KNOWING ABOUT MASCULINITY, TEACHING BOYS AND MEN

Educational implications of the new sociology of masculinity and the old sociology of schools

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INTRODUCTION

HIV infection is rising among teenagers in the United States. The virus is often transmitted through heterosexual intercourse. Sex education classes are largely focussed on promoting 'abstinence'. A study published in a medical journal last year reports that over 50% of high school students are sexually active. Among girls in a program for HIV antibody-positive youth, 'survival sex' was one of the main risk factors - trading sex for food, shelter, or crack. None of the girls' male partners would use condoms regularly (Goldsmith 1993). There seems to be a problem here - a problem about education, and about masculinity, and about the relation between them.

Over the last quarter-century, Western educational practice has been both challenged and enriched by feminism. Patriarchal patterns in education systems have been documented in immense detail, from the fine detail of classroom interaction and pupil culture to the broad patterns of curriculum and hiring (for an excellent overview see Delamont 1990).

This evidence has backed an agenda of reform, whose principles are now familiar. School organization and teaching practice should follow principles of social justice, delivering equal advantage to girls. Given the heritage of sexism, this may require special programs for girls as well as reform of common schooling (Yates 1993). Curriculum should be gender-inclusive. This requires a profound critique of existing bodies of knowledge, which have prioritized the experience of particular groups of men (Minnich 1990). Educational methods should be based on women's experiences and women's skills. Women's studies programs at college level embody these principles and have become a source of ideas and materials for reform in schools.

While these principles yield a clear agenda for the education of girls and women, it is not so clear what they mean for the education of boys and men. In any system of power and inequality, members of the dominant group are unlikely to flock to the support of reforms that will end their domination - or be enthusiastic about learning that questions their domination. The scarcity of men in most college courses on gender is a familiar consequence. Some feminists have washed their hands of the matter;

expecting little but resistance from boys and men, arguing for segregated schools and for women concentrating their energies on the education of girls (e.g. Mahony 1985).

Since gender is a system of social relations, it is unlikely that reform will progress very far without action at both ends of the relationships. Other feminists have thought it worth putting energy into the education of boys and men (Askew and Ross, 1988). The main forms this effort has taken are anti-sexist programs for boys in schools (e.g. Inner City Education Centre 1985), and college courses about masculinity, generally derived from (and sometimes located in) women's studies programs (e.g. Gould 1985). The intention of this work is, as Thompson (1988) puts it in a discussion of practicalities, 'resocialization for males'.

This agenda has not been easy to pursue. Men and boys have a material interest in patriarchy (for thoughtful discussions of this fact and its consequences see Goode 1982, Kann 1986). Persuading boys, male teachers and school administrators to follow feminist principles means asking them to act against their own interest as men. Trying to do it in all-male groups, to make discussion of 'male experience' easier, has the unfortunate effect of highlighting this shared interest.

In places where feminist work has created women's studies programs or affirmative action programs (e.g. encouraging girls into science and mathematics), the idea that it is 'boy's turn' for attention and resources is easily spread. This can be reinforced by calling attention to ways in which boys are less successful in schooling than girls: for instance in regard to reading (especially at elementary level), and in higher dropout rates at secondary level (in the industrialized world at present - this is not generally true of developing countries).

Combined with statistics about men's earlier death, men's greater rates of injury by violence, etc., this can be worked up into a claim that men are the truly disadvantaged group (for a rousing rendition of this idea see Farrell 1993). Or, at least, that they are alienated from their true masculinity and need to be reconnected through men's initiation. The 'mythopoetic men's movement' offers, in its men's gatherings, workshops and newly-invented rituals, an educational program for men which I call masculinity therapy, based on a remarkable pseudo-science of 'deep masculinity' (for samples see Thompson 1991). This is beginning to filter into American universities, though not yet into schools. What is being proposed in schools in the name of anti-sexism sometimes shares with masculinity therapy a concept of men's oppression and a concern to promote male pride (e.g. Fletcher 1988). This has also emerged as an important theme in the United States in response to the devastation of African-American youth (Majors and Gordon 1994).

The question of gender education for boys is, I would suggest, currently becoming more politicized and more complex than it was even as recently as the mid-1980s, when Men's Studies courses were being introduced and the feminist work in schools documented by Askew and Ross was undertaken. We now have better tools for analyzing the question, in the research on masculinity that has matured in the same period. The purpose of this paper is to use this research to try to clarify the issues of educational strategy.

MASCULINITY RESEARCH

In this section I will summarize the conclusions of recent research on masculinity that bear most closely on educational problems. (For documentation see Connell 1993a, 1994; Clatterbaugh 1990; Segal 1990.)

