

**The Interplay Between
Constructions of Masculinity
and Constructions of Subject English
in One Coeducational Year 8 English Class**

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Abstract

There has been growing interest in boys and masculinity in the popular press and educational literature during the 1990s. Much of this interest has revolved around achievement levels in literacy tests and in English. Research has shown that a complex of factors - including gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and locality - work to produce differential educational outcomes for different students. Some authors have argued that boys in particular may relate differently to the English curriculum (in terms of participation, performance and attitude) and posit that this is due to a potential abrasion between masculinity and subject English.

This thesis investigated the constructions of masculinity that were taken up by boys in one coeducational Year 8 English class in a public (government) school. It aimed to explore the interplay between these masculinities and the context of the English classroom in which they were taken up. Data collection involved prolonged classroom observation over a period of two terms, interviews with students and with the class teacher and the collection of work samples from students. A fourth, quantitative source of data was incorporated through the use of a written questionnaire.

Although several claims made in the literature were supported by data from the present study, there were also points of contradiction and tension. The study found that in this class, the boys actively constructed multiple masculinities, masculinities that were relational and sensitive to their context. The data showed gender to play a pervasive role in the classroom, one which mediated the performances and evaluations made by boys in the class on a continuous basis.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university, and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person where due reference is not made in the text.

Greg Hurrell
5 November 1999

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In recent years the education of boys has become the subject of public debate, gaining what Epstein *et al* (1998) term “status as a kind of globalised moral panic” (p 3). Teese *et al* (1995) describe some of the problematic claims about boys that have been made, uncritically, in the popular discourse:

Media stories have given increasing weight in recent years to the view that girls are now more successful at school than boys. Girls complete school more often, they study subjects which lead to employment in growth areas in the economy, they are better at English and perhaps also at maths, and enter university in greater numbers than boys. The tables have turned. Boys have become the new disadvantaged. They are more likely to fail, to develop behaviour problems, to experience isolation and rejection, and to drop out. The jobs they are more likely to get are in decline and have no long-term career prospect

Teese *et al* 1995:v

The present study aimed to illuminate within this “international ... din of anxiety” (Mahony 1998:38) an area that constitutes a small part of the wider debate: the coeducational English classroom. The English classroom is important because it marks a meeting place of “two powerful signifiers [which] shape our current educational landscape; the ‘underachieving boy’ and the ‘failing school’” (Raphael Reed 1998:56). Both signifiers are considered a threat to the “established order of ‘excellence’ and ‘standards’” (*ibid*) and both are mobilised within dominant discourses to support claims of the need for “back to basics” approaches and increased emphasis on literacy (eg Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1998). Due to this discursive climate - one in which concern about literacy is growing - the traditional (and contemporary) status of English as the major site for literacy learning at school, with its particular focus on reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening (Curriculum Corporation 1994), makes it a salient, relevant site for investigation.

Reports of performance differentials in favour of some girls in both literacy (such as Masters & Forster 1997) and in English (for example, Teese *et al* 1997a; 1997b) have fed into public debates and led various authors to theorise about relationships between English on one hand and boys, masculinity and gender on the other (for example, Gilbert 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998a, 1998b; Martino 1995a, 1995b, 1994a, 1994b; and Kenworthy 1994, amongst others). However, as Teese *et al* (1995) argue, “The real question is not whether girls as a group or boys as a group are more disadvantaged, but which girls and which boys” (p 109). The issue of differential performance is complex and embedded within larger questions about the relationships between masculine and feminine subjects, schooling institutions and wider society. These questions extend across all areas of the curriculum and involve concerns about educational (dis)advantage, equity, social justice and post-school outcomes. The present study acknowledges these larger issues but confines itself to the domain of the English classroom.

1. About the Study

The broad aim of this study was to investigate in depth some of the processes, practices, relationships, structures and perspectives that may be connected with boys' involvement with and experiences in subject English. The study's goal was to explore and formulate complex understandings of masculinities in the context of the English classroom, rather than adopt a narrow focus on student achievement levels as is prevalent in the popular discourse. Some central guiding questions used were:

- How are masculinities played out in and shaped, constrained or enabled by subject English?
- What is it about being "masculine" that mediates students' relationships to subject English?
- What is it about the way subject English is constructed that interacts with being masculine?

The study explored these questions through multi-method investigation¹ of one Year 8 coeducational English class². This involved the observation of that class over two terms, interviews with students and with the class teacher, the collection of student work samples and the administration of a questionnaire to students.

The data that resulted were qualitatively analysed within a theoretical framework that used the *construction of gender* and the *construction of subject English* as its main organising concepts. This socially-critical framework acknowledged the complexity of contextual factors impinging upon the study - including but not limited to factors of class, ethnicity, locality, sexuality, (dis)ability and also the wider institutional and sociopolitical context - but predominantly focussed on *masculinity* in order to appropriately delimit the study. The research presented here has the potential to make a contribution to the field because of its focus on the contextual nature of masculinities, and specifically, the way students' constructions of masculinity are informed and produced in the particular context of the English classroom.

2. Key Terms

This thesis features various terminology used in particular ways. For maximal clarity, the usage of several key terms is explained below:

Social Construction

Social construction - often abbreviated to "construction" in this thesis - can be both a process and the product of a process. A central tenet of this thesis is that gender is a social construction. To paraphrase Connell (1996), gender does not exist prior to social behaviour, either as bodily states or as fixed personalities. Rather, gender comes into existence as people act (p 210). The logic of social construction can be applied to other entities as well, and in this thesis it is used in reference to subject English. English is not seen as something with an independent existence but as something that is differently defined and enacted (constructed) at different sites and times. A key aspect of social construction is its

¹The investigation could be broadly described as a *naturalistic inquiry* (as elaborated by Guba 1978, 1981; Lincoln & Guba 1985).

²Hereafter referred to as class "8B4". This is a pseudonym, as are all other references to the research site and participants in this thesis.

social dimensions; each social construction is mediated, constrained or enabled by the context in which it is located, a context which includes an historical aspect. Midalia (1999) argues that our social constructions are informed and influenced by visual and linguistic representations and notes that “representations, then, are never innocent or neutral reflections of reality. As the word itself suggests, they re-present reality for us: that is, they offer not a mirror of the world but an interpretation of it” (p 28).

Masculinity

This thesis uses both “masculinity” (singular) and “masculinities” (plural). As Connell (1996, 1989) has argued, “masculinity” is not a monolithic, homogenous set of characteristics, nor is it embodied in a particular “male role norm”. There exists a multiplicity of masculinities hierarchically arranged or clustered and in a perpetual state of flux and contestation. An individual cannot be said to “possess” a particular masculinity; an individual’s masculinity is in constant, dynamic (re)construction - dependent on a number of historical and contextual factors - and can in fact be envisaged as a performance; not something that one possesses, but something one does (Frank 1993, 1995). As such, when “masculinity” is used in the singular it refers either to the particular construction of masculinity that an individual has taken up at a given point in time, or to masculinity as a general class of potential subjectivities.

Femininity

A similar proviso applies to the word “femininity” (and “femininities”); femininity is not a monolithic construct, but a context-bound performance dynamically engaged in from moment to moment and involving a selection from a range of possible positions (Osborne 1998:148).

3. Thesis Synopsis

This chapter outlines the major aims of the study, describes the research questions and explains key terminology. Chapter 2 reviews the literature pertinent to the study. Areas covered include: the sociopolitical context of the study; gender and literacy performance; the nexus between masculinity and literacy; the social construction of masculinity; and the social construction of subject English.

Chapter 3 extends the context provided by the literature review by supplying what Geertz (1973 cited in Guba 1981:81) describes as “thick description” of the research site, the participants and myself as investigator. Chapter 4 builds on this by discussing the research design, describing the methods of data collection used, the rationale for their inclusion and the integration of the research design with the underlying theoretical framework and research questions. Chapter 5 discusses the data analysis procedures used and Chapter 6 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 7 makes concluding statements, summarises possible implications and directions for future research, and evaluates the study. A reference list and appendices are included.

Chapter 2

Literature on Masculinity and English

The literature reviewed in this chapter provides a broad context and background for the study. I will canvas a wide range of positions and perspectives with respect to masculinity, gender, English and schooling. Authors writing in these areas do not constitute an homogenous group but elements from the work of each contribute to the amalgamated theoretical framework that guides this study. Having reviewed literature on the sociopolitical and historical context for the study, gender and literacy, constructions of masculinity and constructions of subject English, I proceed to elaborate in more detail the research questions that flow from this background, and make a case for the significance of the study.

