaged children with disabilities in those various scenes, that girls with disabilities must still be the subject of a separate chapter in the National Action Plan, and appear almost no where else throughout the document, is ample evidence that 'belonging' has not yet become a background policy assumption. This is true not only in education circles but in virtually any circle you may care to mention. 'Integration' and 'mainstreaming' are still founded upon an assumption that there are children, then there are children with disabilities. There are people, then there are people who have disabilities, there are policies, then there are policies for people who have disabilities. Policies for people who have multiple disabilities, come from non-English speaking background, live in a remote rural area and are poor have not yet been created. Not to mention being a girl as well!

The latest available ABS figures indicate that 18% of people living in Australia have a disability of some kind—physical, intellectual, psychiatric, sensory. These figures, however, relate to a narrower definition of disability than that used in the DDA, so the 18% is an underestimate. (I realise not all of this 18% are sufficiently disabled to require specific adjustments in order to participate alongside and within the community.) When we broaden the definition to include learning and neurological disability, the presence in the body of organisms causing (or capable of causing) disease, physical disfigurement, and a disorder or malfunction that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour, then you can see that the DDA envisages a world in which all people belong. The DDA world is one which is made up of the full range of human beings and 'human being'. It is not the make-believe world of public policy in which there live only vigorous, white, male, employed and not-yet-disabled people.

The DDA requires that its more complete definition of human beings be reflected in all areas of life and government programs (this is not to suggest that government programs are not a part of real life, much though we may wonder at times!), including education programs.

By this circuitous route I bring myself to the detail of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97,* and to the questions I was asked to address.

What problems does the construction of masculinity or femininity pose for disabled students?

As I have just indicated, the first 'construction' problem posed for students with disabilities (often literally a construction problem in the form of various barriers) is the more primary one of the 'construction of humanity'. In the Action Plan the word 'girl' is not automatically taken to include a girl who has a disability: she must have a separate section. This means that her experiences as a 'girl at risk' or 'sexually harassed girl', or 'NESB girl', or 'girl living in poverty' may be subsumed by policy-makers to what appears to them to be the more alluring attribute. Her needs—to find herself reflected in the books she reads, to have puberty recognised as a significant time in her life (perhaps, if you asked her, more significant than learning how to walk or mastering another activity of daily living), to receive counselling for the disturbances of her parents' marriage or protection from her uncle's sexual assaults, to experience her own ambitions as interesting and her own social contributions as worthy—these needs may well be lost because she is not first in everybody's mind a 'girl', but a 'disabled'.

The same, of course, can be said for boys who have disabilities.

Reading through the National Action Plan, one is not encouraged to consider the requirements within the various sections of students who have disabilities, and there is nothing as far as I can see relating to general school management and practice, broadening of work education or in improving teacher practice. I shall return to these points in due course.

Having said that, there are ways in which the construction of masculinity and femininity does have an impact on girls who have a disability (you will note that I do not refer to 'disabled girls', and I sincerely hope that no future documents emerging from this or any other Education Authority will do so either).

To begin with, there is the simple fact of appearance. Girls who have a disability are not so 'girl-like' as those in our imagination, in books, in love songs, in our language. This has an effect on a girl's self esteem, and on her expectations. Further, it has an effect on her experience, and on the expectations of those around her. As a child at school I never experienced myself being experienced as a potential girlfriend, wife, mother. Sure, I had fantasies myself, much the same as any girl does—but the possibility of their realisation was never there in the eyes, the words, the assumptions of teachers (or other adults) around me. I experienced others experiencing me as a neutral sort of being. When I was young I did not think in terms of sexual neutrality or identity—I just learnt what I was through how I experienced myself being experienced. This is how children come to know 'in their bones' who or what they are. What you know 'in your bones' will colour what you are free to create 'in your head'. This is the same for boys as well, of course.

A difference arises, however, in the expectation department. Boys in general grow up expecting that they will get looked after. Girls grow up expecting to do the looking after. This is true whether or not you are poor, have a disability, come from a non-English speaking background or whatever. Girls in general grow up knowing their decorative appeal (or lack of it). Boys grow up expecting to be able to choose.

A common outcome is that girls must learn to live alone while boys more often marry. Yes: even in the disability world these assumptions hold true! Attractive caring women, for various reasons, generally love being wanted and loved. Boys who have disabilities seek out attractive, caring women. Boys without disabilities seek out attractive caring women. Girls who have disabilities are usually not sought out. When you are young, appearance is all.

Oddly enough, despite the abundant evidence that, in general, men who have disabilities are likely to find themselves a wife and women with disabilities are less likely to find a husband, the education and training plans for people with disabilities tend to reflect a different assumption. It is felt that boys need the job, the career, for their self esteem—but girls will probably stay at home and be cared for.

Teachers, therapists, doctors, parents, siblings: almost none of these assume that a girl who has a disability will grow up to be a mother, carer, wife—let alone a working mother, carer, wife. The lesson to be drawn from this is clear: all those who surround and influence a girl with a disability must develop their imagination. They must allow the girl to experience herself being experienced not as an eternal neutral, but as a potential woman of potential.

This has implications for the other sections of the Action Plan that I mentioned before. Teacher training and professional development should include 'girls with disabilities' not as a separate group, an optional extra, but as a core part of the curriculum just as they are a core part of humanity.

I would like to add here that I have discussed the 'sexual identity' issue within very traditional boundaries. This is not in any way to suggest that girls, and boys, who have disabilities are not as likely as all girls and boys to be lesbian or gay and to seek same sex partners. They are also just as likely to be bisexual or transsexual, to cross dress, to wish to set up all the varieties of householding that currently exercise the minds and definitions of those involved in the International Year of the Family. Girls and boys who have disabilities require the same attention to these issues as do all students. I note that these matters are not addressed in the National Action Plan.

How can we address gender issues in their post-school pathways?

Again, the construction of masculinity and femininity no doubt has an effect on the subjects made available to girls who have disabilities, and therefore on their futures, but the construction of the school has an even greater effect. When science laboratories, art rooms, technical skills areas, staff rooms and class rooms, texts and information, computer hardware and software, libraries and excursions are all accessible, then girls who have disabilities can be in the fight to be included in the traditionally male pursuits. Until that time, it would be helpful if girls who have disabilities were included in the National Action Plan's sections on role models, language, analyses of power, discussions of body image, cultural texts and the influence of the community on the construction of gender.

Perhaps it would be more useful and coherent to consider the 'construction of self', of which gender issues form one aspect. I commend this to you for further consideration.

Choice of post-school pathways is in part going to be influenced by those to whom the student looks for advice. When I was in Year 9 and told the Principal that I wished to go to university, her only response was 'do you think you could really manage that, dear?' Such a negative response has a huge impact on future choices. The vocational and career counselling available to all students with a disability must be of a very high standard. It must be well informed, free of stereotyping, imaginative and demanding. It is not all right to suggest telephonist work for students who are blind, cleaning for those who have an intellectual disability, sedentary office work for people with a physical disability and labouring for the deaf.

Neither is it acceptable to give more attention to the employment futures of boys than of girls as I have already indicated.

How adequate is the National Action Plan in addressing the needs of disabled students?

Not very.

Let me expand: in the first place, the National Action Plan extracts girls who have disabilities from the mainstream and 'deals with them' in one section, as though they (and their similarly disadvantaged sisters who come from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-English speaking backgrounds, from remote or rural areas, and those who live in poverty), were not, first and foremost, girls. I take no issue with the specific needs of these students being emphasised. Rather, my concern is that they consequently (and I think it is a consequence of such categorising) do not appear in the other parts of the document. This

is particularly true of those who have disabilities, those from rural and remote places, and those who are poor.

Examining the construction of gender

This priority does, to the amazement of one so accustomed to being left off the list, mention in its preamble that girls who have disabilities, along with Aboriginal girls, are likely to encounter more offensive forms of sexual harassment than other girls—but when we get to the priority on 'Eliminating sex-based harassment' disability is not mentioned. I think this preamble is the only place where girls who have disabilities have escaped from their special and segregated chapter.

In the questions for schools there is no suggestion that issues of life choice, health and violence, traditional occupations, resources and materials, and adult role models should include as a matter of course an analysis of these things from a disability perspective as well as from a gender perspective, or that there may be some intersection of the two. I trust that my comments will open up some of the ways this intersection occurs, and some of its impacts.

Eliminating sex-based harassment

Girls who have disabilities are not explicitly mentioned in this section, yet it has been noted already in the document that it is a significant problem. If I were to deconstruct this priority I would have to draw some very unhappy conclusions about the real recognition of the implications of and attitude towards sex-based harassment of girls who have disabilities.

In 1990 the Office of the Directorate on Equal Opportunity in Public Employment in NSW (more easily referred to as ODEOPE) established through research that women who have disabilities experienced more harassment of every type, including sexual, than other women, and those with disabilities affecting their legs encountered more harassment than any other group. This is not an ignorable matter, yet the National Action Plan, apart from the one statement I have quoted, attends to the issue not at all. Indeed, in the third priority area, that relating to girls who have disabilities, the only harassment mentioned is racially based.

Are girls who have disabilities, those known to encounter most harassment, not to be given the benefit of programs and strategies which reflect and respond to their particular circumstances? Are they to generalise as best they can from programs which relate to girls who do not have disabilities? Are there to be no videos, texts, role models of girls and women who have disabilities managing harassment in an effective way? Are these rhetorical questions? I hope so.

Which brings me to:

Improving the educational outcomes of girls who benefit least from schooling

In many ways this is the weakest section in the Plan because it tries to do too much, in the wrong place. In relation to girls who have disabilities, I'm afraid it does worse than nothing because it eliminates them from the lists even of its own subject matter. Let me illustrate. In the suggestions for strategies and professional development for teachers the areas for 'critical reflection on their own assumptions and beliefs' include gender, culture, ethnicity, rurality and socio-economic status. Are we to conclude that no-one has any assumptions worthy of critical reflection about girls who have disabilities?

I have already commented on the lack of mention of sex-based harassment of girls who have disabilities.

The best way to improve the educational outcomes of girls who have disabilities is to take the Disability Discrimination Act seriously and create schools, systems and budgets which recognise that these girls, and their social and political brothers, boys who have disabilities, are an inherent, integral and necessary part of the school population. Their right to education is ensured by the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, as well as under the DDA.

The terms of the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights make clear that issues of equality, non discrimination, access and participation have priority over issues of adequacy or availability of resources or services in the areas covered. Whatever standard is attainable in the progressive implementation of the rights recognised is required to be respected and ensured without discrimination. These principles are expressed again in the provisions of the DDA.

Whether or not any legislative instrument can compel governments to meet desired levels of commitment to education overall, we can at least expect non-discriminatory access to whatever there is.

In saying this, I do not dismiss the need for discussion of some more general form of guarantees of rights in this area, to achieve results which anti-discrimination law is not well suited to achieve on issues of overall adequacy of services and resource allocation. An equal share of nothing is, after all, still nothing.

The Disability Discrimination Act requires schools, teachers, planners, policy-makers, funders to develop non-discriminatory mainstream educational environments. It means that parents, students and their associates can begin to demand them. The offering of parallel or segregated systems will not be seen as sufficient. This is not to say there may not be choice: some parents will prefer to send their children to schools which would be described under the DDA as 'special measures', just as some now prefer to send their children (who may or may not have disabilities) to private, religious, community, experimental, Steiner or home-based schools. Now, however, all those schools must, unless they can demonstrate unjustifiable hardship, provide a discrimination free education to girls and boys who have disabilities.

It would be quite difficult, I imagine, for the multimillion dollar state system to demonstrate that it would be an unjustifiable hardship to provide an education to students who have disabilities if they were obliged to respond to a complaint under the DDA.

There are a couple of cases which may interest you at this point: first, late last year, under the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act, it was determined that a rear access provided for people who have disabilities, 43 metres away from the front of the Queensland Convention Centre which glories in 27 steps, was not consistent with the principles or the provisions of the legislation. The State Government was ordered to install a lift at the front of the building. The Tribunal underlined the fact that 'adequate' access is not 'equal' access, and 'equal' is what is required.

There have also been several 'inaccessible bus' matters brought to the Commission for Interim Determination and Hearing. It has been found on each occasion that it is unlawful to purchase new buses which are not accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The various Ministers of Transport are now awaiting a report from a suddenly revivified 'accessible transport task force'—as am I!

I hope these decisions will percolate through to Ministers of Education so that there can be a proper and equitable distribution of their resources, rather than the 'you can get into our school if you bring Commonwealth dollars with you' which pertains at the moment. No other child has to find her own funding to be able to participate in the education to which she has a right by birth.

It will behove curriculum developers and teacher educators similarly to teach about the whole population of students, and not save 'special' education for 'special' teachers. All teachers should have knowledge of disability issues so that schools can be managed in a discrimination-free way.