Masculinity, understood as a configuration of practice in everyday life, is substantially a social construction. Masculinity refers to male bodies (sometimes symbolically and indirectly), but is not determined by male biology. (It is, thus, perfectly logical to talk about masculine women or masculinity in women's lives, as well as in men's; as classical psychoanalysis established.) Masculinities vary greatly between different cultures, between different periods of history, and between different social locations in the same culture.

Masculinity and femininity are configurations of practice within a complex structure of social relations, conveniently called gender relations. This structure includes large-scale institutions and economic relations as well as face-to-face relationships and sexuality. Masculinity is institutionalized in this structure, as well as being an aspect of individual character or personality. (Thus we can speak of the masculinization of institutions such as the state, and of informal groupings such as street gangs.) Masculinity exists impersonally in culture as a subject position in the process of representation, in the structures of language and other symbol systems. The relationship between personal life and structure constantly emerges as a key issue about masculinity (for instance, the relationship between boys' engagement in sports and the hierarchical organization of sporting institutions).

In any given social setting there is rarely only one masculinity; there are usually multiple masculinities (still defined as configurations of practice in relation to the structure of gender). The opposite impression may be conveyed because it is common for one pattern to be culturally dominant or hegemonic. The hegemonic pattern need not be the most common pattern of masculinity. Other masculinities co-exist, but are subordinated (e.g. gay masculinities in contemporary Western culture), marginalized (e.g. Black masculinities in minority situations), or complicit in the hegemonic project.

The principal axis around which the varieties of masculinity are organized is the overall social relation between men and women, that is, the structure of gender relations as a whole. A strong cultural opposition between masculine and feminine is characteristic of patriarchal gender orders, commonly expressed in culture as dichotomies and negations. Hegemonic masculinity is thus often defined negatively, as the opposite of femininity; and subordinated masculinities are symbolically assimilated to femininity (e.g. abuse of 'sissies', 'nancy-boys').

Adult masculinities are produced through a complex process of growth and development involving active negotiation in multiple social relationships. (Earlier conceptions of 'sex role socialization' over-simplified the social relations, and pictured children as much more passive than they are.) This involves dialectical processes where masculinities are formed in opposition to institutional pressure, as well as in conformity. Engagement with hegemonic patterns is widespread, but not final; an initial commitment towards hegemonic masculinity may be followed by distancing or even contestation. The result in adulthood is generally a complex personality structure, not a homogeneous

one, in which contradictory emotions and commitments co-exist. (For instance in adult sexuality, a predatory heterosexuality may co-exist with desire to be nurtured, and even with a homoerotic desire which is nevertheless feared and denied.)

The enactment of masculinity in adult life is partly an outcome of this process of development, which defines a person's capacities for practice, and partly a matter of the social situations in which the person acts. Men whose masculinities are formed around the continuing social subordination of women are likely to act in ways that sustain men's interests in that subordination. There is a material interest here, a patriarchal dividend which can be measured in terms of income, access to power in organizations, cultural honour, etc. Yet this interest is divided: as a result of the subordination of some masculinities within the pattern of hegemony, and as a result of the interplay between gender relations and structures of class, race and nationality. In certain situations men's relationships with particular women or children, or groups including women and children, define interests that are stronger than their shared interest as men, and men's general interest in patriarchy becomes incoherent or at least contestable.

Precisely such a situation has been created by the growth of contemporary feminism, presenting a challenge of which virtually all men in Western countries are aware. The result is a growth of new forms of politics addressing masculinity as an object of social action. There is currently a spectrum of masculinity politics, ranging from the anti-sexist men's movement and gay men's politics, through masculinity-therapy and mythopoetic cults, to gun-lobby and militaristic movements celebrating masculine violence. In this changed historical situation, the meaning of 'education for boys' must inevitably be re-thought; the assumptions of past practice cannot be taken for granted.

SCHOOLS AND GENDER

In the heyday of sex role theory schools were commonly understood as agencies of sex role socialization (along with the family, the mass media, etc.), and this was how schools appeared in the early literature on the 'male role' (e.g. Hartley 1959). Sex role theory however had little capacity to deal with issues of resistance (Willis 1977, Anyon 1983), nor with the ways in which schools have promoted equality and thus contradicted sex role conventions. Though 'sex role' remains the commonest language for talking about gender in education research, we need a more sophisticated approach (Holland and Eisenhart 1990, part 2).