1. Sociopolitical and Historical Context for the Study

This is a context in which alarm and a generalised sense of crisis are developing not only in Australia but in other highly developed nations (Mahony & Smedley 1998; Lingard & Mills 1998; Lingard 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998a; Kenway 1996a). At the broadest level:

The depredations of economic globalisation ... have produced political and policy uncertainties, as well as pervasive insecurity. The economic rationalist or market liberal response to economic globalisation has witnessed the growth of inequality, stark life experience divergencies between those who have the credentials to participate in an almost globalised labour market and the rest, as well as intractably high levels of unemployment

Lingard & Mills 1998:4; see also Green & Beavis 1998

Within this wide social context there is growing concern about boys' achievements in education, equality between boys and girls, and a perceived decline in literacy standards and the quality of our education systems as a whole (Comber *et al* 1998; Comber 1998a:16, 1998b:3; Heath 1999; Brock 1998; Freebody 1992; Green, Hodgens & Luke 1996; Hodgens 1996). The prevailing discourse within current economic conditions has fed into conservative calls for "back to basics" approaches in education (Miller & Davey 1988:31; Grant 1997). Concerns about literacy have been exacerbated by high unemployment levels; concerns about the disintegration of school discipline are compounded by a fear of crime in the community; concerns about boys and school are connected with concerns about men's position in society (Gilbert & Gilbert 1998b:26). Many of these concerns coalesce around the intersection of boys and subject English and the result has been increased media, popular and academic interest in the area and an intensifying climate of debate (Simpson 1998). This section provides an overview of these issues and notes some of the different positions within the "boys and literacy" debate. It concludes with a statement of my position – placed within a critical pro-feminist social-constructivist perspective – and touches on how that position has shaped and affected the research. I begin by reviewing the debate as it has been constructed by the media.

In his article "Lost Boys: Searching for Answers" West (1999b:10) writes, "However you look at it, the picture of a boy's life in late 20th Century Australia appears bleak", and elsewhere, "One of the most

disturbing trends in Australian education is the growth of personal, social and educational problems afflicting the nation's male students" (West 1999a:3). Cohen (1998) begins her article by citing the *Times Educational Supplement* : "As we enter the next millennium it is the under-achievement of boys that has become one of the biggest challenges facing society today" (p 19). Headlines warn, "More Boys Dropping Out" (Way 1999) and, "Boys Miss Out on Work Experience" (Mathieson1999). Martino (1995a) cites five examples from the popular media in which boys are constructed as an educationally disadvantaged group; Alloway & Gilbert (1997a) provide an additional three citations, including: "In a school system dominated by women, boys are suffering while girls pull ahead. That's the argument fuelling the backlash against girls' education strategies" (*The Australian*, 27 July 1995). As recently as 16 March 1999 our newspapers have featured headlines such as, "Parents Fail Boys as Literacy Role Models at Home" (Monk 1999:10), and indeed one of the bulwarks of the 'Boys' Education' movement is the literacy achievement level of boys, as a group, when compared to girls (Alloway & Gilbert 1997a).

This media hysteria is problematic for a number of reasons. One of these is that such representations produce deficit constructions of "boys" as a monolithic group, universally and unequivocally failing. Another is that they implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) suggest that girls' recent achievements have something to do with boys' failure - thus framing the debate in terms of a "competing victims syndrome" (Cox 1995) - and that there has been a "turnaround" (Vogel 1995) and "until recently, boys were doing better than girls, boys were best" (Cohen 1998:20; see also Walkerdine 1998). These suggestions can be shown to be in error by bringing a historical perspective to bear. In the UK context, Cohen (1998) cites the Newbolt Report on the teaching of English (published in 1921), in which a headmaster says that "the English composition of a large proportion of boys entering his school was 'clumsy and painful to the verge of illiteracy' and that boys were 'unable to grasp a line of argument or assimilate or criticise the contents of a book'" (p 23). She also cites the School's Inquiry Commission document of 1868, which "found, again and again, evidence that girls outperformed boys" (p 26).

Similarly, in South Australia, comments made by Assistant Inspector-General Whitham (*SAPP*³ 1903) in the *Annual Report of the Minister of Education for 1902* in relation to the introduction of mass-compulsory schooling provide further evidence that the educational problems of some boys have been constructed using a crisis rhetoric for some time:

The Education Act should be amended so as to make every school day a compulsory day ... *Our ever increasing tribe of unemployed boys makes such reform urgent ... when for months, and, in hundreds of cases, for years they have no regular employment to go to, they drift into mischievous habits and idle loafing ... [This] is one of the most serious problems the state has to solve*

Cited in Davey 1985:163, my emphasis

Looking at a more recent Australian context Yates, writing in 1997, cites a report of the Victorian Committee on Equal Opportunity in Schools written twenty years earlier, in 1977. This report notes that on the basis of a number of "indicators" - infant mortality, life expectancy, morbidity, alcoholism, violence,

³South Australian Parliamentary Papers.

drug involvement, crime, imprisonment, literacy, school retention rates, examination success, employment and income - "on every count except the last [ie income], it is males who emerge as the disadvantaged group" (Francis 1977 cited in Yates 1997:339, emphasis in original). She goes on to argue that this statement is still broadly correct two decades later; in other words, a number of the grounds that have recently been used to justify the case for attention for boys "existed and were known at the beginning of the wave of reforming policy directed to girls" (p 339).⁴ As Cohen (1998) states, "The question that needs to be asked, then, is not 'Why are boys now underachieving?', but rather that of why boys' underachievement has now become an object of concern" (p 30; see Walkerdine 1998).

Authors such as Yates (1997) argue that the event which sparked a major inquiry into boys and schooling in Australia (O'Doherty 1994) was the publication of statistics that showed girls gained some of the very highest mathematics results in the Year 12 examinations, which the newspapers "seized on ... as evidence both of an enormous turnaround in gender patterns in school, and as a signal that something now had to be done about the 'underachievement of boys'" (Yates 1997:340). Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b), Mills (1997) and Lingard (1998) note that some authors account for this discursive trend as part of an "anti-feminist backlash" (Martino 1999:289). Kenway (1996a) describes it as "partly a reassertion of masculinity" (p 448).

Several authors propose that a second consideration useful for interpreting the data on boys' literacy performance is the question of post-school outcomes (eg Alloway 1998a). The question is, if literacy performance constitutes educational advantage or disadvantage, then what are the ramifications of such performance upon leaving school? Writing in the United Kingdom in 1986, Janet White describes research evidence in which 4500 students took part in a writing survey; girls were found to achieve higher mean scores than boys in every single analytic criterion of literacy performance (Gilbert 1992 describes parallel findings in Australia). Despite this, at the time of White's research, full-time female employees earned on average less than 70 per cent of the pay levels of their male counterparts. White writes:

While the usefulness of writing to some of the occupations women typically pursue is evident, where it might be thought to play a crucial role, especially in terms of career advancement in academic life, women are notably absent

White 1986:561

White is of the view that girls' superior literacy achievement at school does not translate to post-school economic or career advantage. More recently, Alloway and Gilbert (1997c) cite an ACER study (Ainley

⁴Similarly, in the United Kingdom Hall & Cole (1997) show that although boys read less than girls, the reading rates of both sexes have remained stable for the last 25 years, and cite data from 1940 that indicates the same pattern (p 64). Benton (1995b), however, notes that although "it does not appear ... that in middle England there has been a great falling off in the reading of fiction over all, ... the nature of that reading has changed substantially" (p 110), a trend that he discusses further in Benton (1995a).

1997:9) which found the group of girls obtaining "very high" reading achievement scores at school later went on to earn on average \$60 per week less than the corresponding group of males. Furthermore:

Even the groups of boys with low and very low reading achievement scores still earned, on average, more than groups of girls with high or very high reading achievement scores. All of the boys' groups earned on average more than any of the girls' groups

ibid p 37

Yates (1997) adds that women in Australia constitute a minority of the senior ranks in most areas, particularly in business, they tend to enter a relatively narrow range of jobs, and despite income improvements during the 1970s and early 1980s their incomes since then have remained static at around 83% the level of men (p 341). I provide this information in order to emphasise the complexity of issues around equity and educational (dis)advantage. Arguments that construct boys as the new disadvantaged not only fail to appreciate the diversity of educational outcomes for different boys, but also mask other important dimensions of gender equity (Jackson 1998:78).

The context has been explicated above because it provides readers of this thesis with an insight into the ideological underpinnings that informed the study. I am particularly of the view that it is necessary to critique the popular constructions of the debate because these constructions obfuscate important aspects of the social context (such as ethnicity, social class and sexuality) and militate against the development of complex, nuanced understandings of the issues involved with boys and schooling (Kenway *et al* 1997; Gilbert & Gilbert 1995).

Key questions concerning the role of schools in the social construction of masculinities are omitted; the practices and consequences of different masculinities in relation to women become invisible; and the effects on different groups of boys of the internal orderings of masculinities are obscured

Mahony 1998:37

Having reviewed the wider sociopolitical context I now proceed to describe some literature specifically pertaining to achievement levels.