Addressing the needs of girls at risk

Again, this section from its silence on the matter appears to assume that if a girl has been identified in the 'least benefit' section she does not need to be brought forward again in the 'at risk' section. Girls who have disabilities, however, are at great risk from out of school factors if only because any such factor will have a significant impact on a life already complicated by disability. Girls who have disabilities may also be victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse, they may also be anorexic or bulimic, or have other secondary health problems, they may become pregnant and they may become homeless. Added to this they, too, may have responsibility for the care of younger siblings, household tasks, and other duties. They may be arriving at a school at some distance from home having taken two hours to get up and get dressed.

If a teacher imagines that the only difficulties a girl with a disability has are those directly related to the disability, then that teacher is doing a great disservice to these students.

Families of children with disabilities are known to be among the most stressed. Parents often split up, leaving the child in the care of a single parent. Siblings may put huge pressure on the child or the mother, thus exacerbating the stress. There is often an atmosphere of blame, or of tragedy, for which the girl who has a disability may feel

responsible. She may be isolated at home, lonely, unable to visit friends or even venture outside the front door without assistance.

These risk factors will have a deleterious effect on her capacity to create her own future. If nobody talks to her about anything other than disability related matters, she may never find the appropriate moment to bring forward her own concerns. Then she will be at risk indeed.

Reforming the curriculum

In this priority area there is no mention at all of influencing the expectations of girls who have disabilities. Should not such reform include consideration of why the experiences, achievements and contributions of women and girls who have disabilities have been excluded from the knowledge that is valued by society? I do not mean trotting out the same tired old examples of what we used to call 'super crips' (who were largely male, by the way!), but including in the ordinary course of events the ordinary women who have disabilities and contribute to the social, economic and political life of our community.

Should not access to a 'wider range of knowledge, skills and ways of being' include as a matter of course the ordinariness of having a disability, the ordinariness of the girl in the desk next to you who has a disability?

Why, in the acknowledgment of the 'multiple perspectives which women have because of ethnicity, culture and class' is the perspective of disability suddenly eliminated from the list? Are we not to be interested in this?

Why does the unravelling of 'dominance' not reflect the real world of the dominance of experts, of professionals, of the informed—whether they be men or women? I can assure you, the perspective of a person who lives with a disability would be very illuminating!

Why is the concept of social justice narrowed to the analysis of 'what it means to be male and female'? In this section all the so called 'disadvantaged' groups were left off the list.

The effect of language on, and the hurtful use of language about, people who have disabilities is not mentioned as an area of concern for curriculum reform. Neither, in the notes on post-school choices and the domain of unpaid work, is there any acknowledgment that girls (and boys) who have disabilities will contribute enormously to the nation's voluntary work force.

The key strategies and questions for schools for this section similarly ignore matters of significance in the education of girls who have disabilities: non-discriminatory assessments, examination of social practices and structures, access to all areas of the curriculum, skills to meet needs of dependants and domestic responsibilities, and programs about relationships and sexuality (including information on conception, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth and child rearing, and parenting) are all central to the lives, aspirations and sense of self of students who have disabilities, yet are approached as if these students did not exist outside their segregated chapter.

I can make the same criticism of the priorities on improving teaching practice and changing school organisation and management practice. The whole document is predicated on girls with disabilities being a separate group from girls.

This brings me to the next two questions which can, I think, best be answered together:

What strategies have worked well? What are the areas of most pressing need?

I don't know what strategies have worked well. I suspect, given that girls who have disabilities are relegated to a fifth part of an eighth part of the National Action Plan, that there has been little or no evaluation of strategies designed to enhance the ways in which education may benefit them. Perhaps you can cheer me with unexpected good news on this shortly.

Certainly most of the complaints relating to education which come to me at the Commission concern the reduction, withdrawal or absence of assistance for children who have disabilities to be educated in mainstream schools, and the lack of choice for parents in the education of their children with disabilities. Neither parents nor students are yet well enough established as consumers of mainstream education to be picky about the types of issue outlined in the National Action Plan. When you are dying for want of food you don't fuss because there's not enough choice of condiment.

This does not in any way mean that I consider the issues raised in the National Action Plan to be unimportant. Perhaps if the improvement of educational experience and opportunity for girls who have disabilities were taken seriously, some of the other problems of funding and equity would begin to be resolved.

Let me underline one very important thing: education in a 'special' school is not and never can be the same as education in the mainstream. The range of subjects offered is very limited: science, Latin, art, languages, biology, advanced mathematics, literature, home economics—these will not be taught to the required level, if at all, in 'special' schools, most of which have no facilities at all for teaching technical or laboratory based subjects.

Many girls who have disabilities have been restricted in their future choices by being exposed to the narrow curricula of 'special' schools.

Furthermore, the range of experiences offered is limited—the ordinary competition and rough and tumble of school life is not present in segregated education. Ordinary expectations, naughtiness, opportunities for risk, failure, success, personal challenge, anonymity, leadership, responsibility—ordinary ordinariness—cannot be found in the segregated system.

The areas of most pressing need have, I think, been sufficiently outlined as I have discussed the National Action Plan. Without doubt the most significant advance required is the placement of girls who have disabilities, and boys, firmly in the mainstream of teacherly discourse and professional development. The fallacy that there is a 'normal majority' and a series of 'special minorities' is not helpful in planning any social benefit, including education. The even greater fallacy that if a child fits one category she need not be taken into account in any other group, is the most segregating of all.

Girls who have disabilities are girls. They worry about their looks, their attractiveness to boys, the unattractiveness of scholastic success, whether or not they'll find true love, their parents' marriage, their siblings' peccadillos, their puberty, their future, their employability,

religion, music, peer pressure, self identity—and if they have time, they notice that they have a disability.

It is up to education authorities, schools, teachers and curriculum designers not to create conditions which are in themselves discriminatory and disabling.

GENDERED LEARNING PRACTICES: EXPLORING THE COSTS OF HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY FOR GIRLS AND BOYS IN SCHOOLS

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Introduction

In this paper I want to explore the effects of dominant models of masculinity on learning in schools and on the costs for both girls and boys. In addressing issues around educational disadvantage, I want to focus on the gender system which regulates and structures knowledge and specific regimes of learning in terms of an oppressive private-public binarism (see Connell, 1994). I intend to argue that in order to address some of the problems which affect and inhibit learning for girls and boys in schools, attention needs to be directed to the effects and workings of dominant models of masculinity in an attempt to move beyond an oppressive gender bind (see Davies, 1993; Kenway, 1993; Weinreich-Haste, 1986; Armstrong, 1986). By focusing on my own research into boys' under-achievement and under-representation in subject English, and by drawing on a series of ethnographic studies (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1989; Kessler et al, 1985; Wolpe, 1988), I hope to elaborate in more specific terms on how hegemonic masculinity is produced and regulated within school settings and how this affects learning for both girls and boys. In short, this paper represents an attempt to draw attention to the role of various institutional practices, pedagogies and technologies in the formation of gendered capacities and knowledge structured around a public-private dualism.

Boys and educational disadvantage

Last year in the popular media a lot of attention was drawn to the issue of boys' and their educational achievement in comparison to girls, who are now supposedly out-performing the boys (Arndt, 1994; West, 1994). The common catchcry, 'What about the boys?' appears to be driven by a backlash mentality and, as Foster (1994) argues, is based on the presumption that girls have now achieved equal status with boys in terms of educational attainment. I want to draw attention to the work of Foster (1994) and Gilbert and Gilbert (1994), in order to establish a particular theoretical and conceptual framework for discussing educational disadvantage as it applies differentially to girls and boys and specific regimes of learning. The point I want to make is that I do not think that it is possible to assign a disadvantaged status to boys in the same way that it has been assigned to girls. Many of the claims about boys as a disadvantaged group and the effects of masculinity are based on the 'poor boy' principle (see Wearing, 1994). Wearing claims that one of the

problems with research which construct boys as a disadvantaged group is that it fails to adequately address the assymetrical distribution of power between men and women (see also Connell, 1994). What is left out often are the advantages and benefits that are accrued to men within the hegemonic institutional structures of the state.

West's work (1995) is based on the assumption that boys are deprived and neglected, both emotionally and in terms of the ways in which they are forced to behave according to the dictates of rigid and narrow stereotypes. His work, however, is not based on an adequate theorisation of power and disadvantage and is limited in its capacity to address the issues facing girls in schools in terms of their treatment and positioning in relation to boys. In fact, the effect of his claims and research is to block out the very significant ways in which regimes of practice within educational institutions operate to disadvantage girls in ways that affect their post-school access to particular kinds of employment. Wyn and Wilson (1993), for example, make the point that even though retention rates for girls are higher than for boys in the post-compulsory school years, girls' representation in specific fields of employment and training programs is different from that of boys. Foster (1994) also reiterates that in the public domain women are still underpaid and under-represented in status professions. She also claims that while girls are achieving at the same level as or higher than the boys, they are still under-represented in those non-traditional subject such as physics. Her work is invaluable in that it provides a cautionary tale for those who choose to jump on the feminist backlash bandwagon to claim that girls are outperforming boys. The gender dynamics involved in subject participation and learning are much more complex and involved and require close scrutiny when assigning a disadvantaged status to boys.

Taking into consideration the complexity and the problems involved in analysing and identifying disadvantage for boys, it is important to consider the basis of the claims that will be made in this paper for addressing the ways in which dominant models of masculinity affect and inhibit learning. By focusing on the various ways in which hegemonic masculinity structures specific kinds of learning experiences for both boys and girls in schools, I hope to draw attention to ways in which learning is regulated within a specific regime of institutional and social practices which limit students' capacity for learning. In this way, I believe that interventionist strategies designed to address educational disadvantage and learning difficulties for both girls and boys can be carried out without detracting from or blocking out the focus on (and the need to continue to address) issues around improving girls' educational outcomes and capacity for learning. As Connell (1994) claims:

> *The object of knowledge is not 'men' but the gender system in which they are constituted as men; and the interests that can be mobilised in support of educational work are those that relate men to women, not those that distinguish men from women.*

Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) in their paper, 'Discourse and Disadvantage: Studying the Gender Dimensions of Educational Disadvantage', provide a set of criteria for assigning a disadvantaged status to specific groups on the basis of their social and cultural location. They provide three broad indicators of educational disadvantage:

· those denied access to educational opportunity

· those who leave school early despite their satisfactory performance at school

·   those who are prevented from achieving as a result of social and environmental factors.

Quite clearly these indicators can be used to assign a disadvantaged status to boys in the same way as has been done for girls. Gilbert and Gilbert claim, however, that while it is necessary to evaluate educational outcomes in terms of the principles of access, retention, participation and attainment, such an approach is inadequate in explicating the dynamics and processes by which educational disadvantage operates. They stress that there are problems involved with the group indicator approach or practice because it is based on defining a designated group such as boys or girls by a single criterion. The effect of this is to block out other variables or factors which might intersect with gender, such as class, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In other words, differences and diversity within specific groups can easily be ignored. Elsewhere, I have written about the constitution of masculinity as a monolithic category within the field of psychoanalytic and gender theory, pointing to the need to consider and to elaborate alternative versions and styles of masculinity in attempting to move beyond an oppressive gender bind (see Martino, 1995).

Within the conceptual framework for discussing and assigning disadvantage provided by Gilbert and Gilbert, it is possible to consider the various ways in which boys and girls as two disparate groups are disadvantaged in different but related ways within a specific institutional structure, within which is regulated an ensemble of socio-cultural practices. For instance, class and race factors might contribute to the educational disadvantage of both boys and girls in terms of educational attainment, but the disadvantage is not the same. The positioning of boys and girls within the regime of institutional practices of the school has different effects and consequences for boys and girls—different forms of harassment are regulated within the gendered regimes of the school (see Ollis & Tomaszewski, 1993); different modes of learning and capacities are formed within students (see Martino, 1994a)—and these intersect with race and class factors which exacerbate already existing inequalities for girls.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) provide a useful theoretical framework for examining the social and historically contingent practices and dynamics which operate within schools (and the wider society) to produce particular forms of educational disadvantage. The processes by which students become gendered in schools through curriculum, teaching and disciplinary practices and technologies, for instance, are an important consideration in a discussion of learning difficulties, and of problems which boys and girls experience in their participation or lack of participation in particular subject areas which have become feminised or masculinised fields of learning (see Martino, 1993; Kenway, 1987; Curtis, 1992; Shaw, 1984; Wolpe, 1988).

Gender and reading difficulties

One of the major effects of hegemonic masculinity, apart from its social consequences in terms of violence, harassment, avoidance of intimacy and denial of expressing emotion, is the impact that it has on boys' learning in subjects like English which are considered to be feminine. In fact, O'Doherty (1994) claims that boys' performance in literacy tests in the primary school years in New South Wales is much lower than that of girls. Statistical analysis of students' performance in the Tertiary Entrance English Examination (TEE) in Western Australia also indicates that twice as many boys fail English as girls, and that twice as many girls achieve distinctions as boys (see Secondary Education Authority (Western Australia), 1991–1994; Martino, 1993; Zuel, 1994). Claims have also been made by Lee (1980) that boys have lower reading levels than girls and that they do not feel motivated to read. Lee indicates that boys' rejection of reading may be linked to their perception of reading as a feminine activity. Zuel (1994) also provides the following statistics which require further investigation:

- 90% of the students in special classes for those with emotional and behavioural disturbance are boys

- 75% of the students in language or intensive reading classes are boys

- 75% of the students suspended from school are boys

- 90% of serious assaults are committed by boys.