The creation of modern school systems represented a major change in the organization of the work of child rearing and child care. A substantial part of this work was taken out of families and located in specialized institutions under the control of the church, the state, and (increasingly now) corporations. These institutions were, and are, substantially under the control of men. The change did not represent a direct shift from female to male control, as in pre-industrial agricultural societies child rearing often involved men (including elderly men, and boys), and in the new systems women became a substantial part of the teaching workforce. But the education system developed a marked gender division of labour, with women concentrated in nursery and elementary teaching and men teaching at upper levels and holding authority; a pattern that persists

strongly in the academic world despite the formal equality of women (Thornton 1989). Broadly, modern education systems have brought child rearing and the training of youth under the surveillance, and indirect control, of elite groups of men with predominant power in the society at large.

The school system provided a link between the family and the economy, taking over part of the industrial training of the next generation, and a large part of the sorting of entrants to the workforce. It thus became linked to the gender division of labour in the wider economy (a link still visible in the predominance of boys in industrial arts classes and girls in domestic science, secretarial courses, etc.), and to the reproduction of social class advantage in access to professional training and professional jobs (Mahony 1985, Lareau 1989). This link, however, also made schools a vehicle for challenges to the division of labour: girls as well as boys could see educational paths to a better future (Anyon 1983).

Gender and class (and in some parts of the industrialized world, race) became principles of an institutional division of education. Gender-segregated schools and colleges, separate classes and different curricula, were and remain widespread, despite a historical trend towards common schooling and co-education. Gender is thus embedded in the institutional organization of education (Hansot and Tyack 1988). Schools segregated on gender lines readily become bearers of the society's hegemonic definitions of gender; this is vividly shown in the organizational culture of a Catholic boys' school studied by Angus (1993). Yet segregated institutions may also become the vehicle for challenges to these definitions, as seen in the ruling-class girls' school described by Connell et al. (1981), which was shifting its strategy away from the preparation of wives-and-mothers towards academic competition for entry to the professional world.

As well as forming capacities for labour, schools have also provided a means for the control of bodies (Kirk 1993) and the regulation of sexuality (Sears 1992), processes in which gender is deeply implicated. Physical education, for instance, has typically been accomplished through gender-segregated activities. Competitive sports are the most familiar example but by no means the only one. (E.g. military drill for schoolboys early in the 20th century, now curiously revived in the idea of 'boot camp' for juvenile delinquents.)

The twentieth century spread of child-centred pedagogy and conceptions of education as fostering intellectual and personal growth, rather than simply imposing control and filling heads with information, has had a subtle but important effect on the terms in which gender is formed in schools. There is less sheer prescription (though this continues, for instance in sex education) and less institutional segregation. Teachers' ideology of individual growth can mitigate the effects of gender marking, as King (1978) notes in infants' schools. These changes tend to define masculinity and femininity more as negotiated accomplishments, less as fixed conditions. An educational ideology of growth and personal expression, however, emphasises that action arises from individual personality rather than from external necessity. The net effect is perhaps to shift gender formation more into the arena of peer group life, and to make it more problematic, more an issue requiring anxious attention - whatever the outcome.

Contemporary schools are the sites of a surprising variety of gender relations. They include the interaction and boundary marking between girls and boys, and the gendered relations among girls and among boys (e.g. patterns of dominance and exclusion among boys). There is a gender division of labour and gendered authority patterns among teachers, administrators, and auxiliary staff (secretaries, canteen workers, janitors). Cultural definitions of gender are brought into the school in curriculum documents, books, television, etc. Gender patterns are constituted by teaching practices and school rules (e.g. in sport, dress, forms of speech). There are gendered patterns of involvement of parents (e.g. use of mothers as unpaid labour) and workers who come to the school during the day (e.g. electricians, system administrators). The totality of these gender relations may be called the school's gender regime (Kessler et al. 1985).

The gender regimes of different schools obviously differ: between a ruling-class boarding school and a ghetto school, between segregated and co-educational schools, between elementary and secondary, between different systems, regions and countries. Any school's gender regime changes over time; sometimes dramatically. A striking demonstration is provided by Draper, 1993, who describes the negotiation of a new gender regime when two gender-segregated British schools amalgamated; some of the boys went from wearing very formal uniform to wearing eye-shadow.

Such episodes indicate that gender is not passively reproduced in schools; it is actively worked on. Thorne (1993) and Anyon (1983) alert us to the strategic uses of gender by children in schools, the ways they deploy gender symbols or gender conventions to control events, to organize their social lives, and to entertain themselves. In small and large ways, schools are <u>makers</u> of gender. Morrell (1993/4), in a historical study, observes that white settler's boarding schools in Natal defined forms of masculinity that were then spread more widely through settler culture. During the twentieth century mass co-educational secondary schooling has been the vehicle of a rising retention rate for girls, which has brought girl's average education levels above boys' in many industrial countries. The education system as a whole is a major institutional base of contemporary feminism, not only in universities but also through the presence of feminist teachers in schools (Connell 1985).