2. Gender and Literacy Performance

The 1996 National School English Literacy Survey recorded superior performance by girls in each aspect of literacy – reading, writing, viewing, speaking and listening – over boys at both Year 3 and Year 5 levels. The gap between performance levels of boys and girls was found to widen as socioeconomic disadvantage increased (Masters & Forster 1997). In South Australia, the results of the Writing Reading Assessment Program (WRAP) (Education Department of South Australia 1992) showed that overall, girls tended to outperform boys in tasks that could be regarded as “representative of traditional school literacy” (p 21) but in tasks that “might be considered to represent the more public discourses related to power and influence in society” (*ibid*) the results for boys and girls were lower overall and there was little difference between boys and girls. Similar to Masters & Forster (1997), the WRAP report noted that gender differences were mediated by socioeconomic and non-English speaking background status. Gottlieb *et al* (1994) found that 70 per cent of students classified as "Learning Disabled" (LD) were male

in their sample drawn from a large urban school system in the United States. Flynn & Rahbar (1994) showed that when teachers were responsible for referring students to "LD Programs" boys were identified at a disproportionately high rate. Hey *et al* (1998) describe a two-to-one "skewing" (p 131) of special educational resources towards boys. Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) note a similar Australian situation, with boys "significantly over-represented in special language and reading classes" (p 197).

These findings should be interpreted with a number of things in mind: firstly, that such findings are often treated as though they are divorced from the sociopolitical context described above; secondly, that the comparisons are being made between boys, as a group, and girls, as a group. There are boys who do less poorly at literacy, just as there are girls who do less well (Alloway & Gilbert 1997b). Furthermore, gender is only one of an array of factors that has been shown to be in some way predictive of literacy achievement. Other factors have been shown to strongly influence literacy outcomes for all students; these include socioeconomic status, ethnicity, Aboriginality, rurality and enjoyment levels. For example, the 1996 National School English Literacy Survey found that students from high socioeconomic backgrounds tended to perform better than those from middle and low backgrounds. Thus the group of boys of high socioeconomic status (SES) outperformed the group of girls of low SES, despite the fact that the overall average for all boys was lower than the overall average for girls (Masters & Forster 1997). Teese *et al* (1995) report similar findings and note that "geographical [and therefore socioeconomic] patterns in participation and performance enable us to recognise that gender disadvantages are borne unequally by different population groups" (p 80). Similarly, Aboriginal students have been found to obtain ratings, on average, three to four years below their equivalently aged non-Aboriginal peers (Master & Forster 1997), although Alloway and Gilbert (1997c) note that Aboriginal girls tend to score higher than Aboriginal boys. Thus it can be seen that the issue of boys and literacy is complex. The categories of 'boys' and 'girls' are not two "consistent, monolithic" groups to which assessments of literacy achievement can be automatically assigned, even though gender is a predictor of literacy achievement that partially "cuts across" other predictors such as class and ethnicity (Alloway & Gilbert 1997b). It is this underlying complexity that prompts Teese *et al* (1995) to note that educational disadvantage is not felt equally by all boys, or by all girls; and to ask "which boys and which girls?" (p 109; also Gilbert 1995).

3. Masculinity and Literacy

Most recently teachers and educationists have theorised about the compatibility – or incompatibility – between boys and literacy (for example, Alloway & Gilbert 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Davies 1997; Gilbert 1998; Gilbert & Gilbert 1998b; Martino 1995a, 1995b; Webb & Singh 1998). Why is it that many boys have traditionally expressed an antipathy towards English and reading? Some of the most persuasive explanations emerge from a conceptualisation of gender as a social construction. Such theories need not exclude genetic or biological explanations of gender, but can complement them (Kowaluk 1999 presents an extreme case for this). According to McClean (1997b), "boys' induction into [a] dichotomous gender system begins early" (p 63; see also Osborne 1998:145). Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) describe the different ways in which male and female children are dealt with and spoken to as they grow up, the

different speech practices of fathers and mothers to which they are exposed, and the different patterns of interaction that children engage in with "gender-marked" toys. These authors cite work by Sue Nichols which shows: "Boys' earliest experiences of reading, literacy and of the home-school nexus are likely to be associated with their mothers, rather than with their fathers: with femininity and the female, rather than with masculinity and the male" (p 203-4). The result is that boys are likely to enter school for the first time already "inscribed by expectations and understandings of literacy, schooling and masculinity" (p 204). These findings are corroborated by the work of Millard (1997) and of Liddicoat & Shopen (cited in Monk 1999). These were survey and interview-based research projects, respectively, which found that mothers engage more frequently in reading books and writing letters than fathers, while fathers "tend to use their literacy skills briefly, such as when consulting a technical manual or when using a computer" (Monk 1999:10). In observing their fathers, boys associate these sorts of literacy events with work rather than pleasure.

Upon arriving at kindergarten and later school, these understandings continue to develop and be informed by the experiences and social and cultural forces impinging upon each child. Midalia (1999) writes:

Gender begins with the capacity to construct representations. From an early age we acquire ideas about masculinity and femininity through being exposed to a whole range of visual and linguistic representations. Visual forms such as advertising, movies and television, and linguistic forms such as magazines, newspapers, popular song lyrics, novels, plays, and parental instructions are all ways of formulating and communicating ideas about gender ... [Representations] encode, both consciously and unconsciously, ideas about masculinity and femininity

Midalia 1999:28

Although I agree with Midalia's ideas I believe they are in danger of presenting gender construction as a one way process; something which a young individual passively receives or learns (Jackson & Salisbury 1996:107). Other authors such as Connell (1996, 1989) and Davies (1997) emphasise the agency of individuals as they actively take up, perform and construct their gender from moment to moment. Gilbert (1998) talks about how popular cultural texts such as video games influence young males' perceptions of what it means to be masculine (considered at length by Alloway 1998b). Davies (1997) gives multiple examples of the way language and the "dominant cultural storylines" act upon each individual's mind in powerful ways to produce notions of masculinity and gender. These are the sorts of influences that Martino (1995a) refers to when he argues that masculinities are produced or constructed "within a network of intersecting social practices, and across institutional sites" (p 19). The resulting construction of the male and female genders as a binary dualism is one in which each gender derives its meaning in opposition to the other (Davies 1995, 1989; Jordan 1995); as a result, any deviations from the social norms of masculinity and femininity are seen as aberrations and divergencies from "what is, and what ought to be" (Martino 1995a:10).

The potentially hegemonic constructions of masculinity that result are not necessarily compatible with the constructions of the 'literate self' that are expected of students in the English or literacy classroom. Whereas many boys have learnt to perform a masculinity dependent on "physical control, autonomy and

independence" (Gilbert & Gilbert 1998b:205), the 'literate self' required in the classroom is one who is socially compliant, neat and tidy, and comfortable expressing empathy for characters in texts, engaging in thoughtful self-disclosure and appreciating 'Great Literature'. Taking an historical perspective, Cohen (1998:25) argues that "the phrases 'stiff upper lip', 'cool', 'strong silent type' - all point to a continuing association of reserve and taciturnity with Anglo-Saxon masculinity", a reserve that may militate against "teaching students how to write expressively and in detail about their thoughts, feelings, opinions and ideas" (Curriculum Corporation 1994:28). Put simply, "performances of masculinity may be at odds with performances preferred in English literacy classrooms" (Gilbert 1998:22).

Theorists who hold the above view often note that there is a perception of English as 'feminised practice' (discussed at length by Miller 1996) and this view has received some validation from qualitative studies that seek out boys' views on English. An illustrative example is the following quote from a male secondary school student in a study by Martino:

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

Martino 1995b:354

Statements like this illustrate a stereotypical attitude that some boys hold towards English. Not only does the student voice a personal dislike for the subject of English, but he suggests that to hold an alternative view of the subject is typical of homosexuals. If one considers the pervasiveness of homophobia within dominant masculine culture (as discussed in Epstein & Johnson 1994) then it becomes apparent that boys may be taking a risk if they allow themselves to be seen enjoying English. On the basis of an interview-based study Frank (1995:3) writes:

The boys were well aware of the freedom and privilege that is gained from the practising of a masculinity which is, or appears to be, heterosexual, misogynist, sexist and heterosexist. As well, they knew exactly what they had to lose if they did not engage in the practices that brought privilege

The implication of this is that a pervasive pressure to engage in dominant forms of masculinity could have a direct impact on boys' involvement in English. From this it can be clearly seen that addressing the issue of boys and literacy is both a complex and a sensitive one. There are larger cultural and social forces impacting on boys and their relationships with the English classroom. While much theorisation has occurred about the relationship between "masculinity" and English it must be acknowledged that much of it is based around a particular, hegemonic construction of masculinity. An informed theory of boys and English must account for the full diversity of masculinities in all their complexity and variation, together with the different consequences that stem from each of these masculinities. Furthermore, a comprehensive theory must also acknowledge the diversity of possible constructions of English and the different ways in which these might constrain, shape or enable various constructions of gender. The following sections explore these constructions of masculinity and subject English in detail.