Clearly, further research is required to establish the link between such behavioural and learning problems and the effects of dominant models of masculinity. However, such statistics do indicate how much already is being spent on boys' needs, contrary to the claims that too much attention is now being directed to improving educational and learning outcomes for girls. Despite the fact that such statistics can be used to support the view that boys are severely disadvantaged in terms of their low levels of literacy, other studies have found no significant differences between the sexes in reading performance or in the incidence of reading disability cases (see Downing et al, 1982). Downing et al make the point that reading disabilities in boys are often associated with emotional difficulties which are manifested in terms of aggressive and violent behaviours in the classroom. This leads teachers to direct their attention to the boys who are experiencing problems with reading and may account for why more boys than girls are referred to reading clinics for remediation. Girls are simply overlooked by teachers since poor female readers exhibit less aggressive behaviours. Gilbert and Rowe (1989), in referring to this study, also raise questions about whether boys' concentration in remedial reading classes can be seen as an indication that they are more at risk than girls in developing the requisite reading abilities. This point is also made in a much more recent study conducted by Flynn and Rahbar (1994). They tested the hypothesis that proportionately more boys than girls experience reading difficulties which they claim has been attributed to 'a possible gender-based genetic etiology for specific reading disability (LD)'. Their findings, however, reject the view that there is a genetic predisposition for reading failure in boys. Like Shaywitz et al (1990), they found no significant differences in the prevalence of reading disability for boys when compared with girls. What they did find, however, was that twice as many boys as girls were referred to remedial reading classes by teachers. They claim that the reasons for this

may be related to the overt and disruptive behaviours of the boys which draw attention to the problems that they are experiencing with reading, while detracting from the girls who may also be experiencing similar problems but not exhibiting the same aggressive behaviours. The girls, they state, 'may only be noticed when their intellectual abilities are much lower than boys and their academic difficulties more pronounced.' This study, therefore, highlights the need to examine educational and teaching practices in terms of their capacity to make invisible the extent of girls' reading difficulties.

Downing et al, however, refer to other studies which support the view that boys are 'oriented more toward a verbally receptive and motorically expressive mode of response' which they claim could account for the difficulties which boys experience in learning to read. Are boys and girls trained indirectly through specific child-rearing and other social practices to acquire particular kinds of skills and capacities which become increasingly gender-differentiated as they grow older? Are such differences produced at home and in schools in terms of the differential ways in which boys and girls are treated by significant adults and role-models in their lives? If this is the case, it would account for why there might be significant differences between boys' and girls' reading abilities. Poynton (1985), for instance, refers to studies which document the differential treatment of infants on the basis of gender. She also documents the following research findings:

· there is more vocal-verbal communication between mothers and daughters than between mothers and sons at the age of three

· girls in the first two years are looked at and talked to more than boys

· mothers playing with two-year-olds are more likely to develop conversations with girls than they are with boys

· girls and boys in the same family are addressed differently—girls more softly, boys roughly

· outside play is encouraged more for boys than girls

· sex-typed toys encourage girls to be communicative and to develop nurturing skills while boys are encouraged to develop technical competencies and physical dexterity.

The above findings as documented by Poynton do point strongly to the differential trainings that boys and girls receive as they are growing up, which might help us to understand why boys tend to reject learning practices and refuse to develop capacities which they identify as feminine.

Downing et al also make the point that boys' lack of interest in reading could be related to their perception of reading as a feminised practice and, hence, as a threat to their masculinity (see also Martino, 1993). They stress that the link between acquisition of reading skills and attitudes to reading has not been established and that further research into this aspect of literacy education is required. They end their paper on a note of caution about the sex-related differences in reading behaviour and levels between boys and girls, however, claiming that 'the differences noted between the sexes in reading are generally small in comparison to the range of differences within a sex, and have proved difficult to measure'.

Adolescent boys' involvement and participation in subject English

In focusing on my research into boys' under-achievement and under-representation in subject English, I want to draw attention to the following:

- the structure and organisation of curriculum in schools within which gender-differentiated fields of knowledge and capacities are mapped out in terms of a bipolarisation of maths/science and humanities subjects

- the effects of dominant models of masculinity which structure the ways in which students perceive particular subjects and how this affects their motivation to learn within gender-differentiated fields of the curriculum.

Both these factors are important in consideration of the ways in which learning is regulated for students on the basis of gender. At the institutional level of the structure and organisation of the curriculum, it is important to stress the historically contingent practices which have produced gender-differentiated bodies of knowledge in schools. Attention needs to be drawn to the ways in which particular subjects have become feminised or masculinised in terms of the structuring of the curriculum around a public-private binarism and its capacity to influence learning on the basis of gender. This public-private dichotomy, as Armstrong (1988), Theobald (1987), and MacDonald (1980) point out, has its basis historically in the sexist meritocratic practices of the industrial revolution. During this time the rising middle classes were concerned to educate their daughters to assume appropriate domesticated roles as 'fit companions' for their husbands who had become the new leaders in the rising capitalist society of the nineteenth century. It was within such an historical context that a particular gender-differentiated curriculum was developed in which humanities subjects were designed for women, while other subjects such as business and commercial studies were designed to prepare men for their active role in the public domain.

Theobald (1987), in fact, specifically takes up this notion of the gendering of knowledge and specific capacities at the basis of the binary structuring of the curriculum. She identifies the 'natural affinity' between feminine attributes of intuition, emotionality and expressivity associated with the humanities and a particular form of rationality associated with the maths/science subjects. MacDonald (1980) also develops the idea that the curriculum is structured around the dichotomies of private and public knowledge with specific kinds of gendered capacities becoming mobilised within particular subject disciplines. Conceptually, their work is important in providing a basis for a discussion of the effects of an ensemble of learning practices which are regulated within specific subjects in terms of a split between masculine rationality and feminine intuition/emotionality—in terms of a public-private divide. This is reflected most clearly in the polarisation of maths/science subjects at one end of the curriculum continuum and the English/humanities at the other. It is in this way that educationalists like Thomas (1990) and Kelly (1987) draw attention to the ways in which certain forms of knowledge and patterns of behaviour become hierarchically structured and valorised within such a gender regime—maths, in being assigned a masculine status, is positively valued in that it is set in opposition to subject English, which becomes designated as the devalued feminised other. It is in this way that certain subjects become associated with males and others with females—a cluster of specific kinds of gendered capacities becomes mobilised around certain subjects and this dictates certain

patterns of learning. Kelly and Thomas both claim that subjects which become designated as masculine can conflict with girls' developing sense of femininity and, hence, influence their participation and motivation. The converse of course can be applied to boys whose developing masculinity comes into conflict with subjects such as English which is attributed a feminine status. The gender regime which is institutionalised in terms of the structure and organisation of the curriculum clearly has the capacity to influence patterns of learning and the motivational dynamics for girls and boys depending on students' differential training as gendered subjects.

Weinreich-Haste (1986) also elaborates on this point about the gendered polarisation of subjects at the basis of the dichotomised curriculum. Different ways of knowing which are gendered have become associated with particular subjects and, like Armstrong (1988), Weinreich-Haste advocates the need to escape from this binary categorisation of thought at the basis of this split between maths/sciences and the English/humanities subjects. She claims that ways of knowing or capacities which are not necessarily attributed to either men or women on the basis of their gender need to be elaborated so that the restrictions of such a gender bind and way of thinking can be avoided (see Davies, 1993; Kenway, 1993).

In order to explore whether boys and girls expressed very different attitudes towards English and whether there was a link between masculinity and poor performance in subject English, I distributed a questionnaire to Year 10 (n=156) and Year 11 students (n=93) at a private co-educational school in the metropolitan area of Perth. The students who completed the survey were of middle-class socio-economic status. The questionnaire basically used open-ended questions which required students to explain their perceptions of English (see Martino, 1994a). The data did indicate that there were differences in the ways in which boys and girls perceived English, which related to their position as gendered subjects and which appeared to influence their performance along gender-differentiated lines. In other words, particular models of masculinity and femininity clearly influenced students' preferences for particular modes of learning which were clearly gender-inflected, and which affected boys' performance and participation in a subject which they felt was suited more to girls.

What was interesting about the boys' responses was that they tended to see English as a subject which was suited more to girls and this clearly affected their learning:

> *I believe [that English is suited more to girls] because most of the work is about emotions and feelings and girls are more used to this or have better practice at expressing their feelings.*
> (Student 39)

Many boys tended to see English in this way, as a subject which required them to express their emotions, and they clearly felt threatened by this. They did not regard English as manly—it conflicted with the dominant image of masculinity which emphasises being tough, strong, aggressive and in control. To express emotion is perceived by boys as a sign of effeminacy or of being girlish, which is considered to be a put down. Rejecting what is considered to be a feminine attribute is one of the ways in which masculinity is policed and regulated (see Martino, 1994b; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell; 1989). It is in this sense that learning for boys and girls is socially regulated, with gender playing a significant role in influencing boys' participation, performance and involvement in a subject which they

perceive to require them to develop feminine capacities. In short, the construction or formation of gendered capacities is clearly a factor influencing boys' learning within subject English.

> *English is more suited to girls because girls express their feelings ... the texts are all about feelings and they're never action or interesting. I think English is boring and we know how to talk so why do we have to learn more. Also reading is lame, sitting down looking at words is pathetic. Watching TV and playing sport and the computer is way more interesting.*
> (Student 56)

What is interesting about this response is the way in which this boy clearly sets sport and computer games in opposition to reading. In fact, many boys tended to compare English and reading to other kinds of activities which they preferred, and rejected English on this basis:

> *Boys don't read as much as girls because of sport.*
> (Student 63)

Many boys, in fact, rejected reading, perceiving it to be a girls' practice or activity which clearly conflicted with their developing sense of masculinity.

Other boys' stereotyped perceptions of English were based on similar oppositions. They tended to make sense of their participation and involvement in English by comparing it to sport which they clearly valued as the preserve of males:

> *I'm not sure about anyone else, but I would rather play footy.*
> (Student 15)

> *I say this stereotypical [that English is more suited to girls] because boys don't read as much because of sport etc.*
> (Student 63)

> *English is more suited to girls because boys like sport, heavy stuff but girls' personalities are more suited to English because they are usually more on the quiet side than boys ... I don't actually like the texts I study this year because my personality doesn't fit the stuff I'm studying.*
> (Student 75)

What is significant about these responses is that they foreground the regimes of learning that are regulated for boys within specific subject areas. Sport is clearly an important part of these boys' lives and their investment in such a practice is related to the model of masculinity they have been trained to value (see Martino, 1994b). Sport clearly confirms these boys' developing sense of what it means to be a man—active as opposed to passive, strong as opposed to weak, tough as opposed to vulnerable, hard as opposed to soft. Through studying English these boys clearly feel that their masculinity is not supported or validated; rather, it appears to be brought into question in a subject which requires them to express their emotions and to behave in unmanly ways. It is clear that further investigation into the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is produced, sustained and regulated through sporting practices in schools is necessary, in order for better understanding of the

effects of such a regime of practice on the lives and learning patterns of both boys and girls.

English in many of the boys' eyes was considered to be a passive subject suited to the quiet disposition of girls while the 'heavy stuff' involving physical activity was seen as more appropriate for boys. This has important implications in that it emphasises the role of a particular set of schooling practices through which a particular version of masculinity is sustained—a version of masculinity which clearly appears to be influencing the literacy and learning practices of boys within subject English. The study also highlights that boys from a very early age are socialised or trained to behave, think, act and respond in very specific ways according to a particular set of expectations about what defines manly behaviour. This has led to boys feeling the need to prove their masculinity through denial and fear which are based on a denigration of the other (see Forsey, 1990; Hite, 1981). What this means is that boys from a very early age learn to define themselves as male in opposition to females—females become identified as the other—and the data does point to the effects of such a training in relation to boys' literacy practices within subject English. In other words, through an ensemble of practices, the male body/mind is assigned particular traits and characteristics such as the capacity for strength, the capacity for rational thought, the capacity to wield power, the capacity to be sexually active and the capacity to be in control. Similarly, the female body/mind is assigned oppositional capacities such as the capacity for nurturing and caring, the capacity for emotionality and receptivity to the needs of others, etc.

It is important, I think, to investigate further this ensemble of practices and processes through which certain versions of masculinity and femininity are produced and sustained, for this clearly has implications for elaborating an alternative set of practices through which alternative versions of masculinity and femininity can be produced outside of an oppositional framework. Is it possible to develop practices through which alternative versions of masculinity can be produced for boys—versions of being which are not based on a denigration of the other? This is necessary in order to address some of the learning difficulties which both boys and girls experience within the current system of gender which is institutionalised in schools through the binary structuring and organisation of the curriculum, as well as through the informal and routinised practices of school officials (teachers, those working at the administrative level, etc) and students in their peer groups (see Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Walker, 1988; Wolpe, 1988; Kessler et al, 1985; Danby, 1994).