Yet if schools are makers of gender relations, they are also takers. Schools are not free to adopt whatever gender regime they choose. Teachers frequently speak of the intractability of the gender relations they experience, the difficulty of making progress with reform. Schools always operate under cultural and institutional constraints. Grant and Sleeter's (1986) study of an American junior high is very typical in this respect; what this school does and does not do in relation to gender reflects the gender division of labour in its catchment area. We must remember, nevertheless, that this context changes; gender is a historically dynamic system of relationships. Schools may run into difficulty because they lag behind cultural change and lose credibility or even relevance - a situation which has clearly developed in sex education in the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Sears 1992).

MASCULINITY FORMATION AND SCHOOLS

With this background we can get some grip on the processes of masculinity formation documented in research on schools. The best evidence about these processes comes from school ethnographies and interview studies, an old-established research tradition which has been renovated in recent years. These methods have their problems and limits (explored by Woods and Hammersley 1993, Thorne 1993, McCall and Wittner 1990). The information on school processes they yield is markedly superior to the abstracted questionnaire/attitude-scale surveys that still account for the bulk of publications on 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in educational and psychological journals (e.g. Galambos et al. 1990).

Few studies (with any of these methods) focus primarily on masculinity. But those which explore gender relations in any detail are likely to document masculinities in a variety of forms. Three aspects of schools' gender regimes emerge from this research as being of broad importance in the formation of masculinities among the pupils.

Peer group interaction and pupil culture

With the secondary schools studied by Willis (1977), Corrigan (1979), Everhart (1983) and Foley (1990), it is plain that peer culture is the focus of boys' and girls' interest in the school; the point of The Adolescent Society (Coleman 1961) still holds. The peer milieu is the site of informal segregation of boys and girls, sexualization of cross-gender interactions (the 'romance' pattern studied at college level by Holland and Eisenhart 1990), and a hierarchy of masculinities with the heterosexually successful and the athletes (who often overlap) at the top. Hierarchy among boys is sustained by homophobic abuse (Frank 1993), minor terrorism (traditionally known as 'bullying'), and the prestige attached to dating desirable girls such as cheerleaders. Difference between masculinity and femininity in peer culture is sustained in dress, speech, friendship patterns, and interests such as use of cars and consumption of mass culture (e.g. boy's consumption of arcade video games - Willis 1990). Foley, describing a school in a country town in Texas, gives a particularly vivid account of the events (parties, football games, etc.) in which masculinity is constructed, and the different varieties of masculinity produced - Anglo jocks, Mexican-american anti-authoritarian 'vatos', the 'silent majority'. Foley's study makes very clear the importance of teenage peer groups as the bearers of definitions of masculinity, a theme that also emerges in the working-class Australian school studied by Walker (1988).

Gender is also produced in peer interaction at elementary level. Since there is a widespread belief that boys and girls 'naturally' separate, it is worth noting that this research has repeatedly documented easy and frequent cross-gender interaction (e.g. Joffe 1971, Lockheed 1985). As Thorne (1993) notes, it is easy for observers to focus on gender separation as the 'figure', and miss the routine 'ground' of gender integration; I suspect that some of the work on adolescent peer groups, by concentrating on spectacular displays of masculinity, suffers from this problem. Nevertheless it is clear that children in the elementary schools studied have a symbolic knowledge of gender difference and use it to make claims (e.g. on nursery toys), to organize play, etc.

Thorne's study shows in upper elementary classes the enactment of difference beginning its mutation towards the 'romance' pattern of the adolescent world.

The sexualization of the peer world in adolescence is plainly important for the formation of masculinity. Sex is a constant topic of conversation in boys' peer groups, and important in establising identity. It is also important in establishing hierarchy. The commonest terms of abuse, in establishing superiority over other boys and over girls, are sexual ('fag', 'slag', etc.). Harassment of girls - ranging from verbal abuse and put-downs to groping and fondling, to pressure for intercourse - is widespread at secondary level (Everhart 1983, Wood 1984, Mahony 1985, Lees 1986, Askew and Ross 1988, Foley 1990, etc.).