4. Constructions of Masculinity

“Masculinity” is neither a monolithic nor homogenous category. There exists a variety of masculine subject positions that boys can take up and perform. These positions are not predetermined, fixed or immutable but actively constructed by each individual within a social, cultural and historical context. Masculinities, then, can be conceptualised in terms of relationships rather than singular “roles” based on gender (Haywood & Mac an Ghail 1996). Connell (1996) describes how such conceptualisations have gained ascendance within the social-science literature over older ideas about the “male sex role” (p 208) or “natural” masculinity (see Connell *et al* 1998 for a critique of “gender role” theories). He summarises some of the major conclusions of modern social-science research. Six that inform the present study are discussed below:

(1) *Multiple Masculinities:*

Historical and cross-cultural studies have shown that there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found in all places and times: “Different cultures, and different periods of history, construct masculinity differently” (Connell 1996:208). In a multicultural society like Australia one would therefore expect to find numerous “definitions” of masculinity. One could also anticipate “more than one kind of masculinity ... *within* a given cultural setting” (Connell 1996:208, emphasis in original). Sewell (1998), for example, describes the many masculinities that exist within the male African-Caribbean population in England. Variations in masculinity according to ethnicity, class, disability, religion and sexuality are one possible source of diversity.

(2) *Hierarchy and Hegemony:*

According to Connell (1996) and Frank (1995), masculinities are hierarchically arranged: some masculinities are valorised and privileged above others. Some are marginalised or actively dishonoured (for example, homosexual masculinities in modern western culture; see Epstein & Johnson 1994) and others are considered exemplary (such as sporting heroes’ masculinities; see Fitzclarence, Hickey & Matthews 1997b). In his book *Masculinities* (1995) Connell formalises this by clustering masculinities into several categories.

The first of these is *hegemonic masculinities*, which are now “widely used in discussions of masculinity” (Kenway 1997b:59) and refer to the “form[s] of masculinity that [are] culturally dominant in a given setting ... signifying a position of cultural authority and leadership, not total dominance; [because] other forms of masculinity persist alongside” (Connell 1996:209). Perhaps the most visible example of hegemonic masculinity within Australian culture is the stereotyped masculinity of the sporting hero (Connell 1995; Fitzclarence, Hickey & Matthews 1997a). A second category is *subordinate masculinities*, for example, gay masculinities, which are repressed and oppressed by hegemonic masculinities. Thirdly, Connell argues there are *complicitous masculinities*, which are taken up by men who are “complicitous with hegemonic forms of masculinity even if they fail to live up to [its] rigorous standards” (Kenway 1997b:59). Connell’s final category is *marginalised masculinities*, which are associated with subordinate social

groups and which “may not be marginal within their own patch, [but] are unlikely to exert power beyond it without some sort of sponsorship by and only within the tolerance limits of the dominant” (Kenway 1997b:59). Examples include masculinities practised within minority cultural or ethnic groups.

As useful as Connell’s formulation is, if it is used uncritically then it can become just another reductionist typology. Haywood & Mac an Ghail (1996) argue the need to critically examine “hegemonic masculinity” as an analytic tool, and examine the fluidity and instability of hegemonic masculinity. In this study these ideas have been used as an aid to thinking about masculinity, but an appreciation of the range of possible masculinities within each category, and an awareness of the fluidity and ability for individuals to move within and between sometimes contradictory constructions have been kept at the centre of the analysis.

(3) Collective Masculinities:

Connell introduces the concept of collective masculinities in order to signify that masculinities are not only attached to individuals, but can be “defined and sustained in institutions, such as corporations, armies, governments - or schools” (Connell 1996:209) and can also exist “impersonally in culture” (*ibid*), for instance in the masculinities that are circulated and promoted by video games, organised sport and media.

(4) Active Construction:

As has already been argued, masculinities are actively constructed, or performed by individuals. Connell and others (for instance, Frank 1993; Buchbinder 1995) sometimes refer to this as “doing gender”. Frank (1993) cites Beane (1990) who reflects on the complex processes whereby he learnt to “do gender”: “Age twelve brought rules for how to walk and carry books. Athletics loomed larger ... There were rules to be followed in order to be a man, but the rules were confusing” (p 158-9).

(5) Layering:

Layering denotes that masculinities are not “simple, homogenous patterns” but often contain “contradictory desires and logics” (Connell 1996:210). Such tensions and contradictions can actually be sources of change in gender patterns (*ibid*).

(6) Dynamics:

Connell emphasises that masculinities are not fixed but are amenable to change. “In the layering of masculinities we see one of the sources of change, and in the hierarchy of masculinities we see one of the motives” (Connell 1996:210). Masculinities are “composed, historically, and may also be decomposed, contested and replaced” (*ibid*). Clark & Page (1997) argue that “fundamental shifts ... about what it means to be female and male” (p 24) have occurred this century that highlight the historically and socially constructed nature of gender.

Other Literature on Masculinities

Connell's ideas are useful to the present research because they provide a means of arriving at complex conceptualisations of how masculinities are taken up and shaped within schools or classrooms. They are also of methodological value because they provide a theoretical framework against which data obtained in the field can be analysed or assessed (McCracken 1988), thus enhancing the investigator's theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin 1990). The remainder of this section reviews some other perspectives on masculinity in order to consolidate this theoretical framework.

Within the literature there are a number of attempts to produce typologies of masculinities. Kenway (1996b) traces this trend back to Willis' (1977) ethnography of working class schools which identified two groups of boys, the *lads* and the *ear 'oles*, who subscribed to starkly differentiated masculinities. Later examples include the *cool guys*, *swots*, and *wimps* of Connell (1989) and the *Macho lads*, *Academic Achievers*, *Real Englishmen* and *New Entrepreneurs* (Mac an Ghail 1994; Haywood & Mac an Ghail 1996). There is also Connell's (1995) theoretical typology of masculinities - *hegemonic*, *subordinate*, *complicitous* and *marginalised* - discussed previously.

It is the *hegemonic* varieties of masculinity that feature most prominently in the literature reviewed for this thesis. Frank's (1995) study explores some of the aspects of hegemonic masculinity - and its relationships to other masculinities - by emphasising the voices of young male students. He uses these to highlight the themes of sporting prowess, competitiveness, aggression, sexual conquest, homophobia and heterosexism (many of his points are echoed in Gilbert 1998:23). Illustrative quotes by men in Frank's study include: "Sports, looks and a woman. I think that's what every guy needs to be masculine" (Frank 1995:1); "You need to have sex with females to prove that you're not a homosexual. And if that means beating a homosexual up, then that's what you do. You should be a good size" (*ibid*); and, "Sports is probably the biggest thing to prove you're a real man, besides not being a fag" (*ibid*). The homophobia that Frank refers to need not be translated into physical violence, but according to Epstein & Johnson (1994) may be deployed in less overt ways to regulate the conduct of young men who deviate from the norms of hegemonic heterosexual masculinity (see also Buchbinder 1995:33 and Rogers 1998 for a discussion of heterosexism in schools).

Alloway & Gilbert (1998) extend this representation of hegemonic masculinity, describing it as "less regulated, less conforming and less compliant than schooling practices accommodate ... more maverick, self-styled and independent than can be expressed within the processes of school regulation" (p 7). In saying this Alloway & Gilbert allude to the potential incompatibility between hegemonic forms of masculinity and schooling. They go on to argue that hegemonic masculinity is not characterised by "self-disclosure, introspection, personalised and creative expression, but rather [by] an outside-of-self, objectified expression" (*ibid*). Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) add to the list of possible tensions by stating, "Hegemonic masculinity is lined up oppositionally to sensitivity, emotion, disclosure, regulation and surveillance" (p 213). These authors are careful to state that they describe the most visible, hegemonic forms of masculinity

as they exist in contemporary western society. Such constructions are often based on particular white, middle-class, heterosexual versions of masculinity and are not necessarily representative of other types of masculinity.

5. Constructions of Subject English and Literacy

Subject English, like masculinity, is a socially constructed entity varying in time and place (Luke 1993b:21). One can survey the constructions of English that exist in the literature, but such constructions can only inform and not dictate the construction of English that exists in each English classroom. Therefore, two essential components of this study were, firstly, a review of some of the perspectives on subject English found in the literature; and secondly, the exploration of the construction(s) of English that existed in the 8B4 class at the research site. Not only did the review of the literature enhance my theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin 1990), but the perspectives represented served to frame the contextual information about the 8B4 class (see Chapter 3).