It seems that boys denigrate traits and attributes which in Western cultures traditionally have become associated with girls. A necessary area of further research would be to trace the historically specific formation of particular gendered capacities in order to map out a typology or grid of the ensemble of localised practices through which hegemonic masculinity has been produced (see Martino, 1995). For instance, how is it that English has come to be associated with particular kinds of capacities that are considered to be feminine? This has also been the case with Maths and the Physical Sciences (see Kelly, 1987). For instance, this is reflected in my study where students tended to value one particular subject at the expense of another and this varied according to the gender of the student. For example, the boys tended to place or to define English in opposition to other subjects which they clearly perceived as more masculine:

I find English hard. It's because there are no set rules for reading texts. It's hard for me to express myself on paper and, therefore, I don't do as well as I do in other subjects. English isn't like Maths where you have rules on how to do things and where there are right and wrong answers. In English you have to write what you feel and that's what I don't like.
(Student 12)

English to me is one of those subjects where it has its ups and downs. Most of the things we do in English are interesting but some get lengthy and make you want to fall asleep e.g. the study of Romeo and Juliet. Also it gets a bit confusing at times because there are no real answers to things. The answer could be a variety of things, you're never really wrong. It's not like Maths or Science where there is one set answer to everything
(Student 20)

Student 12 identifies English as a subject which requires him to express his feelings and he finds this difficult. The reason for this could perhaps be explained in terms of the way in which he has been trained to adopt a particular mode of gendered behaviour according to specific sex-appropriate dispositions that are prescribed for males. His response also points to the effects of a particular teaching practice in the formation of specific kinds of literate capacities in students within subject English and which this student clearly identifies as feminised. It is in this sense that he perceives learning tasks associated with subject English as sex-inappropriate. In other words, it is precisely this perception of English as a feminised learning practice that leads him to define the subject in opposition to Maths/Science, with which he feels more comfortable because there are clear right and wrong answers. For both these students, subjects are gender marked—English is seen as a feminised learning practice in its association with developing expressive capacities. Moreover, its devalued status for boys is regulated in relation to a validation of maths/science subjects which are considered to be more rational and straight forward in the kinds of learning practices that they promote.

The boys clearly respond more favourably to the learning tasks associated with the maths/science subjects which conform to a male model for processing information and solving problems. These boys feel that in English they are not able to arrive at a definite solution to a problem but rather see the subject as more fluid and indeterminate in its boundaries and requirements. This is perhaps what student 39 means when he claims that English is:

a very laid back subject that concentrates on people's feelings and emotions rather than on fact and knowledge.

What these responses point to is that particular ways of thinking and gendered patterns of learning are prescribed for students in schools and within specific subject areas. Such ways of thinking, however, are not an effect of biological or hormonal differences, or of language practices for that matter, but of a specific set of social, schooling, teaching and child-rearing practices through which particular regimes of learning become established (see Tyler, 1993; Meredyth & Tyler, 1993). Moreover, it is through such an ensemble of practices that norms for socially regulating learning and gender become established. Regimes of truth are set up within the normative practices that operate within schools to produce particular versions of femininity and masculinity which clearly prescribe specific

patterns of learning. It is within this framework that patterns and styles of learning which are set up within specific subject areas and the practices that produce them need to be examined more closely. This issue I think is foregrounded when the above responses are compared with those provided by the girls:

> *I feel motivated to study in English because it's a fun subject and you have freedom in English—unlike subjects such as Maths and Science—and your view isn't necessarily wrong. There is no definite right or wrong answer and you have the freedom to say what you feel is right without it being rejected as a wrong answer.*
> (Student 13)

> *English is a very worthwhile subject because it is different to subjects like Maths which is all numbers and working out things.*
> (Student 22)

> *Actually I really enjoy this subject very much ... I think English is the easiest subject for me because for example in Maths, Science you have to know all the formulas etc. where English, you only need to read and answer questions, essays etc. and I enjoy doing it ...*
> (Student 64)

These girls see English positively and reject maths and science. They appear to enjoy the freedom that English allows in terms of being able to express their feelings and in not feeling compelled to follow rigid guidelines or formulas to arrive at a definitive answer. We have seen, though, that with boys the converse was true—they responded positively to Maths precisely because it was based on problem-solving tasks which require a definite answer.

Overall, the study tends to highlight the link between the construction of gender and patterns or styles of learning. Regimes of learning have been set up for boys and girls on the basis of their gender, and particular subjects are perceived as gender-inflected and, hence, as requiring specific capacities which are sex-appropriate. More explicitly, English tended to be perceived as requiring capacities which boys considered to be more suited to girls and which conflicted with their view of masculinity. The girls, on the other hand, responded positively to English and to the specific set of relational capacities that they perceived to be endorsed through their involvement in the subject. However, the point is that learning is affected and regulated both for boys and girls within such a system which locks students into defining masculine and feminine attributes in binary, oppositional terms. This also has consequences in terms of perpetuating gender stereotypes associated with particular subjects. It is in this way that a particularly oppressive version of masculinity based on the macho ethic of physical strength, competitive independence, virility and sexual prowess becomes institutionalised via specific technologies and apparatuses which prescribe norms for behaving, learning and teaching within the context specific milieu of the school (see Hunter, 1994). What it means to be a man and how to behave as a man are produced within specific institutional apparatuses and involves a denial of expressing emotions and an avoidance of intimacy. This appears to be at the basis of boys' rejection of English as a girls' subject. In fact, as the following boy's homophobic response indicates, it is boys' fear and rejection of the feminine that plays a major role in defining a particular

masculine identity which comes into conflict in their study of a subject which they believe encourages feminine ways of knowing:

> *English is more suited to girls because it's not the way guys think ... this subject is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever done. Therefore, I don't particularly like this subject. I hope you aren't offended by this, but most guys who like English are faggots.*
> (Student 81)

This response is quite significant in that it raises important issues about homophobia and the role it plays in the construction of dominant models of masculinity and how this inhibits learning for this low-achieving English student. English conflicts with this student's tenuous sense of masculinity. Moreover, he questions the masculinity of those boys who enjoy English and constructs them as homosexual. Consequently, he suggests that they are effeminate in some way for responding positively to a girls' subject. English in its association with femininity and feminine ways of knowing leads this boy to reject it as a worthwhile subject. At the basis of such a response is a rejection of the other, based on fear, and it is such a mechanism that leads boys to continually feel the need to prove their masculinity (see Martino, 1994b; 1994c).

The important issue that this boy's response raises relates to the role of homophobia in the policing of masculinity for boys. I want to raise several questions which I will take up later when examining more closely the specific schooling practices, processes and technologies that operate in the formation of particular versions of masculinity. How might homophobia affect the kinds of learning and social activities that boys choose to engage in? To what extent is such a mechanism for regulating and producing hegemonic masculinity built into the system through the specific teaching and peer group social practices that produce particular kinds of gendered subjects?

The study into boys' perceptions of subject English is important for a number of reasons within the context of this paper:

- it identifies mechanisms and processes which affect learning on the basis of gender

- it draws attention to gendered patterns in styles of learning and how this might affect learning within specific subjects

- it highlights how the gender-inflected nature of subjects can influence and affect learning for boys and girls on the basis of particular models of masculinity and femininity which they have internalised

- it draws attention to the structuring and organisation of the curriculum at the systems level to highlight how particular bodies of knowledge and learning practices are implicated in social technologies for forming particular kinds of gendered subjects and capacities.

The study also points to the need to move beyond thinking about masculinity and femininity as oppositional categories or sets of traits or behaviours. Strategies need to be developed to encourage students to think beyond such a gender bind and to consider alternative ways of knowing. When alternative and less oppressive models of masculinity are made available, more flexibility will be provided for boys to take up a range of learning

styles and ways of being and relating to others which are not based on a homophobic and misogynist denigration of the other. This will also have positive effects for girls.

Traditional masculinity, therefore, needs to be challenged so that both boys and girls can be encouraged to explore a range of ways of learning and being which are not locked into an oppressive binary structure. By targeting the construction of masculinity as an object of critical scrutiny it is possible to elaborate alternative ways of knowing. Once alternative models of masculinity become available, an alternative motivational dynamics becomes possible. In fact, particular pedagogies and reading practices have been developed in an attempt to elaborate less oppressive models of masculinity in the English classroom (see Martino & Mellor, 1995).

At the level of curriculum development and implementation, the answer does not lie necessarily in masculinising subject English or feminising maths/sciences to enhance the learning of boys and girls respectively in these subjects. This will only serve to reproduce a gendered set of cultural dualisms. More work, however, needs to be done in developing alternative bodies of knowledge in an attempt to reconstruct the curriculum (see Kenway, 1993). Kenway claims that a restructuring of the curriculum needs to take place for girls to ensure that their participation and success in the non-traditional school subjects are enhanced. Moreover, she claims that the curriculum needs to be restructured in such a way that it does not impose upon girls a single model of learning. Her approach is not one unlike that elaborated by Mellor and Patterson (1994) and Martino and Mellor (1995) in relation to developing specific reading practices in the English classroom, in an attempt to train students to develop particular critical capacities and competencies for reading gender, which we claim are necessary to elaborate less oppressive models of masculinity. Similarly, Kenway advocates an explicit pedagogy designed to teach students particular skills which are not necessarily tied to a binary structuring of gendered capacities. She claims that those educational practices that benefit all students across all school subjects and which contribute to the 'making of a compassionate and humane society' are the ones which should be endorsed. Her focus on the level of institutional practices and pedagogies, I think, is important in the development of alternative technologies which will produce different effects in terms of student learning.

This point about institutional practices and apparatuses in their capacity to produce particular kinds of learners and forms of learning is also taken up by Licht and Dweck (1984) and Walkerdine (1989), in their focus on the production of gendered patterns of success and failure in students' learning behaviours and orientation. Licht and Dweck (1984), for instance, take up the issue of learned helplessness with regard to girls' tendency to attribute their failures to lack of ability, while boys tend to attribute their learning difficulties to lack of effort. The study demonstrated that, relative to boys, girls appeared to have less confidence in their ability to succeed and that this affected their self-esteem. Moreover, they claim that it is more likely that teachers will themselves attribute boys' poor performance to a lack of effort or motivation, while accounting for the errors that girls make as an indicator of insufficient ability.

Walkerdine (1989), in fact, examines the apparatuses and technologies which have led to the production of femininity as poor performance. She claims that historically females were considered to lack the capacity for reason and she explores the complex network of practices and pedagogies which led to the production of such a truth. What is important about both studies is that they highlight the very significant ways in which teachers' practices and their positioning of students can influence and exacerbate learning. Such studies emphasise the role of teachers and pedagogies in their capacity to produce patterns of success and failure which have detrimental consequences for girls in terms of reinforcing learned helplessness and inhibiting their performance.

Bannister's work (1993) is also useful in developing a theoretical framework for theorising the ways in which gender differences and patterns of learning are produced through an ensemble of teaching and learning practices in schools and how the apparatuses of developmental psychology and objects relations theory have produced 'a regime of truth about learning'. Bannister's work is important in drawing attention to ways in which particular truths about learning have been produced through specific practices and assessment techniques. She reviews studies which document the differences between boys' and girls' performance on particular modes of assessment—boys' superior performance on multiple-choice items is set against girls' superior performance on open-ended forms of essay writing tasks. She claims that such studies have been used to establish a truth about gender differences in cognitive styles of learning. This point is important because it draws attention to the processes—the practices and techniques—by which certain claims about the learner and his/her capacities become established as 'truth' (see Walkerdine, 1989).

Bannister critiques the ways in which feminist researchers such as Harding have drawn on object relations theory to explain differences in the ways males and females respond to science. Her point is that the learner or child is produced through the normalising practices of developmental psychology and Piagetian theories of cognitive development. What constitutes learning is informed by particular psychological theories which create an apparatus or an ensemble of techniques and practices for producing certain truths about the learner and learning. This also clearly relates to ways in which learning difficulties are produced as either socially constructed or physiologically determined through the normalising practices informed by particular theories about learning (see Nichols, 1995). In other words, learning difficulties are produced within particular regimes of practice. Bannister stresses the need, therefore, to examine closely the ways in which teaching and learning practices in specific localised contexts operate to produce certain patterns of learning and gendered attainment. She makes the point, for instance, that boys' superior achievement in science could be the effect of teachers' biased expectations and perceptions. She shifts the focus from examining the differences in learning styles between male and female students to exploring the processes by which such differences are produced. Thus, she advocates a focus on teaching practices and pedagogies in their capacity to produce particular kinds of learners.