Yet we must remember that sexuality too is socially produced and structured (Gagnon and Simon 1973, Connell and Dowsett 1993), and adolescence is still a period when sexual interests and sexual practices are being learned. Like Foley's American ethnography, Wood's (1984) study of boys' sex talk in a London secondary school annexe emphasises the element of fantasy, uncertainty and boasting - which can be punctured when a tough girl, or group of girls, pushes back. Wood notes the different registers of boys' sex talk, for instance the greater hesitancy in a mixed group, and this is a useful point about other expressions of masculinity too. Massey's (1991) picture of teenage fathers in a Black community in California shows very diverse responses, ranging from pride and engagement through confusion to rejection and blaming of the woman. It is all too easy to stereotype.

Control and discipline

However important peer life may be, schools are still adult-controlled institutions, and the system of control is a second focus of masculinity formation. School rules may themselves encode masculinity, prescribing dress, deportment, forms of speech, or leisure activities, that are held to be appropriately masculine. Heward's (1988) study of an English boarding school, and Morrell's (1993/4) study of similar institutions in South Africa, show how such prescriptions embody systematic strategies for producing class- and race-specific masculinities.

Day schools in public systems also mark gender difference and define a place for masculinity. This may be literally a place: in the Australian primary school I attended there was an invisible line in the playground; at recess and lunchtime boys were required to be on one side of it, girls on the other. The boys, needless to say, got the dirt. Delamont's (1990) study of two English middle schools, one progressive and one conservative, found them identical in sex segregation: listing boys and girls separately, teaching them different games (teaching boys football and girls netball), insisting on different uniforms, lining them up separately before activities, and so on. In the infants' classrooms studied by King (1978) the girls and boys were even made to hang up their coats separately. These patterns are subject to change - my daughter's school for instance now allows unisex tracksuit as uniform; and there is probably less prescriptive gender marking in American schools than in British or Australian. Yet practices of this sort remain widespread.

Adult control in schools is enforced by a disciplinary system, and it is clear that this is both gendered, and a focus of masculinity formation. Teachers from infants to secondary level may use gender as a means of control, e.g. shaming boys by saying they are behaving like a girl, or motivating them by setting up a gender competition:

> Boys, don't sing. Listen to the girls, make certain they sing nicely. Now it's the boys' turn. Get your best singing voices ready. See if you can beat the girls. (King 1978: 68)

Punishment too may be gendered. When corporal punishment was still allowed in New South Wales public schools, boys were legally allowed to be beaten but girls were not; the result was large gender differences in experience of discipline (W.F.Connell et al., 1975).

Where the hegemony of the school authorities is well established, as in the school studied by Heward, the delegation of disciplinary power (e.g. in a prefect system) becomes part of the learning of masculine hierarchy. Where hegemony is lacking, as in many working-class secondary schools, masculinity may be constructed against the discipline system, through defiance of authority. In this regard there is a striking parallel between the American ghetto school studied by Ferguson (1994), the British working-class schools studied by Corrigan (1979), and the Australian school studied by Angus (1993). With corporal punishment, this becomes literally an issue of bravery in the face of pain, a test of masculinity of the crudest kind, to which boys respond with excitement and bravado. (Advocates of the return of corporal punishment seem to miss this effect.)

The dialectic of masculinity and disciplinary authority is one of the dynamics producing drop-out. However tough they act, the boys cannot win this particular conflict: behind the authority of the school stands the power of the state. A protest masculinity may develop around conflict with school, police, sometimes parents and employers (Connell 1989, 1994), where the school does little more than represent repressive authority. But the state itself may stand for, and sustain, an oppressive or exploitative social system; the boys' resistance to disciplinary authority may thus express their resistance to racial oppression (Bowser 1991) or class exclusion (Willis 1977; but see the qualification in Corrigan 1979). In a further twist, the state may use the dynamic of masculinity for its other purposes - for instance, in military recruitment, as with African-american and Latino students in the high school studied by Fine (1991).

At a lower level of intensity, a rejection of school authority and the 'work' defined by school authority seems important in the alienation of the working-class American boys studied by Everhart (1983). Here, however, we are dealing with something closer to the experience of the majority of girls. It is important to note, then, that adult control in significant ways also works to flatten out gender difference. As Thorne above all has emphasised, much gender marking in schools is situational, with many shifts between segregation and integration (and situations in between) in the course of a school day. The seriality (Sartre 1976) of teacher-dominated classroom instruction, preventing interaction between girls and boys, homogenizes their situation.

Curriculum

This brings us to the third key aspect of the school's gender regime. For the 'work' despised by Everhart's working-class boys is precisely the means by which they are socially disempowered at the point of entry to the labour market. Academic learning has not been prominent in discussions of gender formation in schools, yet as Yates (1993) has argued, it is vitally important.