There is no one construction of English that exists in the literature. Grant's (1997) thesis reviews curriculum documents and academic literature dating back to the 1950s, charting the changing emphases in educational discourse about literacy and English teaching. During the eighties, Australian literacy education underwent a swing towards more progressive approaches. These included process writing, whole language and reader response pedagogies (Comber & O'Brien 1993). Such approaches were propagated and taken up so extensively as to become "the new orthodoxy" (Grant 1997:15). These theories sought to make literacy learning more meaningful and empowering for students, but they attracted criticism. Several authors pointed out deficits; for example, that certain groups of students remained educationally disadvantaged (Comber & O'Brien 1993; Comber & Cormack 1995), and that narrative and personal recount were privileged (Grant 1997). Advocates of the genre approach argued that there are languages of power in society and that these should be taught explicitly; something they claimed whole language and process approaches failed to do (described by Comber & Cormack 1995). It was argued that explicit teaching in these areas was required – especially for non-mainstream students - to induct students "into the secret English of power" (discussed by Comber & O'Brien 1993). Examples of genres of power include exposition, reports and arguments (*ibid*).

However, genre approaches have also been criticised on several levels. These include: their basis in a transmission model of teaching; their restriction of student choice when compared with process approaches; their implication that certain ways of writing and speaking are the best or only ways to produce texts for given situations; their privileging of masculine, western, middle and upper class genres; their emphasis on writing (at the expense of reading and talking); and their inattention to gender, social and cultural consequences of text production (*ibid*). Luke (1993a, cited in Comber & Cormack 1995) also questions the assumption that linguistic knowledge of the genres of power will guarantee access to power. There is debate about whether such an approach empowers students, or whether it merely perpetuates the status quo by ensuring the continued production of socially valued genres (Comber & O'Brien 1993).

Amidst this atmosphere of debate critical literacy emerged as an alternative pedagogy, or more accurately, as a set of alternative pedagogies (Kamler & Comber 1996; Comber 1998a). As Lankshear (1994:5) writes, "even the most cursory survey of contemporary educational theories and pedagogies reveals quite different approaches to critical literacy." Different educators adopt different positions, and the meaning of critical literacy is contested (Comber & O'Brien 1993; Hattam, Kerkham & Wooldridge 1994). An influential model of critical literacy was advocated in 1991 by Shannon who argued that critical literacy differs from both whole language and genre theories, in that it takes on a critical view of reality. Rather than accepting the status quo, it challenges its inequalities and injustices and asks, "Why are things the way they are?" (Shannon 1991:518).

Critical literacy education pushes the definition of literacy beyond the traditional decoding or encoding of words ... it becomes a means for understanding one's own history and culture and their connection to current social structure, and for fostering an activism toward equal participation for all the decisions that effect and control our lives

Shannon 1991:518

Through an examination of curriculum documents one can see the influence of these developments in the educational discourse (eg Dellit & Ralph 1995, 1996). While older documents like *The English Handbook: Years 8-10* (Education Department of South Australia 1987) promoted "explorations of the self and of the experiences of the others in the world" (p 3), Wood's (1993) article typifies the swing towards more critical pedagogies, yet it retains a heritage that still values "pleasure in reading". Similarly the more recent document, *A National Statement on English for Australian Schools* (Curriculum Corporation 1994) contains both references to critical approaches as well as the legacy of formerly dominant constructions of English that saw English as a site for moral and personal development. Grant (1997) argues that "the literacy models of the last twenty years are represented" in the document (p 23). It is evident that, at least in 1991, the more traditional goals of English and literacy teaching were still firmly embedded: "Luke (1991) reported a ... response by Australian teachers who, when asked to rank order 'the most important goals of literacy teaching' ranked 'personal expression and creativity' the 'highest by a significant margin" (Patterson 1997:342; see also Hunter 1997). In support of this Kamler & Comber (1996) state how the term "critical literacy" has entered the educational discourse and gradually asserted a privileged position within that discourse during the 1990s, but question the extent to which critical literacy based pedagogies have been taken up by teachers.

Nevertheless, despite its uncertain position in classrooms critical literacy has a significant presence in recent literature and is therefore of interest to this study. Furthermore, if critical literacy aims to promote socially critical thinking and a self-reflexive approach, then perhaps it can be seen why several authors writing in the area of masculinity and literacy argue for the usefulness of critical literacy as a possible means of positively effecting gender reform (for example, Alloway & Gilbert 1998; Davies 1998, 1997; Kenworthy 1994; Martino 1998, 1995a; Martino & Mellor 1995; O'Brien 1999; Henry 1998) although there are those who offer critiques of the potential dangers that can exist in the approach (for example,

McFarlane 1998, who criticises Davies' (1993) "uninterrogated adoption of the poststructuralist project" (McFarlane 1998:199).

The above historical review of constructions of literacy and English shows that while various competing constructions jockey for primacy, broad trends have shaped the overall tone of these debates over time. The implementation in the classroom is another matter and although informed by the theoretical and curricular frameworks in the literature and in the professional community, each teacher must negotiate a particular construction on an ongoing basis within his or her English class. In the following chapter I provide some contextual information that gives some indication of the constructions of English that were to be found in the 8B4 class.

6. Research Questions

In addition to the questions broadly stated in Chapter 1 that focus on the construction of masculinities within the context of the subject English classroom, a number of subsidiary questions flow on from the review of the literature and guide the study:

- How is English specifically constructed in this English class?
- What constructions of masculinity are being taken up by boys in this class?
- Might it be that successfully being masculine and being a successful English student sometimes pull boys in diverging directions?
- How does boys' work reveal these things and how do boys talk about themselves in this respect?
- How does their response vary with different text types or activity types?
- What happens when boys' personal constructions of themselves as masculine and literate subjects overlap?
- If there are tensions between constructions of English and the constructions of masculinity, what spaces exist for boys to construct their literate selves in the English class?

7. Significance of the Study

As is evident from the literature reviewed above, 'Boys' Education' has recently become the focus of substantial attention from both the popular media and educational researchers (Alloway & Gilbert 1998, 1997a). Epstein *et al* (1998) argue for "the importance of moving away from simplistic, often alarmist, descriptions and proposed 'solutions' towards hearing more thoughtful, and especially feminist, voices and analyses of the issues involved" (p 3). This study seeks to make a contribution - from a pro-feminist, socially critical, social constructivist perspective - to the "rapidly growing volume" (Kenway 1997a:57) of literature on men, boys and masculinity.

There have been detailed ethnographic studies of masculinity and schooling (such as Mac an Ghaill 1994), gender-based analyses of participation rates, achievement levels and assessment (such as Teese *et al* 1995, 1997a, 1997b), classroom based research (Kenworthy 1994) and various other

qualitative, interview-based studies that sought to elicit student voices (for example, Frank 1993, 1995; Martino 1994a, 1994b; Hilberdink 1998). Williamson (1999) explored boys' constructions of gender through their reading and writing. Despite the volume of research, Raphael Reed (1999) argues that "there is a significant lack of close observation of gender processes in action in classroom spaces" (p 105). This thesis aims to make a contribution to the research literature by partially addressing the paucity of "close observation" that Raphael Reed describes.

A strength of the present study is its multi-method approach to the topic of masculinity and English. It combines a number of data gathering techniques - interviews, participant observation, document analysis and questionnaire administration - thus drawing on a wider range of sources than have previously been used in the cited studies pertaining specifically to masculinity and the English classroom. Epstein *et al* (1998) write that "the current moral panic around boys' 'underachievement' has produced a key opportunity for challenging gender inequalities in schools" (Epstein *et al* 1998:14; see also Mills 1997). This study seeks to demystify issues surrounding boys and English by taking a "highly contextualised approach" (Swann 1998:154), with a view to working towards better educational outcomes for all students.

Chapter 3

Research Context

This chapter describes the context in which I conducted this research, provides a brief account of my prior involvement with the participants and also supplies some details about my stance as researcher. The purpose of this is twofold: firstly, by providing what Geertz (1973 cited in Guba 1981:81) describes as “thick description” of the research context, the interpretability and transferability of research findings is enhanced (Guba 1981; Guba 1978); secondly, an explicit treatment of my position is necessary because “we as researchers construct the objects of our own investigations in ways that serve our own interests, the interests of our audience, and the concerns of our fields of action. ‘Data’, therefore, should not be taken for granted ... or accepted as portraying ‘the truth’” (Reid 1998:39). This view is supported by Lather’s argument that, “Since interest-free knowledge is logically impossible, we should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones” (Reinharz 1985:17 quoted in Lather 1986:63) and that we should “construct research designs that push us toward becoming vigorously self-aware” (Lather 1986:66).