This also relates to one of the major points made by Wolpe (1988) in her study about the effects of schooling which have produced particular truths about boys' impact on girls' educational outcomes. She claims that such feminist educators as Arnot (1984), Mahony (1985), Spender and Sarah (1980), and Weiner (1985) have provided simplistic monocausal explanations of boys' behaviour in relation to how it affects girls' performance in schools.

She stresses that stereotypical views of girls as quiet and passive, and of boys as the problem, have been produced within a regime of practices which target boys in too simplistic a way. The effect of this is to block out the various ways in which girls can be disruptive in their refusal to learn. She claims that within a regime of feminist educational practices certain stereotypes about girls' and boys' behaviour in schools have been reinforced with boys' noisiness, demand for teachers' attention, need of discipline and sexual harassment of girls becoming the object of critical scrutiny. The effect of such research has been the establishment of a regime of truth about boys' behaviour as a whole group which ignores intra-group differences which are influenced by a range and ensemble of practices. This relates to the point made by Gilbert and Gilbert (1994) in relation to the effects of the group principle when undertaking research into the gender dimensions of educational disadvantage. What needs to be targeted, therefore, when undertaking study into the effects of masculinity, is avoiding falling into the trap of reinforcing gender stereotypes, while examining the processes by which differences within groups of boys and girls are produced and how particular versions of masculinity and femininity are regulated.

Masculinity and learning: regimes of practice

In his ethnographic study of masculinity, Mac an Ghaill (1994) explores the ways in which dominant models of masculinity are produced in schools through specific regimes of practice. His study is important for a number of reasons:

- it details the specific normalising processes and practices by which particular versions and hierarchies of masculinity are produced

- it details the various ways in which masculinity is policed for boys through the mechanisms of homophobia, compulsory heterosexuality and misogyny, and highlights both the social and educational costs for boys of such a regime of practice

- it explores the interplay of class, race and gender relations in the production of particular versions of masculinity

- it develops further understanding about the effects of masculinity on patterns and styles of learning

- it explores the interplay between sexual and gendered practices within the context of the peer group network and how this relates to specific patterns of gendered learning.

In focusing on the social practices of working class heterosexual peer groups, Mac an Ghaill explores the range of masculinities formed within a particular school settings according to the interplay of intra-class variations and ethnicities. This work is important in the context of this paper on learning difficulties and the construction of gender, in that the effects of a macho style of masculinity are explored in terms of regulating learning for boys. Those boys who resisted such versions of masculinity were ridiculed, while others adopted such a masculine code as a defence against the class domination of the school. The 'macho lads' who were clearly the low achievers had learned particular anti-social behaviours such as truanting, coming late to lessons, refusing to answer teachers in class, etc., as a means of resisting and contesting the class-based authority of the system. Through such social practices and within the specific context of their peer groups, a particular macho version of masculinity was produced for these boys which was organised around conflict with the

institutional authority of the school. The system set up an apparatus of disciplinary surveillance for policing and controlling these boys' behaviours which only appeared to exacerbate already existing learning difficulties and the boys' low levels of literacy. In fact, Mac an Ghaill suggests that these boys adopted an aggressive macho style of masculinity in response to their failure and, hence, as a means of achieving an alternative status in a system which denies them access to particular cultural capital. What is important about this case study is that it draws attention to the ways in which a particular version of masculinity was enforced and sustained for these boys in terms of assigning a feminine status to academic work and achievement. Any association of academic work for these boys signalled effeminacy and on this basis they denigrated the academic achievers by referring to them as 'dickhead achievers' and by questioning their masculinity. A hierarchy of masculinities is set up within such regimes of practice in which boys create an inferior group of the 'not so real boys' (see Arnot, 1984).

Kessler et al (1985) also frame the production of working class masculinities in similar terms to Arnot and Mac an Ghaill, claiming that resistance to school (in this case, for a working class boy, Bill) is stiffened by a need to protect a bruised sense of self and to assert masculine claims to authority and personal space. However, Kessler et al also raise the issue that while resistance for a working-class boy confirms his masculinity, similar behaviour among working-class girls only serves to call into question their femininity. This relates to a point raised earlier in terms of how disadvantage for boys and girls is regulated differentially within a specific regime of gendered practices which have a normalising effect in regulating the production of masculinity and femininity. Attention is also drawn to the regime of sporting practices within a ruling-class school which produces and reinforces a particular macho version of masculinity based an aggressive competitiveness and physical toughness. Those boys who are unable to play sport or who prefer not to are derided. Those relegated to study, non-violent games, debating and similar kinds of activities are ridiculed by the footballers and labelled 'Cyrils' which is an indicator of effeminacy (see also Wolpe, 1988).

Connell (1989) also elaborates on the demarcation of masculinities in terms of a hierarchised pecking order within the context of the peer group of an urban working-class high school. He also sees the assertion of an aggressive masculinity on behalf of working-class boys through sporting practices as an effect of and a response to their institutionalised failure. What is significant about such studies is that they highlight the role of sporting practices and class relations in the policing and production of particular versions of masculinity and how this prescribes a particular regime of learning for boys. Moreover, through specific case studies the ways in which schools arbitrate among different versions of masculinity and femininity are also explicated:

> *... the school as an institution is characterised at any given time by a particular gender regime. This may be defined as the pattern of practices that constructs various kinds of masculinity and femininity among staff and students, orders them in terms of prestige and power, and constructs a sexual division of labour within the institution.*
> (Kessler et al, p42)

Such a gender system as has been explicated in this paper clearly has an impact on both boys and girls in schools in terms of the regimes of learning which it establishes.

While I am conscious of not wanting to fall into the trap of blaming teachers or of offering monocausal explanations of their practices in terms of their effects on learners, it is important to stress that teachers themselves are produced through an ensemble of institutional practices. This relates to Mac an Ghaill's discussion, for instance, about the role of teachers in positioning academic achievers as effeminate through heterosexist jibes, thereby sustaining a particular gender regime. He also draws attention to the ways in which the public/private dualism is reproduced within particular subject areas such as English which is considered to be a feminine subject. He quotes one student who sees English as split in terms of boys engaging with the rational side of English while girls do all the 'emotional stuff'. The point is that by focusing on what teachers, students and other school officials do and say, it is possible to begin to situate their practices and how they affect learning within the wider context of specific kinds of apparatuses and technologies for producing particular kinds of learners (see Bannister, 1993).

The policing of masculinity

Through a close examination of the peer group cultural practices, Mac an Ghaill (1994) also documents the ways in which masculinity is circumscribed and policed for adolescent boys within schools. What is important to note is that within peer group networks, boys continually felt the need to compete with one another and to assert their masculinity. This was achieved through a process of labelling and teasing of those boys who fell short of the dominant expectations of how men should behave. In fact, a particular hegemonic heterosexual version of masculinity was asserted in this way in terms of a separation from effeminacy or homosexuality (see Holland et al, 1993). Through the mechanism of homophobia, boundaries for boys were marked out and in this way their masculinity was policed. The effects of such practices for boys is a form of emotional illiteracy. The boys interviewed by Mac an Ghaill claimed that there was no safe space for them at school within which they could talk openly about their feelings. This represents an attempt on behalf of boys to distance themselves from any association with femininity for fear of being labelled a 'poof' and having their masculinity questioned. This sexual boundary maintenance is also sustained for boys across other sites such as the family and the workplace, and intersects with other variables such as race, class and ethnicity (see Walker, 1988).

The policing of masculinity within the overall context of boys' learning does require close attention for a number of reasons:

·   it draws attention to the normalising practices which regulate boys' behaviours

·   it highlights the need to consider the role and effects of homophobia in regulating specific kinds of capacities for boys such as learning to express their emotions and to deal with conflict resolution in non-violent ways.

I have attempted to address this issue because I believe that it is important in a discussion of the effects of hegemonic masculinity in terms of how boys are socially regulated and how this might affect their learning practices in schools.

Conclusion

Overall, in this paper I have attempted to elaborate a post-Foucauldian framework (see Hunter, 1987, 1994; Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1989; Martin et al, 1988), within which to discuss the formation of specific kinds of gendered learning capacities and practices. This framework offers the possibility of thinking about gender and learning as being produced within the context of a materialist set of normalising practices and apparatuses. In framing issues around boys' under-achievement in English and their low levels of literacy, as well as focusing on the effects of specific practices within schools in their capacity to influence certain patterns of learning, my purpose has been to elaborate a sound theoretical basis for developing interventionist boyswork practices and strategies which will consolidate the existing Girls' Education Strategy as outlined in the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97*. By focusing on the gender system in terms of the ways in which versions of masculinity and femininity are institutionalised through specific regimes of practice, what becomes possible is a mapping out of the limits and possibilities of an alternative set of practices designed to improve the educational outcomes of both girls and boys. It is in this sense that the role of gender in influencing the formation of and research into specific learning difficulties can be made the object of critical scrutiny.

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SEX AND GENDER: WHAT PARENTS WANT

LORI BECKETT, MARGARET BODE & KERRIE CREWE

The authors are with the Australian Council of State School Associations.

Introduction

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) is the national organisation representing parents of over 2 million children in government schools. It is comprised of eleven affiliates from the states and territories, one each from the ACT, the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland and Tasmania, and two from South Australia, NSW and Victoria. These affiliates elect their parent representatives onto national committees like the MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce, and national projects such as DEET's Gender and Violence Project, as well as the state-based forums on violence in schools. ACSSO also had a representative on the Schools Commission committee that wrote the *National Policy for the Education of Girls 1993–97*. In this way, ACSSO is very much a part of the education reform agenda.

ACSSO is built on a commitment to a public education system which is fully funded by the state; inclusive, that is, available, accessible and attractive to all young people from all social backgrounds; and determined by administrators, teachers, parents and students (ACSSO, 1994/5). Gender equity and anti-homophobia are part of this commitment, and feature in ACSSO's own policy document which is determined by parents from across the country when they meet in conference once a year. Gender equity and girls' education are located under the policy section on 'equity of outcomes', and anti-homophobia in the 'human development programs' under the policy section on curriculum and assessment. They are included because of ACSSO's commitment to equity and parents' deep-seated concerns about the number of children who struggle with their sexuality, and about the spate of gay-hate violence that effects so many people in our school communities. The ACSSO policy document published yearly is regarded as a part of the historical record of the thinking of the parent movement in Australia since its establishment in 1946 (ACSSO, 1994/5). In 1996, the organisation celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

Parent participation

To talk about what parents want is to invoke a political rationale for parent participation in their children's schooling. ACSSO is also built on a commitment to the principle of participatory democracy, which underpins the provision of public education insofar as those students, parents and teachers involved in the system are enabled and empowered to be partners in the decision-making about their needs and concerns (ACSSO 1994/5). Brown, Cahir and Reeve (1987) recognised that parents, teachers and students have some authority to participate in determining the school experience. For parents, that authority derives from their role as parents and their responsibility to and for their children, and their right to participate in decisions affecting their children's education (ACSSO 1994/5).

In ACSSO's 1994/5 Policy Document, the principle of participatory democracy is combined with the principles of equality and excellence to form an essential statement of principles to guide the organisation's practical activities, which are geared towards achieving a high quality public education system for everyone. ACSSO's brief involves parents arguing on behalf of girls and boys and putting the case that schools and school systems should take the responsibility for ensuring equality of outcomes for all young people. Through schooling, all young people should have independent access to knowledge and the skills and understandings necessary to shape their own lives and to participate in shaping society. Learning outcomes should not be effected by gender or sexuality, nor ethnic origin, racial background, class, ability/disability, and geographic location (ACSSO 1994/5).

The former Federal Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Ross Free (1995), acknowledged and welcomed the parent perspective that ACSSO contributes to the educational debate. He invited all government and non-government education authorities to recognise the need to strengthen the role of parents in school education. 'When this occurs, the quality of schooling in Australia will be further enhanced as parents, teachers and education authorities work together to improve the learning outcomes of students' (p3). Other state and territory Ministers of Education have done the same with respect to the state-based parent organisations' contribution to educational reform.

Parents have made a significant contribution to the gender debate. They have supported initiatives for girls and lobbied for adequate resourcing and professional development. Parents have also challenged the meaning of gender equity, and the way some 'gender' programs have focused on girls, but looked like they ignored boys. A lot of children and adolescents struggle with learning, different approaches to teaching, quality of teaching, the curriculum content, competition and assessment, and various behavioural problems and their effects. Parents want a thoughtful and imaginative response to their concerns, through programs that identify the gender dimension in young people's experiences at school. They want a focus on girls and boys, and different groups of girls and boys, as well as a focus on the making of men and women. They certainly want boys to benefit from gender equity initiatives, particularly on the construction of masculinities. Parents recognise that some versions of masculinity, especially the 'macho' version, can be harmful and damaging to boys as well as girls. They also want gender work to move beyond critique to provide hope and possibilities, so that girls and boys can learn about thoughtful ways of being and living in a society which is not characterised by domination and oppression.