The hegemonic curriculum is, in the first place, a means for the differentiation of masculinities. In studies that have recognized the differentiation of masculinities within schools, relations with the curriculum repeatedly emerge as an axis of difference: between the 'lads' and the 'ear'oles' in the British working-class school studied by Willis (1977), between the 'Bloods' and the 'Cyrils' in the Australian ruling-class school studied by Kessler et al. (1985), to a lesser extent but still visibly in Walker (1988).

In certain respects the curriculum is itself gender-differentiated. Masculinized trade teaching (Mealyea 1993) and heavily masculinized sports (Walker 1988, Skelton 1993) contrast with the gentility of mainstream academic work and the cultural feminization of arts and music.

With the core of academic learning, however, there is a paradox. Compared with sports and manual arts this appears feminine; and the alienation of working-class teenage boys (including American Black boys: Irvine 1979) is often expressed in these gendered terms. An apparent lag in boys' reading readiness and reading accomplishment at elementary level may also be interpreted in terms of the feminization of the curriculum. Two decades ago there was a minor panic about this in the United States, with feminized schools and their 'feminine, frilly content' held to blame for denying boys' 'reading rights' (Austin et al. 1971, Sexton 1969).

Yet the same academic curriculum is criticized in feminist writing as embodying male perspectives, universalizing male experience, and therefore being culturally inhospitable to girls (Mahony 1985, Minnich 1990). Girls are somehow discouraged from science and mathematics, all the more at the advanced levels of study, and a good deal of work by feminist teachers has gone into trying to combat this effect.

Both of these lines of thought have some truth. The paradox is partly explained by the multiple levels of gender, which can function both as symbol (for the white-collar world, on the part of working-class boys) and as material privilege (in a historic gender division of labour that reserved philosophy and science for men).

The paradox also requires us to go beyond dichtomies in thinking about gender. To make any sense of masculinity we must be able to see both the overall privileging of men and the dis-privileging of particular groups of men, through class and race exclusions as well as sexuality and the hierarchy of masculinities. (When exponents of masculinity therapy point to the high rates of injury, homicide, etc sustained by men compared with women, they rarely note that ruling-class white men are quite safe from industrial accidents and drive-by shootings, not to mention malnutrition and cholera.)

The dominance of the competititive academic curriculum leads both to the educational advantaging of middle-class and ruling-class boys (in access to science and professions) over girls, and to the educational disadvantaging of working-class and

ethnic minority boys in comparison with girls (at the level of high school graduation).

We may perhaps take the argument further. The claims to universalism and comprehensiveness which have underpinned the hegemony of a highly specific cultural perspective, also open possibilities for contestation. Proving that the hegemonic curriculum is not actually universal and comprehensive, while agreeing that curriculum ought to be, is the way multicultural and gender-inclusive curricula have been validated. This seems to me a crucial point in thinking about the education of boys and men, and I shall return to the path it opens up.

Some years ago Grant and Sleeter (1986) conducted a careful ethnography of a working-class junior high school in the American mid-west, which found a widespread endorsement of gender equality by teachers, boys and girls - at the same time as segregated labour, compulsory heterosexuality and male initiative in sexuality were being reproduced, pretty much uncontested. The girls in particular, Grant and Sleeter suggest, were on the brink of a challenge to gender inequity but had not made the challenge. That situation, routinely produced and undramatically accepted, seems to me emblematic of much wider contradictions and unrealized possibilities in education.

EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

Bases

What is the purpose of teaching men and boys about gender? On the one hand, such teaching is a necessary part of any decent education. The issues involved here are things all educated people need to know about, and be able to reflect on. On the other hand, the importance of gender inequalities places a general demand on education for work in this area. A good education is founded on social justice. If we are not pursuing gender justice in the schools then we are not offering boys a good education, though we may be offering them some privilege. I take it that education, not privilege, is the purpose of schooling.

The starting-point for educational work with boys must be their own experiences, circumstances and needs (Askew and Ross 1988). We cannot read off a strategy for work with boys by trigonometry from the needs of girls. The work should be driven by the claims of justice, not by the pressure of guilt.

At the same time, the experiences, circumstances and needs of boys cannot be interpreted as simply parallel to those of girls. This is the error of the idea that pride in maleness, and positive images of masculinity, are the bases for non-sexist programs for boys. This ignores the actual structure of gender privilege. Taking pride in maleness is about as reasonable as taking pride in having fair hair, and has led to the same sort of consequences. Taking pride in what you do about inequality, having been born into a certain privilege, is another matter. Work based on boys' experiences must also go beyond their own experience. This leads to curriculum principles I will outline shortly.