1. Research Setting: School and Class Context

I conducted this research with the Year 8 B4 English class at Southwoods High School taught by John Weathers. This is a coeducational DETE⁵ school of approximately 800 students located 50 kilometres south of Adelaide’s central business district and comprises two subschools located on a shared campus: a middle school (Years 8 and 9) and a senior school (Years 10 to 13). It was not chosen for reasons of “typicality” but because my placement at the school as student teacher during Term 2 facilitated the kind of prolonged engagement and in depth knowledge of the research site desirable in naturalistic inquiry.

Southwoods High School draws most of its student population from the expanding coastal suburbs to the west and some from the local township. The school’s Staff Information Folder describes the school as “relatively isolated due to its geographical location” with “very limited access to public transport” and notes that “the school is not situated at the economic or social centre of the community it serves”.

Several years ago Southwoods underwent major restructuring which involved its conversion from a conventional secondary school (Years 8 to 13) to two subschools: a middle school (Years 8 and 9) and a senior school (Years 10 and above). Both subschools continue to share the same campus, but the middle school classes are allocated distinct areas such that all the Year 9s share one building and all the Year 8s share a connected set of transportables. The school has sought to implement many of the guidelines of *The Junior Secondary Review* (Eyers *et al* 1993), a document that has been particularly influential in middle schooling in South Australia. The most visible consequence of this is that the school timetable is divided into three 100-minute lessons per day. Another is that students are assigned to “home groups” that take all their classes together. Although students move to special facilities for particular lessons (such as art, music, and science on those occasions where laboratory equipment is

⁵Department of Education, Training and Employment (responsible for public/government schools in South Australia).

required) they spend the majority of their lessons, including English, in their assigned home rooms. This is intended to impart a sense of ownership to students. The concept of “learning communities” which is advocated in much of the middle schooling literature (for example, Barratt 1998; Schools Council 1993) is promoted through the clustering of classes in blocks. The 8B4 class that participated in the study was one of four B-block classes. Each block is assigned a small number of teachers who take the classes for the majority of subjects. The allocations are made in such a way as to minimise the number of different teachers students must interact with.

John Weathers, the teacher of the Year 8 class used in the study, describes the majority of the student population as coming from lower-middle to middle class families and notes that unemployment is an issue for many families. Many families have a sole supporting parent. In the class five boys and four girls are enrolled with a “school card”, thus indicating that the government considers them entitled to reduced school fees on the grounds of their socioeconomic circumstances.

Classes at Southwoods are said to be of mixed ability and gender; however, it could be argued that a defacto form of streaming exists at Year 8 level due to the school’s implementation of Languages Other Than English (LOTE). In this system, students are sorted into LOTE classes (either French or Japanese) on the basis of their judged performance potential in the selected language. The central motivation for this practice is to attempt to cater for the wide variation of LOTE experience that new students bring to Southwoods (ranging from extensive experience to none). A number of factors affects the allocation of students to classes, including the recommendations of each student’s primary school teacher, primary school achievement levels (grades), and recorded experience levels in LOTE. The result of this process is that the B-block classes are stratified according to LOTE performance with 8B1 constituting the most successful students and 8B4 the least. This may have implications for student performance in areas other than LOTE and is reflected in the comments made by some girls in the class during the group interview I conducted (transcription symbols are explained in Table 4.2 on page 30):

N: That’s cos we’re the dumbest class in this block

B: It is, it’s B1 then B2 then B3 then B4

N: We’re the rebel class in the whole of Year 8, we’re the ones who are all the dumbest, who don’t do the work and stuff

Nikki & Belinda, Interview 9, Lines 149-52

Four students in the class are on NCPs (Negotiated Curriculum Programs) - three boys and one girl - and therefore receive various levels of support from the Special Education teachers at the school. A fifth student (also a boy), although not on an NCP, receives Special Education support and has been referred to the local behaviour support team. John notes that about two thirds of the class are “bunched around” the NCP level although not all of these students receive support.

2. Prior Involvement with Participants

I was introduced to John Weathers in late 1998 by my university lecturer in English, Lyn Wilkinson. Lyn had recommended that I apply to conduct my final teaching practice at Southwoods High School with John. Lyn was aware of my interest in English teaching with my particular emphasis on critical literacy approaches, popular culture and visual texts. Based on her long-term acquaintance with John she believed that a partnership with him would be conducive to a successful teaching placement and could also provide an ideal environment for conducting my honours research.

John is one of the middle school coordinators at Southwoods High. This means that in addition to his teaching role he also serves as the coordinator for B-block. This position requires him to facilitate communication between teachers of classes in B-block, to liaise with middle school coordinators in other blocks, and to intervene in matters of student discipline too severe to be handled by any individual classroom teacher but not necessarily meriting referral to the higher authorities in the front office (the principal, deputy and vice principal).

John is heavily involved in professional activities that extend beyond teaching; this includes both extensive participation in and organisation of professional development. John has been called upon to present at conferences and also run workshops at one of the state's three universities. In addition, John is enrolled in postgraduate studies on a part time basis. In the classroom, John's teaching is informed by almost twenty years of experience teaching English, drama, music, art and media studies.

In late 1998 I met with John to discuss possible areas of honours research. During the period in which I was developing my honours research proposal (early 1999) I remained in contact with John. Most of our discussion focussed on what I would teach in the following teaching practice block although we maintained a dialogue about my honours plans. By that point the focus of my honours project had been narrowed to an investigation of masculinity and English.

When I first met the 8B4 class it contained 18 students (11 boys and 7 girls). I was introduced to the class during a visit in Term 1 of the school year and I returned in Term 2 to spend eight weeks with the class as a student teacher on my final year practicum. The first week was spent observing and helping and in the remaining seven weeks I took on the role of teacher. During this time I presented myself to the class as teacher rather than researcher. It was not until Term 3 that I returned and introduced the topic of my research. At this point I applied for consent to participate from the students and their parents. By this time the class membership had changed; three new students had arrived (one boy and two girls) and two girls had left for other schools.

During my involvement with 8B4 I saw (or heard about) a wide variety of activities, content and pedagogy in use in English. John said that he valued getting to know students, so one of the first activities they did was write a letter to him. He also said that he liked to arrange a free choice oral presentation for students

early in the year in which they could talk about something important to them. His curriculum included more traditional exercises such as the occasional comprehension or spelling test (based on words that the students had been having trouble with in their work). The year began with a free choice novel, followed by a novel around the theme of adolescence, and finally a class novel. While the level of student choice with regard to novels diminished with time, in other areas freedom increased. Work progressed from highly structured activities such as book reviews and an essay to more open-ended tasks such as negotiated research projects. In poetry (writing) students sat outside describing what they saw in whatever words came to mind; this text was then used as the basis for a poem. Many other lessons were conducted outside of the classroom, for instance in the computer room. By the time I first met the class, a high level of trust between teacher and students was already evident in that John would often allow students to work outside of the room if their work required it. At various times students worked individually, in pairs or in larger groups. There were points of integration with other subjects. For example, students wrote play scripts for English that were then used in drama (another subject in which John Weathers was their teacher). Visual texts were also used (such as films, or book covers).

John Weathers' teaching was primarily characterised by its variety and range. His approach was eclectic, drawing on traditional and contemporary influences. Elements of reader-response, genre and critical literacy pedagogies were visible. The diversity of purposes underpinning John's practice was evident during our interview. When I asked John what he wanted for his students in English, he responded that it was about giving students "confidence as communicators" (John Weathers, Interview 10, Line 131). In part this confidence entailed a mastery of different genres: "I just want them to be able to have confidence not to be held back by not being able to [do] something, whether it's write a letter or whether it's the confidence to talk to someone or ask for something" (*ibid*, Lines 133-5). Yet he also emphasised the critical dimension: "You're moving [students] along this line that encourages them to see the world as constructed" (*ibid*, Lines 150-1). Even this, however, was multifaced in that he wanted students to appreciate the human agency behind that construction. He said, "It's not just the political deconstructionist line, it's also a sense of the aesthetics and enjoying your world" (*ibid*, Lines 156-7).

3. Researcher Information

I supply this information to assist the reader with interpreting my research. Writing about ethnographic research, Goetz & LeCompte (1984:9) state, "Ethnographers record and report both their initial assumptions and their subjective reactions, often presenting audiences with both preconceptions and postconceptions". I believe that this pattern is also applicable to naturalistic inquiries such as the present study.

At the time of undertaking this research, I am a Fourth Year undergraduate student in the Bachelor of Education (UP/LS⁶) program at Flinders University. My two areas of specialisation are English and Studies of Society and Environment. Throughout the course of my studies at Flinders I have been exposed to a number of educational positions. These include psychological and sociological perspectives,

⁶Upper Primary/Lower Secondary.

and perspectives which range from those with individualist, liberal-progressive underpinnings to those which privilege factors of social context and promote socially-critical thinking. It is this latter perspective that has come to inform my thinking to the greatest extent.