ACSSO wants state and territory governments to undertake research into the different needs and concerns of girls and boys, and different groups of girls and boys, from different language backgrounds, from low socio-economic backgrounds, those who live in remote areas, and Aboriginal and Torres Islanders. ACSSO wants schools to develop strategies that attends to teaching, learning and assessment suited to the different needs of girls and boys; that breaks down male and female stereotypes, including paid and unpaid work in and outside the home; and that addresses the separate areas of disadvantage particular to girls and boys (ACSSO 1994/5).

The MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce has responded to this challenge and developed national guidelines called *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*. It has listened to the parent voice and made sure the needs and concerns of girls and boys are taken into consideration. It has acknowledged gender and the ways it is inextricably linked to class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. The national Framework demonstrates a responsibility to the children and adolescents in our schools, and it has the potential to have a profound effect on their young lives. ACSSO wants to see this work put to good use.

Productive partnerships

ACSSO wants departments of education to provide the opportunities for parents to participate in decision-making about educational goal setting for girls and boys at the state level and the school level, and to ensure collaboration before decisions are made and then during the implementation of sensitive curriculum issues (ACSSO 1994/5). ACSSO recognises there is some resistance to parent participation, when principals and teachers have little regard for parents, when schools do not have a policy on parent participation, and do not bother to develop the appropriate infrastructure of support. As Brown and Reeve (1993) pointed out, parents are often relegated to the roles of fund-raising or lobbying the Ministers in centralised school systems.

In an effort to break down these barriers, ACSSO encourages productive partnerships between parents, teachers and students. Productive partnerships demonstrate not only more equal power relations in the school community but good relations between men and women, boys and girls, and respectful ways of working together. Everybody needs to feel secure and valued in terms of what they have to offer. This is different to parent involvement which simply means informing parents about what is happening in school and education more generally. This is also different to the common approach to parent participation, where teachers and others acknowledge the influence of parents and families on students' learning and their behaviour, and initiate a form of parent education to complement the school's teaching program. For instance, programs on violence in schools which revolve around student behaviour often use parent education in the form of parenting courses to reinforce the school's work, to develop parent effectiveness, conflict resolution skills and positive parental role models.

ACSSO recognises the limits of this approach to parent participation. To continue with the example, parental programs and behaviour management are simplistic solutions to addressing violent behaviour in schools. Violence in schools is a part of the complex problem of violence in society. Parents' role modelling and behaviour change strategies are not enough to address the incidence of violent behaviours, including homophobic violence. Encouraging more positive role models and managing student behaviour does not challenge the practices and power relations that contribute to the social problem of violence in schools. As the Gender and Violence Project's 'No Fear' kit (1995) pointed out, these sorts of programs are limited because they do not necessarily problematise the underlying attitudes and assumptions that underpin and perpetuate violent behaviours. At the same time, they do not address the school practices that may unwittingly reinforce the particular behaviours that are of concern.

ACSSO agreed with the Sticks and Stones Report and the 'No Fear' kit that violence is a critical social issue. The parent organisation is concerned about students' and teachers' experience of violence, and wants to address girls' and boys' involvement in sex-based harassment, bullying and other forms of violence. Parents are disturbed about the effects of violence on schooling and learning outcomes. Now that the Gender and Violence Project materials are released, ACSSO wants its affiliates to have copies of the 'No Fear' Kit. We are hoping to produce and distribute a 'parent pack' that will develop an understanding about violence and its relationship to gender and power within the networks of school parent organisations, and through them, the wider parent body.

Sexuality education

In an ironic twist to parent participation, parents are supposed to be invited to participate in discussions about sexuality education, which is about teaching children, or helping them learn, about all the things that constitute sexuality (Murrow, 1995). Wilson (cited by Murrow, 1995) provided a list of ways to make parents partners in the decision-making. She suggested teachers should invite parents on to advisory committees to review and approve the teaching program and resources. Parents should be invited to meetings to discuss and view all the resources. Parent should have the opportunity to undertake the course, and be asked for an evaluation of the teaching program to determine its effectiveness. Children should be asked to complete homework with their parents. Most importantly, parents should be given the opportunity to withdraw their children from classes.

Parents' entitlement to participate in their children's schooling experience is particularly significant in sexuality education. However, the idea of consulting parents on sexuality education has had more to do with the sensitive and controversial nature of the teaching program and with Ministers and school administrators wanting to minimise conflict. The rationale for parent participation should not be built on the fear of teaching sexuality education. Whatley (1992) called it a defensive teaching position that is designed to avoid conflict and controversy.

Parent participation in sexuality education, like parent participation more generally, rests on the importance of parents in the teaching and learning process. ACSSO's (1994/5) policy asserts that parents have a unique knowledge and understanding of their children. Parents are the child's first educators, and they have talents, interests and energies that can enrich and diversify the school's teaching program. ACSSO's policy is underpinned by the educational rationale for parent participation spelt out by Brown, Cahir and Reeve (1987) and Brown and Reeve (1993), where parent participation is integral to the development of curriculum which builds on the knowledge and experiences of students (and their families). Parents are important because they provide access to the social backgrounds and cultural frameworks that are part of the known world each child brings to school. This is crucial to the school's task of building a relevant curriculum responding to children's needs and concerns, and moving girls and boys forward in their educational and social lives.

In sexuality education, productive partnerships mean parents and the home join with teachers and the school to work together in a way that takes into consideration young people's different family backgrounds and the different cultural expressions of what it means to be sexual. It means teachers, parents and students draw on the knowledge that

derives from their experience of living in traditional family settings; of living in settings characterised by separation, estrangement, and divorce, of living in defacto relationships; of sole parents with or without partners; and of people who live indifferent family situations; not to forget those young people who experience homelessness. This helps girls and boys and adolescents learn about the complex social processes of sexuality.

Murrow (1995, citing Calderone & Johnson) indicated that sexuality has to do with 'the entire self as girl or boy or man or woman, including 'sexual thoughts, experiences, learnings, ideas, values and imaginings, as these have to do with being male or female' (p2). Murrow was right when she said it has to do with gender identity in that a person is male or female, and gender roles in that a person acts like a man or woman, but it is not just about biological definitions of men and women. Sexual identity is complicated by the ways people actively negotiate meanings about sex, sexuality and sensuality from home, school, popular culture, the media, sport, fun times, friendships and relationships. For young people, sexual identity is determined by age-related social definitions of sexuality, which find expression in intimate homosocial friendships, 'mixed group' activities, and teenage romance.

In the absence of parents and teachers, young people rely on youth culture to inform their expectations of sex and sexuality. As Thomson and Scott (1992) pointed out, the possession and acquisition of sexual knowledge for adolescents is not straight forward. The most popular form of peer sex education is built on male sexual discourse or dominant male 'sex talk', which positions and defines boys and girls in particular ways. This sort of thing teaches adolescents about a dominant sexual order where the agenda revolves around boys, who is going out 'with who', and often actual sexual experience. It is naive to think that young people are not sexually active. In a report on adolescent sexual involvement in New Zealand, Murrow (1995) cited two studies which indicated that sexual activity is relatively prevalent among 15-year-olds.

The traditional response to sexuality education staunchly promotes family life education, youth abstinence from sexual activity, the avoidance of disease, reproductive heterosexuality, and conformity to moral absolutes. We cannot assume that this sort of sexuality education is useful to young people. There are some who simply do not identify with the biological reproductive model, there are some who are not interested in delaying sexual activity, and there are some who refuse to reject the moralistic approach. Young people need more than information about sexual activity and genital contact, 'the birds and the bees' and married life. They need more than 'Chinese whispers' from their peers (Thomson & Scott, 1992). They certainly need more than ridicule and hostility if they question their sexuality.

To counter this situation, parents, teachers and students can work together on understanding the friendships and relationships between girls and boys, and between girls and between boys. They can determine what constitutes an acceptable sexuality, given that young people live in different social groups and come from different cultural backgrounds. Kitzinger (cited by Murrow 1995) provided a lead for discussion. 'Sexuality ... is seen as an integral part of human existence. (It) is about the acceptance of ourselves as sexual beings, our feelings, and the way we communicate those feelings to others' (p2).

Overcoming conflict and controversy

ACSSO offers the advice to individual teachers or groups working on matters of sex and gender to tap into the parent network. ACSSO and its affiliates have a huge network in place to support the operation of parents working in schools, where parents are active in decision-making. The parent organisations also have guidelines that provide some direction and instruction to school teams of parents, teachers, students and others wanting to work together in the school setting on projects of interest.

ACSSO supported the Gender and Violence Project's encouragement of a whole school approach to understanding the problem of gender and violence, and the 'No Fear' kit's intention to create a non-violent school community. Productive partnerships are an important ingredient in the whole school approach and in groups working together on sensitive and controversial issues. The school parent organisation would be receptive to teachers wanting to make a presentation at a parent meeting. The parents would then have an opportunity to hear about teachers' proposals to address matters of concern, and express some support. The parents at the meeting would also be able to share their concern and anecdotal stories, and hear the teachers' response to what they want. Another strategy is for teachers to invite the school parent organisation to identify two 'key parent representatives' to work on a school team which would be supported by the school parent organisation and the school generally.

The idea of a genuine partnership between the two 'key parent representatives' and others is also informed by the educational rationale for parent participation, which has to do with the knowledge the parents bring to the task of working on the school team. As Brown, Cahir and Reeve (1987) pointed out, parents' knowledge embodies their insights and understandings about the world which comes from life experiences as well as knowledge that is relevant to the task of teaching and learning. The task of developing and understanding violence, power, gender, and sexuality requires not only the school team working together but regular and on-going discussions in the parent forum and parent newsletters. As Brown, Cahir and Reeve (1987) reminded us, parents in government schools will distil a set of common understandings and principles from their collective knowledge through the on-going process of discussion and negotiation. Parents, mothers, fathers, men and women, will relate to discussions about gender and what it means to be male and female, and about the exercise of power. Their own life histories and their children's daily experiences provide them with first-hand knowledge of the way power and violence, gender and sexuality impacts on their life chances.

By discussing and negotiating national and state gender equity strategies and the contents of the 'No Fear' kit, the school parent organisation and the wider parent body will support and contribute to the school team's efforts to provide hope and possibilities for girls and boys. As the 'No Fear' kit's Leadership booklet indicated, 'Schools have significant potential to be the agents and contexts for positive change in responding to such concerns by developing understandings, positive values and skills about gender relations and violence among students, staff and parents' (p5).

Endnote

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RESOURCES

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER

Allard, A, Cooper M, Hildebrand, G & Wealands, E (1995), *Stages: Steps Towards Addressing Gender In Educational Settings*, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.

> Focuses on development of gender inclusive teaching practices and encourages teachers to explore their own understandings about gender in the classroom context.

Alloway, N (1995), *Foundation Stones: The Construction Of Gender In Early Childhood,* Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.

> Practical assistance to teachers in this area by suggesting ways of challenging current practices which may restrict young girls' and boys' educational outcomes and future potential.

Buchbinder, D (1994), *Masculinities and Identities*, Melbourne University Press (1) Book, 114pp.

> Traces some causes of the crisis in masculinity, the developing interest in masculinity, and the creation of men's studies as an academic subject. Showing that such enquiries originate in feminist theory and gay political activist theory of the 1960s, *Masculinities and Identities* examines the dynamics at work in the various cultural constructions of masculinity, not all of which meet with approval in a patriarchal culture. Different strands of masculine discourse are identified and examined in a variety of texts, ranging from the early decades of the twentieth century to the present. Opera, film and current news stories provide examples for exploring the ways in which we construct masculinity.

Browne, R & Fletcher, R (1995), *Boys in Schools*, Finch Publishing. Fax (02) 9418 8878.

> Presents accounts which show how innovative approaches used in schools can change the way boys view themselves and others. A collection of writings from key practitioners of boys' programs in both secondary and primary schools across Australia. Addresses issues of bullying, school violence, boys' under-achievement, homophobia, sexism, boys' non-involvement in school life, relationships, peer culture, masculinity, gender stereotypes, identity and self-esteem.

Clarke, M (1993), *The Great Divide*, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne.

> This work on the construction of gender differences in primary schools identifies practices and attitudes which contribute to the production of gender differences. A new framework for action is outlined.

Connell, RW (1994), *Knowing about Masculinity*, *Teaching the Boys*, paper presented to Pacific Sociological Association Conference, San Diego, USA.

Cooke, K (1994), *Real Gorgeous: The Truth About The Body And Beauty*, Allen and Unwin.

An authoritative, and hilarious, guide to everything girls and women of all ages need to know about dieting, self-esteem, lipstick, nutrition, health, high heels, anti-wrinkle creams, and lots more.

Davies, B (1989), *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales: Preschool Children and Gender*, Allen and Unwin.

Davies, B (1993), *Shards of Glass: Children Reading And Writing Beyond Gendered Identities*, Allen and Unwin.

Looks for ways to interact with children and to speak and write in a fashion that disrupts the male/female dualism. With boys and girls of primary school age, from a range of social and ethnic backgrounds, explores the possibility of discovering different ways of being, as well as looking at the ways in which gender relations are resistant to change

Davies, B (1994), *Poststructuralist Theory and Classroom Practice*, Deakin University.