Boys in general share an interest in patriarchy, which should be an object of enquiry in gender education, but will not motivate it. What will motivate it are other interests and other needs to know. The interests include those shared with girls and

women in general, for instance the collective interest in environmental balance and survival that requires examination of the role of gender dynamics in environmental destruction; and relational interests. By these I mean the interests constituted by the particular relationships - with mothers, sisters, partners, classmates, neighbours, etc. - that form the gendered world of a particular boy. Acknowledging that gender is not categorical and not unitary, educators can use this differentiated social world as the basis for a wide range of enquiries.

This seems to me one of a number of reasons not to rely on the concept of 'men's studies' as the bases for educational work with men and boys. The object of knowledge is not 'men' but the gender system in which they are constituted as men; and the interests that can be mobilized in support of educational work are those that relate men to women, not those that distinguish men from women.

Curriculum principles

A curriculum for social justice requires a counter-hegemonic logic; that is to say, it prioritizes the interests of the least advantaged in any structure of inequality (Connell 1993b). In gender relations that means prioritizing the interests of women.

For boys, this means a gender-inclusive curriculum (adopting Blackburn's conception of the socially inclusive curriculum [Yates 1993]) in which they learn to see the world from a standpoint they commonly reject, despise, or regard as other. They are required, in Sapon-Shevin and Goodman's (1992) term, to 'learn to be the opposite sex'.

This is not symmetrical between boys and girls, because of the power relations of gender. More is demanded of boys in moving to a gender-inclusive curriculum (though no more than is currently demanded of girls by patriarchy).

The gender-inclusive curriculum means taking the standpoint of other masculinities, as well as moving across the masculinity-femininity divide. This is a principle well established in men's studies programs, which normally make an attempt to include gay as well as straight and black as well as white.

This is not likely to be easy to do, with many adolescent boys, especially those most heavily invested in gender difference or most insecure about their own developing identities. The sources of information currently available to boys about sexuality and gender are often narrow and reactionary. It is a coherent educational goal to try to introduce students to the whole truth about an important area of their lives, rather than a sanitized fraction of it; to gay sexuality as well as straight, to the range of gender patterns across the world, to issues about harassment and domestic violence as well as happy families, abstinence and romance. There are certainly motives of curiosity and sympathy on which creative teaching can call to expand horizons.

Since gender relations invest the whole of social life and the production of all knowledge, the curriculum of gender education cannot be separate from other areas of learning; we are not talking about discrete units (like the units of health education in which 'sexuality education' is most commonly undertaken at present). It is a question of an effort across the curriculum, as much focussed on science and language as on personal development and occupational skills.

Curriculum content

The content of educational work of this kind must be negotiated between teachers and students, it cannot be laid down in advance. But the negotiation needs material to work on, and existing programs are important sources. (Useful sources for school-level programs: Inner City Education Centre 1985; Askew and Ross 1988; Thompson 1988; Sapon-Shevin and Goodman 1992). The need to circulate experience and materials among schools is one of the reasons for developing in-service programs for teachers.

Pedagogy

Angus (1993) tells the story of the 'sex talk' given by a devout mother at Christian Brothers College on occasions such as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception:

> Now boys, there's no reason to be uncomfortable about the subject. I have raised three boys so I have a good idea of what you know about girls. You know, girls are special creatures with special needs and special times. You may notice that women - even your mums - act differently at different times. During these times you must be especially careful not to upset them, because they're feeling a bit under the weather. It's natural and part of God's plan. Just as you've changed, so have your mother and older sisters at different times in their life...and so, boys, remember to be open and honest with your parents, and show special care for your sisters and your mother. They are all special people who deserve your special care. Are there any questions?

Doubtless the Immaculate Conception was crystal clear after this.

Discussion of anti-sexist education for boys and men has focussed on specific units or interventions: men's studies courses in universities (e.g. Farrant and Brod 1986), classroom units or counselling in schools (see references in previous section). Many of the issues, however, call for a whole-school approach. An example is the strategy at Hugh Myddleton Junior School in London that included policy on gender access to computers, classroom space for girls, music participation for boys, and a reworking of discipline, in 'a firm, if understated, affirmative action policy at the school' (Dowsett 1985: 13).

It is important that gender equity work with boys should open possibilities, should find ways forward for those engaged in the enterprise. Here I think the masculinity-therapists have a point about the effect of a certain kind of feminist criticism, which emphasises blame and treats men as an undifferentiated category. In teaching university courses about gender I have repeatedly seen men discouraged by the endless facts of sexism, experiencing feminist ideas mainly through guilt, and turning away because the alternative was to be overwhelmed. Some sense of agency, of being able to accomplish goals, is important. Programs need to be achievable.