As may be evident from the literature review I have constructed in Chapter 2, my current position is one that is heavily influenced by pro-feminist and social-constructivist thought. Like Pallotta-Chiarolli (1997), I have found arguments rooted in biological determinism to be unconvincing (popular examples include Biddulph 1998, 1995; others are reviewed by Gilbert & Gilbert 1998b) and can only concede a limited role to biology in theorisations of gender. I believe that understandings of gender as a social construction (such as those offered by Connell 1996, 1989) are not only conceptually more convincing, but also provide a more optimistic, productive way of thinking about gender and education, one which admits the possibility of amelioration and change to a far greater degree than alternative theoretical frameworks. As Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) write, "If boys' 'nature', predispositions and abilities are biologically given, as some of the more simplistic biological arguments would have it, then the possibilities for boys and their education are immediately constrained" (p 36).

This ideological stance frames and underpins the research design explicated in the following chapter. Consequently, the data collection methods employed aimed to explore the social constructions (of gender and English) in the 8B4 class, and to be sufficiently broad and detailed so as to capture as much relevant contextual detail as possible.

Chapter 4

Research Design

Chapter 3 outlined the context and nature of my involvement with the research participants. The current chapter builds on this by providing explicit details of my research procedures, covering the following aspects:

- Ethical Considerations
- Data collection procedures:
 - Classroom observation
 - Interviews
 - Documents
 - Children's Personality Attributes Questionnaire (Hall & Halberstadt 1980)

In each case data collection and analysis was underpinned by the previously described theoretical framework. Accordingly, my aim was to make discoveries about the constructions of gender within the classroom as well as about the constructions of English. The central research questions of the project ask about the interplay between these constructions; therefore, I constantly reflected upon and probed possible points of connection or abrasion. At the same time I sought to make my data collection sufficiently broad to incorporate the contextual factors impinging on the study. This is in keeping with my arguments in Chapter 2 for complex, nuanced and contextualised understandings of gender. The remainder of this chapter draws on the methodological literature to justify my research methodology. At various points I will highlight links between the methods employed and the underlying theoretical frameworks and research questions.

"In qualitative research, the investigator serves as a kind of 'instrument' in the collection and analysis of data" (McCracken 1988:18; also Thorpe 1999; Guba 1981). This involves "trading off some objectivity and reliability (in the rationalistic sense) in order to gain greater flexibility and the opportunity to build upon tacit knowledge" (Guba 1981:79). As such, the biases and predispositions of the investigator require consideration. The present study addresses this issue in two ways: firstly, as suggested by Guba (1981, following the reasoning of Scriven 1972), the burden of neutrality is shifted from the investigator to the data. This is achieved by producing evidence of the confirmability of data, through the provision of thick description of findings and the retainment of referential adequacy materials (such as documents and audio recordings). Secondly, in accordance with Lather (1986) the research design aims to produce "theory grounded in trustworthy data, [through] formulat[ing] self-corrective techniques that will check the credibility of our data and minimise the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence" (p 65). This is achieved through the consistent employment of the techniques of triangulation (of multiple data sources, methods and theoretical schemes), reflexivity and member checks (Guba 1981; Lather 1986). These considerations are expanded upon in the following sections.

1. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the study a number of ethical requirements had to be met. These included the provision of detailed information about the research design to the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University and also to the Research Council Unit of the Department of Employment, Education and Training. Once formal approval was granted by both bodies the approval of the Principal and cooperating teacher at the selected school was sought and obtained (the letters used for this purpose appear in Appendix A).

Letters of introduction (for these also see Appendix A) were sent home with each of the students in the selected class. Only students whose parents/guardians returned signed consent forms were included in the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences. In the interests of participant confidentiality neither the site nor any individual participant were to be identifiable by name.

Interviews were conducted in John Weathers' office, a room with several large windows along one side and a door leading out to a heavily trafficked corridor. The entrance to the office was left open during all interviews to prevent the possibility of misconduct allegations.

2. Data Collection

Classroom Observation

Classroom observation constituted a significant portion of the data collection process. Because gender is actively constructed in social contexts it is critical to observe participants in those contexts. By spending time in the class and observing the discourse, interactions and events, I was able to gather information about the construction of English offered by the teacher (for example, by looking at the content, organisation and style of lessons); through repeated and prolonged exposure to students uncover data which may reveal how they each construct their gender in the context of the English class; gather a sufficient range and depth of data to contextualise the analysis; and make explorations within a site that is critical to the central research question: that is, what interplay exists between masculinities and English?

I engaged in what Goetz & LeCompte (1984) describe as *participant observation*, wherein "researchers take part in the daily activities of people, reconstructing their interactions and activities in field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence" (p 109). Although my field notes always accompanied me to the 8B4 classroom, data recording predominantly occurred soon after rather than during each visit. Together with my prolonged engagement at the site, this strategy permitted the research participants to become accustomed to my presence and also consolidated my position as participant and class member rather than external researcher. This position was motivated by my awareness that:

Through elicitation and personal interaction, the investigator is better able to obtain data that address the questions asked in the study. However, they are more reactive or obtrusive. The so-called observer effect may lead participants, deliberately or unconsciously, to supply false or misleading information

Goetz & LeCompte 1984:109

Field notes were recorded in a dual page journal, with observations and description written on the left hand side and reflections and analysis on the right (after Smyth, Hattam & Shacklock 1997:11). The reflections were particularly useful because they enabled me to maintain my focus on the research questions by constantly considering the emergent findings and suggesting possible directions for further data collection and observations. I maintained these field notes during my eight week teaching practicum and then on subsequent visits in terms three and four. The trustworthiness of the data was enhanced by this prolonged engagement at the research site. Furthermore, the field notes also served as a “field journal” (Lincoln & Guba 1985), which contained a log of my day-to-day activities, a personal log charting my introspections and reflections, and a methodological log which recorded all research decisions. This constituted part of the “audit trail” of the study and thus contributed to its trustworthiness (*ibid*).

Interviews

A key data collection method was the use of the semi-structured interview, “one of the most powerful methods in the qualitative armory” (McCracken 1988:9). While the classroom observations provided a picture of the constructions of and intersections between gender and English at the site, the aim of the interviews was to elicit the perceptions of the participants with regard to the same areas. As with the classroom observations, the interviews were intended to be sufficiently broad to provide contextual information as well as data immediately connected with the research questions.

This data collection method was chosen for several reasons. The oral format of the interview eliminates reliance on respondents’ reading and writing abilities, and provides the interviewer with the opportunity to explore vague or inadequate responses, clarify misunderstandings and control the order and context in which respondents receive questions (Judd, Smith & Kidder 1991:217-8).

As advised by McCracken (1988), Judd, Smith & Kidder (1991) and Goetz & LeCompte (1984), a series of pilot interviews was conducted with “comparable respondents” (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:127) before interviewing the consenting members of the 8B4 class. A schedule was developed to guide the interviews (for this and subsequent revisions of the pilot interview schedule see Appendix B). The questions were loosely divided into three types. These were questions that aimed at:

- discovering student perceptions of English (How do students construct English? How do they view the constructions of English in 8B4?)
- discovering student perceptions of gender (How do students construct their own gender and how to they interpret and interact with the constructions of others?)
- exploring how constructions of gender are taken up in and shaped by English

The first round of pilot interviews was conducted with two Year 8 boys from the class adjacent to 8B4. After the recording of these interviews was listened to and reflected upon the interview schedule was refined and a second round of pilot interviews occurred, also with two boys from that class.⁷ These interviews were also listened to, and in addition were transcribed to enhance the depth of the analysis. The interview schedule which resulted was trialled with a final pilot interview, this time with another Year 8 boy not from Southwoods but introduced to me by a colleague.

The final interview schedule that was used with the actual research participants appears in Table 4.1 below. It was the result of several stages of refinement. With each round of pilot interviews, questions were reworded to enhance clarity, question order was adjusted to increase interview flow, and additional aids were implemented to facilitate elicitation of more data (Judd, Smith & Kidder 1991:225). These aids (which appear in Appendix B) included the use of sample texts, a handout listing activities in English, and a pair of hypothetical scenarios describing different fictional boys (all of which could be used to elicit respondent commentary; Goetz & LeCompte 1984:122-3). Experience in the pilot interviews showed that approximately half of the questions that appeared in the original interview schedule would need to be omitted in order to keep each interview within the desired time span (20 to 30 minutes). Questions which had proven to be unclear to respondents (despite attempts at clarification) were eliminated, as were questions which were deemed most peripheral to the objectives of the research. This delimitation on the range of questions included in the schedule was necessary because of the restricted time frame in which the research had to be completed, and also because of the potentially limited concentration span of some of the adolescent respondents (Goetz & LeCompte 1984).