Covers classroom management, structuralism, gender identity, educational equalisation. Study materials include: Gender Stories and Language Classroom, Language and Gender—study guide and reader.

Forsey, C (1990), *The Making of Men,* West Education Centre. Ph (03) 9314 3011, Fax (03) 9314 1075.

Outlines the theory behind the practice, and includes chapters on: the masculinisation of males, the masculine power imperative, denial of self, boys in schools, guidelines for change.

Issues for the 90s: *Resource books on contemporary issues*, Spinney Press. Fax (02) 9810 6024.

Volume 6:   HIV/AIDS—Examines the impact of HIV/AIDS and Safe Sex Education in Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world.

Volume 12:   A violent society?—Young people both as victims and perpetrators; dating violence; men and violence; family violence.

Volume 17:   World Conference on Human Rights; human rights, aid and trade; Australia's record and Asia's attitudes to human rights.

Volume 24:   The body beautiful—Eating disorders; body image; drugs in sport.

Volume 34:   A man's world?—Men's health; boys' education; how men cope emotionally with their changing roles.

Volume 41:   Sexuality—Identity and sexuality; celibacy; homosexuality; gender reassignment; cross dressing.

Kamler, B, Maclean, R, Reid, J & Simpson, A (1994), *Shaping Up Nicely—The Formation of Schoolgirls and Schoolboys in the First Month of School*, AGPS.

> Investigates gender and language in the primary classroom, examines how masculinity and femininity are constructed differently for girls and boys entering primary school by the language that surrounds them. The focus is on the first month of school, as this period is seen to be crucial in the students' initiation into the culture of the primary school.

Laskey, Louise & Beavis, Catherine (eds) (1996), *Schooling and Sexualities: teaching for a positive sexuality*, Deakin Centre for Education and Change, Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria.

NSW Teachers Federation (1995), *New Agendas: Girls, Boys and Equity*. Contact Joan Lemaire. Teachers Federation, 300 Sussex St, Sydney, Ph (02) 9287 2100, Fax (02) 9267 5221.

> Practical resources for use in schools, particularly informative in defining the construction of gender, presenting strategies aimed at examining the concept of harassment and how to deal with it.

Orbach, S (1986), *Hunger Strike: The Anorexic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age*, Penguin.

> Examines the causes of eating disorders, arguing that they are, at once, a reflection of society's demands that women look a certain way and deny their needs, and a rebellion against such ideas. Orbach, a psychotherapist specialising in eating disorders, also suggests ways in which the medical profession might treat these conditions more effectively.

Queensland Department of Education, (Draft 1996), *Piecing it Together: Construction of Gender Training Module*. Professional development kit for teachers, parents and school communities, focusing on the understanding of the construction of gender.

> A self-paced kit allowing facilitators to choose from a variety of workshops including: what gender is, how gender is constructed, gender in the media, gender in sport, gendered violence, effective learning and teaching, behaviour management, and reforming the curriculum.

Robertson, M (1992), *Starving in the Silences: An Exploration of Anorexia Nervosa*, Allen and Unwin.

> Offers a feminist analysis of a condition which the medical profession regards as a psychiatric illness. Social worker and playwright Matra Robertson examines the relationship between food and femininity, and the place of the anorexic, in a culture which has created 'a maze of food patterns, taboos and meanings'. Robertson argues that current psychiatric, sociological and feminist literature does not sufficiently explore the meanings which anorexics ascribe to their lives, and that new understandings of anorexic behaviour will emerge if sufferers are allowed to speak for themselves.

Ronin Films (1992)**,** *The Famine Within*. Video.

Examines how the mass media distorts images of women, and the devastating effects this can have on women themselves. It includes interviews with image-makers, medical and psychoanalytic experts, and former and current bulimics and anorexics.

West Education Centre Inc, Footscray, Victoria, *Taking the Rap.* Video and teachers' guide. Ph (03) 9314 3011, Fax (03) 9314 1075.

Uses a narrative format to explore the ways in which gender and young people's understanding of it impact on young people and their relationships with each other. The program is designed for use with both males and females, because girls and boys need to reconstruct their perceptions of masculinity before meaningful changes in adolescent positioning on the spectrum of masculinities and femininities can occur.

Wilson, J & Allard, A (1995), *Gender Dimensions: Constructing Interpersonal Skills in the Classroom*, Eleanor Curtain.

A positive and practical resource which will assist teachers to establish a constructive learning environment where boys and girls work together with mutual understanding and respect.

Wolf, N (1990), *The Beauty Myth,* Vintage Press.

An incisive look at how the beauty industry and mass media ultimately oppress women. Wolf, who herself suffered from anorexia as an adolescent, devotes a compelling chapter to dieting and eating disorders.

POST-SCHOOL PATHWAYS

Baxter, J (1989), *Work at Home: Domestic Divisions of Labour*, Penguin.

Identifies gender ideology and economic power as the basic issues. She concludes that, while masculinity continues to be defined in terms of paid work outside the home, and femininity in terms of mothering and housework, we are likely to see very little change in household arrangements.

Blackmore, Jill & Kenway, Jane (eds) (1993), *Gender Matters in Educational Administration and Policy—a feminist introduction,* Falmer Press, London

Connell, RW (1995), *Masculinities*, Allen and Unwin.

Essential reading for anyone interested in the future of gender relations.

Genderwork: An Education Kit on the Concept of Gender and Work, Tasmanian SCO Gender Equity. Fax (03) 6233 6980.

An excellent practical resource for primary and junior secondary teachers. It challenges students to assess stereotypical roles and aims to effect positive changes in attitudes among students, parents, employers and the public towards those entering trades. The teachers' guide helps teachers recognise the ways in which classroom behaviour contributes to the construction of gender and offers strategies to improve quality of schooling for girls as well as boys.

Kenway, Jane & Willis, Sue with Junor, Anne (1995), *Critical Visions—Rewriting the future of work, schooling and gender*, DEETYA, Canberra.

Kenway, Jane (1990), *Gender an Education Policy—a call for new directions,* Deakin University Press, Geelong, Victoria.

Office of the Status of Women (1991), 'Juggling time', *The GEN*, July.

Examines the ways in which Australian families use time.

Report of the Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia (1992), *Halfway to Equal*, AGPS.

Women's Studies Resource Centre, *Into Our Own Hands,* Video Resource Package.

Encourages girls in upper primary and junior secondary school to become involved in politics. Tells two stories: the history of Australian women's achievement of the right to vote and to stand for Parliament; and the tale of a group of girls who learn about shared decision-making, lobbying and local and state politics as they work together to save an area of bush near their school.

VIOLENCE AND SCHOOL CULTURE

DEETYA Canberra (1995), *No Fear: A Kit Addressing Gender Based Violence.*

The kit is produced in two separate editions, primary and secondary, and includes professional development materials, curriculum materials, a leadership manual, a user's guide and a video.

Forsey, C (1994), *Hands Off: The Anti-Violence Guide to Developing Positive Relationships*, West Education Centre, Footscray, Victoria. Fax (03) 9314 1075.

Uses student-centred learning to assist young people to understand violence within the context of power and gender, why it occurs and the consequences; to develop communication and negotiation skills for preventing violence in personal relationships; and to raise awareness of how popular culture and sport institutionalise violence in Australia.

National Film Board of Canada, *Out: Stones of Lesbian and Gay Youth*, Classroom version, video and discussion material. Available from Heathcliff Distribution, 41 Gould Avenue, Petersham NSW 2049.

NSW Department of School Education (1994), *It's My Decision.* Video discussing the sensitive issue of sexual decision-making in relationships, including safe sex information.

NSW Department of School Eduction (1993), *Mates.* Video and teaching materials on HIV/AIDS related discrimination.

Ollis, Debbie and Tomaszewski, Irene (1993), *Gender and Violence Project—Position Paper,* DEET, Canberra.

Queensland Department of Education (1994), *Sexual Harassment and Violence: Enough's Enough.* Fax (07) 3246 3534.

Part 1—targeted at staff and parents, covering issues such as the difference between sex and gender; how gender is constructed; the links between gender and violence; and what schools can do. *Part 2*—targeted at upper primary students, shows how the construction of gender is linked to violence, inequality and harassment at school, and reinforces the need for change.

Queensland Department of Education (1993), S*ays Who? Sexual Harassment—Students Explore the Issues.*

Developed with secondary students, for secondary students. Through a montage of dramatic presentations, workshops and interviews, students define what sexual harassment is, what the effects are, why it happens, and what you can do about it. Students draw upon their own experiences while reflecting on the wider social contexts, and present some strategies for positive action.

South Australian Department for Education and Children's Services, *Windows on Practice.* Ph (08) 8235 8059 or (08) 8372 1840, Fax (08) 8235 1197.

A means for teachers to learn about the practice of their colleagues. Documents current practice in classrooms, schools, clusters of schools and across the government education system, to inform, assist and challenge teachers in their day-to-day teaching. Includes programs to counter sexual harassment Reception to Year 7, and a program for pre-adolescent boys, 'Boys and Relationships'.

West Education Centre Inc, Footscray, Victoria, *Being Me.* Ph (03) 9314 3011, Fax (03) 9314 1075.

Three attractively presented posters dealing with 'Feelings': invites reflection on a range of emotions and how they are communicated and dealt with in daily life; 'Conflict': illustrates three typical approaches to conflict—submission, aggression and assertion; 'Power': explores the abstract notion of power—where it comes from and how it is accessible to all.

CURRICULUM TEACHING AND LEARNING

Curriculum Corporation (1995), *Early Moves: Primary Gender—Inclusive Curriculum Units.* Free call 1800 337405.

A collection of 10 units for Kindergarten to Year 3, middle and upper primary, aimed at enhancing the educational experiences of girls and boys and expanding their future options

English Teachers' Association of Western Australia (1994), 'Boys in English', *Interpretations,* (special edition), 27(2).

This special edition presents five papers on boys in English:

·   *'Poor Boys', Power and Gender: The Masculinist Responds to Femininity.* Betsy Wearing.

·   *Masculinity and Learning: Exploring Boys' Under-achievement and Under Representation in Subject English.* Wayne Martino.

·   *Adolescent Boys' Perceptions of Masculinity: A Study of Group Stories Constructed by Years 8, 9 and 10 boys.* Mary Rhodes.

·   *'We Want to Resist Your Resistant Readings': Masculinity and Discourse in the English Classroom.* Colin Kenworthy.

·   *Butch Minds the Baby: Boys Minding Masculinity in the English Classroom.* Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli.

English Teachers' Association of Western Australia (1995), 'Gender and Literacy', *Interpretations,* (special edition), 28(2).

This special edition presents five papers on boys in English:

·   *What about the Boys? The Parable of the Bear and the Rabbit.* Bronwyn Davies.

·   *Critical Literacy for Boys?* Wayne Martino.

·   *Doing Masculinity.* David Buchbinder.

·   *Mestizaje: Interweaving Cultural Multiplicity and Gender Codes in English Studies.* Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli.

·   *The Girls in the Back: Critical Literacy, Gender and Educational Disadvantage.* Pam Gilbert.

Fraser, Heather (ed) (1995), *Challenging the text—Critical Literacy Units for Secondary English*, James Cook University Printery, Townsville, Queensland.

Fraser, H & White, RS (1995), *Constructing Gender: Feminism in Literary Studies,* University of Western Australian Press.

Focuses on the idea that gender is not biologically determined but rather a construction of cultural, historical and even geographical factors. The editors have drawn together a vital and accessible collection of essays covering a diversity of topics and analysing writers from Shakespeare to Grenville, making this a work particularly suitable for use by secondary students.

Gilbert, P & Rowe, K (1989), *Gender, Literacy and the Classroom*, Australian Reading Association.

The book investigates how the power of gendered language affects girls and boys in their reading and writing development.

Gilbert, P (1993), *Gender Stories and the Language Classroom*, Deakin University Press.

Gilbert, P (1994), *Divided By A Common Language? Gender and the English Curriculum.*

Based on a broad overview of the most current research and theory on gender and English. It provides an accessible overview of the ways in which gender is constructed through language practices. The author poses questions related to gender relevant to the goals outlined in the *Statement on English for Australian Schools* and to key assumptions underlying *English—a curriculum profile for Australian schools.*

Hetherington, P & Maddern, P (1993), *Sexuality and Gender in History*, Optima Press, WA.

Essays which ask new questions, especially about the experiences of women, including studies of abortion, rape, prostitution and in-vitro fertilisation, as well as more 'traditional' subjects, such as the history of Catholicism, which are now being re-examined in the light of contemporary interest in the gender divisions and power structures in society at various times in history. This volume, from the work completed by honours and postgraduate students in the Department of History in the University of Western Australia, is an important addition to our understanding of the past in a field previously neglected by historians.

Macklin, P (1995), *Moving On: Facilitator's Guide To The Use Of Gender-Inclusive Curriculum Units*, Curriculum Corporation. Free call 1800–337–405.