This does not mean that the pedagogy should be an attempt at therapy. It does mean that it should be democratic, that it should mobilize, and criticize, experience. The top-down pedagogy illustrated by Christian Brothers College is about the last method that should be used in this enterprise. Gould (1985) argues for adopting the 'tactics of engagement' developed in women's studies. Group methods with boys and men might be thought to come to grief on the famous 'inexpressive male' problem. But as Corrigan

(1979) points out, boys hanging about in the street do almost nothing but talk; and classroom wit and humour is a familiar form of resistance (Dubberley 1988). The problem is not to find the capacity for expression but the right circumstances for it.

The deeper problem, I think, is that Women's Studies pedagogy has been worked out in association with concepts of women's knowledge, women's styles of learning, or feminine thought (Hagemann-White 1989) based either on the experience of patriarchal subordination or on the specificity of women's bodies. To the extent this is true, the pedagogy cannot be transferred to men and boys. I am sceptical of the argument from bodily difference (after reflecting on how it might be supposed to work for male bodies), but the argument from social location is a powerful one in the light of the sociology of knowledge (cf. Smith 1990). To this extent, work on gender with boys and men will have to create a new pedagogy.

Organizational change

Angus (1993) has rightly observed that changes in the cultural handling of masculinity require changes in school organization: in the administrative authority of men, in disciplinary systems, etc. This has not been much addressed in the literature on anti-sexist education for boys, partly because the discussion has focussed on small-scale units easily accommodated in existing structures, partly because feminists have argued for institutional change and it seemed that nothing more remained to be said.

Discussion of education for boys may nevertheless help the case for institutional change. When 'sexism' is acknowledged as an issue, it is often in a narrow sense, adequately handled with formal provision of equal opportunity, rules against harassment, and not much more. (Thus, in the school studied by Grant and Sleeter [1986], teachers are undoubtedly committed to liberal ideas of equal opportunity for girls and boys; but they interpret that commitment in a formal and undemanding way that does not hinder the practical reproduction of patriarchal relations). Administrators often see the issue as 'doing something for the girls'. Insisting that it is also a matter of doing something with the boys, helps to frame the issue as one of whole-school change. A school examining issues of masculinity with its pupils must reflect on sport, on science, on art and literature and 'feminized' learning, on peer group interaction, on relations between pupils and teachers, and on the school's own institutional practices (administration, tracking, testing, etc.).

Work on gender with boys calls on capacities among teachers that need to be fostered and supported. Askew and Ross (1988) note the significance of in-service support. I would argue that networking among teachers, a major function of in-service training, is the best means of dissemination and building up an informed 'public' on these matters.

THE POLITICS OF CHANGE

In this as in other issues, teachers are the workforce of reform; if anything large is to happen in the schools, teachers must be engaged in making it happen. Two dilemmas arise.

As everyone in the field agrees, active involvement by men teachers is essential; but as with the boys, this cuts across the interest men share in the maintenance of patriarchy. As Angus notes, in a patriarchal school environment men may have little motive to change because the existing pattern of masculinity works.

The complexities of teachers' involvement in gender relations, and the possibilities and limits of change among them, thus become significant issues (cf. Acker 1983, Connell 1985). The presence of women teachers can be a catalyst for change, but this is likely to be highly stressful for them (Askew and Ross 1988). The diversity of masculinities among male teachers is an important resource.

The second dilemma concerns teachers' relations with parents and communities. As studies of these relations show (Lareau 1990), teachers seek parent involvement in schools but also have ways of limiting this involvement. In fields like gender and sexuality, these limits may be overwhelmed. Religious right mobilizations and conservative politicians have severely limited the capacity of American schools to deliver realistic sex education, a major reason for the problems in AIDS prevention already mentioned (Sabella 1988). Work on gender may equally be targeted.

At the same time, many parents are aware of changes in gender relations in the wider world, and issues such as AIDS and sexual violence. Many parents want the schools to address these issues in a realistic and timely way. To build on this kind of support is certainly possible, and is done by a number of the schools mentioned in the literature. It needs, however, a certain nerve, and public credibility, both of which may become casualties of the repeated attacks on public schooling that have marked neo-conservative politics since the late 1970s.

Educational work on gender with boys, this implies, cannot be treated as a technical issue, hidden away in a corner of the curriculum and discussed in muted tones. To have any chance of flourishing in the form of whole-school initiatives it must come out of the closet and be proposed as an issue for public debate, an issue of concern to teacher unions, and a key question for parent and community involvement in schools.

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