Topics covered include: our gendered identities, expanding girls futures and reforming the curriculum.

Martino, W & Mellor B (1995), *Gendered Fictions*, Chalkface Press, Cottesloe. Fax (08) 9385 1922.

An anthology of 12 texts—9 short stories, a nursery rhyme, an essay and two magazine articles—by a range of quite different writers, for Year 10 and above. The texts are accompanied by activities, which apply ideas derived from contemporary literary theory to classroom practice in accessible ways. Although the concepts addressed are

frequently complex, the approaches taken are activity-based and encourage involvement from students.

Real Girls Use Computers (video), Westcap. Fax (03) 9688 5001.

> After discovering that many girls think a career in computing means only word processing and clerical work, staff at Westcap and the Department of Business Computing, both at Victoria University of Technology, got together with students from Footscray Girls' Secondary College to broaden computing's image.

Teese, R (1995), *Gender, Curriculum and Assessment*, DEET.

> The text and accompanying activities encourage discussion of the ways in which gender might be read.

Teese, R, Davies M, Charlton M & Polesel J (1995), *Who wins at school—Boys and Girls in Australian Secondary Education*, Department of Education Policy and Management, University of Melbourne.

> Interpretation of data on what particular groups of girls and particular groups of boys study at school and on how well they achieve.

SUPPORTING CHANGE

Ball SJ (1990), *Politics and Policy Making in Education—Explorations in Policy Sociology*, Routledge, New York.

Brown, J, Cahir, P & Reeve, P (1987). 'The educational rationale for parent participation', *Unicorn*, 13(4).

Brown, J & Reeve, P (1993), *Parent participation, equality and democracy*, Chapter 8 in Smith, DL (ed), *Australian Curriculum Reform Action and Reaction*, Canberra: Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), PO Box 884, Belconnen ACT 2616.

David, Miriam (1993), *Parents, Gender and Education Reform*, Cambridge Polity Press.

Davies, Bronwyn (1996), *Power Knowledge Desire: Changing School Organisation and Management Practices*, DEETYA, Canberra ACT.

Kenway, Jane (1993), 'Parents and Educational Politics', in *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 14(4).

Luke, Carmen & Gore, Jennifer (1992), *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, Routledge, New York.

GENERAL RESOURCES

ACT Department of Education and Training (1995), *Proceedings of the Promoting Gender Equity Conference.*

> This conference, held under the auspices of the Gender Equity Taskforce of MCEETYA, brought together a wide array of speakers on gender equity, covering topics such as gender reform, the construction of gender, gender and difference, the costs of gendered behaviour, and the impact of gender on post-school life.

Collins, Cherry, Batten, Margaret, Ainley, John & Getty, Corrine (1996), *Gender and School Education.* An ACER report for the Schools and Gender Equity Taskforces of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, published by the Australian Government Publishing Service.

The study was designed to provide data on gender matters in relation to boys as well as girls. The data collected provides baseline data against which progress in implementing particular aspects of the *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools 1993–97* can be judged. The report indicates that systematic and consistent action on the issue of gender does lead to improved outcomes.

Commonwealth Schools Commission (1987), *National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools.*

Developed within the context of examination of the status of women; outlines schools' responsibilities in contributing to the achievement of equality between the sexes and in improving the conditions of life for girls and women. All Australian schools should ensure that what is being taught and learned does justice to girls and women, taking account of their culture, language and socio-economic diversity, and is equally valuable for girls and boys.

Curriculum Corporation (1993), *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993–97.* Fax 03 639 1616, Free call 1800 337 405.

Represents a key developmental phase in national policy processes designed to improve educational outcomes for girls. This major national initiative involved all state, territory and Commonwealth Governments working together to bring about real improvements in equality of educational outcomes for girls and boys. Builds on the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools. Encourages direct action in such areas as curriculum. Two commissioned reports, *Listening to Girls* and *Where Do I Go From Here?,* accompany the National Action Plan.

Department of Employment Education and Training, *The GEN.* Fax (02) 6257 2317. Published approximately eight times per year.

Gilbert, Pam (1996), *Talking About Gender*, Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory (WEETAG) Group Project.

Terminology used in the education of girls policy area and implications for policy priorities and programs.

Yates, Lyn & Leder, Gilah C (1996), *Student Pathways Project: a Review and Overview of National Databases.*

A report for the Gender Equity Taskforce of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs to investigate national databases that now exist in Australia, to assess what they are doing and how adequate that seems to be in terms of gender equity and to comment on whether the data collection could be done differently or better.

GLOSSARY

New terminology plays an essential part in marking the changes which have occurred in current thinking about gender and education. To facilitate further reading and debate, it is important for new terminology to become more commonplace and accessible for classroom teachers.

construction of gender—the process by which individuals actively build, or 'construct' a sense of themselves as gendered. For education practitioners, it is important to understand the active part that young people play in this process, testing out behaviour and language which enables them to operate comfortably within a range of complex social relations. They interact with adults, with peers, and with media images within a variety of contexts, making sense of many competing agendas.

Although young people are actively engaged in this process, it is also important to understand that real choice is limited by the power relationships and structures within which we live: through these, young people can learn to 'desire' ways of being masculine or feminine which ultimately restrict them. The phrase 'construction of gender' reflects a development from the limitations of earlier theories of 'sex role socialisation' and 'role modelling'.

The process has been described in this way:

*In reality the choices are multiple and many dimensional, and come from home, from peers of both sexes with many different backgrounds, views and embodiments of gender, from a variety of views and modelled behaviours among the staff, and from the traditions and rules of the school itself. Students must undertake the difficult task of constructing themselves in ways which enable them to feel comfortable inside this confusion. This whole spiral of gender-shaping experience, personal reaction and self-modification is called '**the construction of gender**"* ... (Dr Cherry Collins)

difference—the focus on **difference** in recent work on gender recognises that there is little value in comparing 'boys' and 'girls' as if these were simple, single-dimensional variables within homogenous groups. Consciously and unconsciously, young people make choices between many conflicting ways of being masculine and feminine, and are influenced by factors including place, socio-economic status, ethnicity and race. Disaggregated data which reflects these variables is needed for meaningful reporting on the education outcomes of girls and boys.

disadvantage—there are a number of factors which are associated with reduced access to and participation in schooling. These include physical and intellectual disabilities, geographic isolation, limited proficiency in the English language, poverty or low socio-economic status, homelessness, physical and sexual abuse, sexual and homophobic harassment and racial vilification. It is not uncommon for students to experience the combined effects of multiple factors associated with educational disadvantage. This does not mean that being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or coming from a non-English speaking background is *in itself* a disadvantage: in a study of Italo-Australian girls in South Australia, researcher Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli found that:

Far from seeing themselves as disadvantaged and inferior, the girls perceived their bridging position to be positive and fulfilling ... the girls were not torn between two worlds but were negotiating the two, embracing the values from either while rejecting others that were inappropriate to their personal identity.

discourse—a framework of values and ideas and ways of seeing the world which is embedded in the language we all use, and which marks the exchange of ideas within a community, e.g. 'scientific discourse', 'economic discourse', 'feminist discourse'. Language—discourse—plays a powerful part in transmitting cultural values; it can also limit or open up the possibility of our recognising, resisting and redefining them.

equity—equity in schooling is defined in the *National Strategy for Equity in Schooling* as 'the concept of equal access to school education and the fair and just distribution of benefits from the school education system' for all students. This does not imply **equality** of treatment, as there are many factors which may disadvantage students in achieving equitable outcomes, and 'priority assistance' or identified affirmative action may need to be directed towards students in need.

essentialism—there is a perception in schools and the wider community that there is an 'essential' difference between men and women, that male and female behaviours are biologically determined and thus 'fixed'. However, the powerful social influences of family, language and culture begin at birth, and it is impossible to know the extent to which human behaviour is either learned or 'natural'. Theories of biological determinism also ignore the fact that men and women are diverse culturally, socially and economically, and that there is no single 'masculinity' or 'femininity'.

femininities—speaking of 'femininities' in the plural is a way of drawing attention to the fact that there are many different ways of being feminine; that 'femininity' is not a single static entity within a homogenous culture. Girls are presented with many 'femininities' within popular culture, in formal school areas of learning and within their own environment, and experiment with a range of feminine ways of being.

gender differences—those differences in behaviours and attitudes which are constructed through social practice, which are dynamic and are capable of challenge and change.

gender-based harassment—harassment based on an individual's gender, including harassment relating to the way in which an individual's gendered behaviour, appearance, language and attitudes conform to dominant local norms. There is a growing understanding and acceptance that **homophobic harassment** is a form of gender-based harassment (see **sex-based harassment**).

harassment—behaviour (physical, verbal and social) which makes an individual feel embarrassed, frightened, hurt, angry or uncomfortable. Harassment frequently relates to an individual's gender, race or ethnicity, and constitutes an abuse of power by one individual or group over another. Schools are coming to reject the use of terms such as **teasing** and **bullying** to label behaviours of this type, and to develop policies and

procedures which target harassment within school culture. Recent attention has been given to harassment of girls by other girls, as well as harassing behaviours by boys.

homophobia—fear or dislike of an individual based on their perceived failure to conform to dominant local norms of masculinity and femininity. This term has come to refer particularly to hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality, and the harassing behaviour which it produces.

homophobic harassment—verbal and physical harassment, including social exclusion and violence, which arises from individual or group homophobia. Homophobia can create a limiting environment in a school or workplace for young people wishing to exercise choice in relation to subject choice, cultural and recreational activities, relationships, attitudes and behaviours. It represents the exertion of power by a dominant group over girls and women, boys and men who are perceived to be different (see **sex-based harassment**).

masculinities— speaking of 'masculinities' in the plural is a way of drawing attention to the fact that there are many different ways of being masculine; that 'masculinity' is not a single static entity within a homogenous culture. Boys are presented with many 'masculinities' within popular culture, in formal school areas of learning and within their own environment, and experiment with a range of masculine ways of being.

risk—a broad term which is used differently in different contexts: a student may be 'at risk' of failing to complete schooling; of becoming long-term unemployed; or of death or long-term disability through drug and alcohol abuse, diseases associated with poverty and homelessness, or the effects of physical and sexual abuse. 'Risk-taking' behaviour by boys can include the misuse of cars, drugs and alcohol, and antisocial behaviour in gangs which may lead to death, injury or criminal record. Girls' risk-taking behaviour can include eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia, unprotected sexual intercourse, self-mutilation, smoking and drug abuse. Girls at risk often pass unnoticed in school settings.

role modelling—an aspect of **socialisation**, in which adults or peers provide a 'model' of the behaviours young people should learn.

sex-based harassment—the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993–97* used **sex-based harassment** as the broad term which includes **sexist harassment**, **sexual harassment, gender-based harassment** and **homophobic harassment**. The variety of such terms reflects the effort to find language to describe the many forms which harassment may take. **Sex-based harassment** is the imposition of behaviour based on sex stereotyping. It is often unrecognised, trivialised or accepted as **teasing**, but it is one of the factors most commonly identified by girls as limiting their participation in schooling. It can include verbal and physical abuse, social exclusion and other forms of emotional trauma.

sexist harassment—harassment based on assumptions about an individual's ability to enter and succeed in various types of work or courses of study, based on their gender. Sexist harassment relegates girls and women, and activities related to the domestic sphere, to an inferior position in Australian society. Because of this, boys and men can themselves become targets of sexist harassment when they actively participate in activities which are perceived as 'female' (see **sex-based harassment**).

sexual harassment—this term is used in some states to include all sex-based harassment. It can refer particularly to harassment which relates to an individual's sexuality, and which may include comments about an individual's sex, their relationships, sexual preferences, sexual behaviour or appearance, and includes unwanted sexual attentions, sexual propositions and physical contact (see **sex-based harassment**).

sex differences—biological differences between males and females.

socialisation—the process of learning sets of values and beliefs, through role modelling, through the communication of role expectations by the media, the family and the community, through sanctions applied by adults and by peers, and through direct instruction in how to behave. Recent research and writing has drawn attention to the limitations of the socialisation model. It is important to understand that individuals can make *choices* between alternative courses of action, and that schools can play a part in helping young people to challenge and resist learned behaviours. It is also important to understand that real choice is limited by the power relationships and structures within which we live, including those operating within school culture.

violence—violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual and verbal assault, emotional, psychological, social, economic and spiritual abuse. The national *Gender and Violence Project Position Paper* comments that:

> *A definition relevant for schools needs to convey an understanding that violence is a means of asserting power and control over an individual or a group, and can be perpetrated by individuals or groups of either sex ... A school based definition of violence needs to include a recognition of the impact of violence not only on the safety of the victim, but also on their rights and freedoms and recognise both the overt and hidden forms of violence which routinely take place in the school grounds, on the sports field and in the classrooms and corridors.*

work—all productive labour which contributes to the maintenance of a society, whether paid or unpaid; it includes the production of goods, intellectual endeavour, domestic work and care for others (children, the aged and the disabled).