The purpose of the interview schedule was to provide a semi-structured format for the interview and thus ensure that all areas relevant to the study were covered, while a fully-structured format was rejected because such a design could obtain responses that result from interviewer construction rather than respondent perception (Goetz & LeCompte 1984; McCracken 1988; Thorpe 1999). To maximise the likelihood that each interview would run smoothly, each was prefaced with a brief statement of the research purpose, assurances of confidentiality and an outline of the expected course of the interview (Lofland 1971 cited in Goetz & LeCompte 1984:129). For the same reason, questions were arranged so that “sequences [began] with descriptive, present-oriented questions and [built] to more complex issues of emotion, belief and explanation” (Goetz & LeCompte 1984:129 paraphrasing Patton 1980; McCracken 1988).

As stated above, an objective of the interviews was to provide data of direct relevance to the guiding research questions of the project (described in Chapter 1). Key areas of interest were respondents' perceptions of subject English, of themselves as English students and as masculine subjects, and their wider views of the relationships between school, boys and girls. In addition to this, it was hoped that

⁷I was already familiar with these respondents because I had spent time in their class during my teaching practice. I had not been assigned to that class as a student teacher, so my role within it was primarily one of observer and helper.

respondents would produce data that would either triangulate, extend or challenge data from other sources and therefore work towards the credibility of the study (Guba 1981; Goetz & LeCompte 1984; Strauss & Corbin 1990).

Table 4.1: Final Interview Schedule (for use with male student respondents)

Preamble:

As you probably remember, I am doing a research project on English and what boys and girls think of it. I'd like to ask you some questions to find out what you think of English. Now some of the questions I ask might seem pretty dumb, like, "What sort of things do you do in English?" but the reason I am asking them is because I want to find out what your perceptions are.

I'd like to make a recording of this interview if that's all right with you, so that I can listen to you while you're talking and not have to worry about writing down every thing that you say. I'll then be able to go back to this tape at home and write out what you said. No one else will hear this tape except for my two supervisors at uni, and when I write my final report no one's name will be mentioned so your confidentiality will be protected.

If there are any questions you don't want to answer, we can skip over those, and if you want to stop the interview at any time that's OK too. This isn't a test so you don't have to worry about giving me the right answers. I don't want you to tell me what you think I want to hear. I want you to tell me what you really think. And because I'm trying to find out about your views, the more you can tell me the better.

I've got a list of some questions here that I'd like to ask you, but you can ask me questions too if you want.

Questions:

- How long have you attended this school?
- Could you please tell me a bit about what you think of this school?
- What are the subjects you like the most?
- What are the subjects you like the least?
- I'd now like to ask you some questions about English. What do you think of English overall?
- What do you like most about English?
- Are there any things about English that you don't like? What are they?
- Thinking back over this year, what sort of work have you done with Mr Weathers in English?

[Handout: Example activity types in English]

- Here is a list of some of the activities that get done in English. There are other things that get done but that's just a selection of some of them. Could you please look down that list and tell me which things you would like the most?
- What is it that you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say about that?
- Looking down that list again, are there any activities that you don't like? How come?
- What don't you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say about this?
- Now I'd like to find out about the sorts of texts that get used in English. Could you think back over this year and tell me the things you've read or watched for English?

[Response to sample texts: What do you think of this book/anthology/magazine?]

- Do you do any reading outside of school that's not for homework? What do you read?
- What sort of things do boys read out of school?
- How do boys spend their time?
- What sort of things do you think girls read out of school?
- Now I'd like to ask you about how well you think you do in English. How hard or easy do you think English is for you?
- What things can you do best in English? In other words, what are your strengths in English?
- What about the other boys in your class? What are they good at?
- What are the girls in your class good at in English?
- What are the things that you find harder in English?
- What do you think the other boys find difficult in English?
- What do you think the girls in your class find difficult in English?
- Who do you think likes English better? Girls or boys?
- Who do you think tends to do well in English? Girls or boys?

[Response to scenarios: What would you think of a boy like this?]

- To finish off with I'd like to ask you a question about English. If you could change English so that you enjoyed it more, and that you would be more successful what changes would you make?
- What do you think the other people in your class would think of that?

Conclusion:

- Thankyou
- Feedback

It can be seen from an examination of the above table that the questions include:

Context questions:

- "How long have you attended this school?"
- "What are the subjects you like the most?"

Questions aimed at uncovering student perceptions of English:

- "What do you think of English overall?"
- "Could you think back over this year and tell me the things you've read or watched for English?"

Perceptions of themselves as English students:

- "What things can you do best in English?"

Questions about gender:

- "How do boys spend their time?"
- "What sort of things do boys read out of school?"

Questions intended to explore the interplay between gender and English:

- "What do you think the other boys find difficult in English?"
- "Who do you think likes English better? Girls or Boys?"

In practice the scheduled questions guided the interviews but participant responses often opened up new directions which I pursued in the interviews. A discussion of the results and their analysis appears in following chapters.

Eight boys in total were interviewed (three others could not be interviewed because their parents had withheld consent and a fourth independently chose not to take part). Interviews took place towards the end of the data collection period. This timing was chosen on two bases: firstly, prolonged engagement at the research site (Guba 1981; Goetz & LeCompte 1984) prior to interviewing maximises the likelihood that the investigator will be aware of the pertinent aspects that should be covered in the interview; and secondly, data elicited during the interviews can enhance the theoretical sensitivity of the investigator for the remainder of the data collection period (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Before the first interview with students I held a discussion with the class members, notifying them of the purpose of the interviews, answering their questions and emphasising the need to refrain from discussing the interview content until all respondents had been interviewed. The student interviews were conducted in close sequence - on three consecutive days - to ensure interviewer consistency. This included an interview with a group of female students from the 8B4 class which covered the same areas. As a precaution, I recorded the order of the interviews (see Appendix C) in case analysis suggested that initial respondents had influenced those interviewed later. In addition to these interviews I also conducted an open-ended interview with the class teacher after the transcription and analysis of the student interviews.

All interviews were recorded onto audio cassettes, thus increasing the accuracy of the data collection (Thorpe 1999). By making recordings of the interviews and employing interview schedules, the investigator is enabled "to give all his or her attention to the informant's testimony" (McCracken 1988:25; also Thorpe 1999). Furthermore, the existence of permanent copies of each interview contributed to the referential adequacy of the study (Guba 1981) because it permitted the retrospective testing of analyses and interpretations against data obtained during the field portion of the study (Silverman 1995; Heritage 1984 cited in Silverman 1995).

I produced verbatim transcriptions of all interviews. This had the benefit of heightening my familiarity with the data through what Silverman (1995:117) describes as "close, repeated listenings to recordings which often reveal previously unnoted recurring features". A modified notation format based on that described in Silverman (1995:118) was employed and is detailed in Table 4.2 overleaf.

Table 4.2: Symbols and Conventions Used in Interview Transcripts

R:	A capital letter followed by a colon indicates the beginning of a turn of speech by the respondent
/:	A capital followed by a colon indicates the beginning of a turn of speech by the interviewer. This symbol and adjacent transcriptions are italicised to differentiate them from the speech of the respondent
	The vertical slash indicates the point at which one speaker's talk is overlapped by another's
[]	Empty square brackets indicate the transcriber's inability to hear what was said
[words]	Words in square brackets are possible hearings
[[words]]	Words in double square brackets contain the author's description rather than transcription
? and !	Question and exclamation marks are used to denote the speaker's intonation
, and ...	Commas and ellipses (three consecutive dots) are used to indicate pauses of relatively short and long lengths respectively

Detailed transcripts are useful because “what may appear, at first hearing, to be interactionally ‘obvious’ can subsequently (via a transcript) be seen to [be] based on precise mechanisms” (Silverman 1995:119). A sample page of interview transcript which shows some of the transcription symbols in use is included in Figure 4.1 overleaf. A feature of the transcript is that it is truly verbatim; everything is recorded as it exists on the tape, including “ums”, “uhs”, stutters, repeated words, and conversational “false starts”. This is intended to minimise errors of interpretation at the transcription stage.

Figure 4.1: Example Interview Transcript

but I'd look at the pictures and that like cos most like cars and that, whatever's in here, yeah cars, I like cars and that so like if I looked at a car, if a good car come up like that one, I'd just look at it and I might read a little bit to see what like what's in it and see if it's good like that one. Sorry, you don't know what it is but, tape recorder. Yeah, but I would yeah I'd look at pictures and that in it

I: Um are there any other types of magazines that you'd be interested to read other than that motoring type?

S: Well motorbikes and boats and that, yeah or watersports and that and like sports magazines, like all skateboarding, bike riding

I: Yep, you like that?

S: Yep

I: Um. What would other boys, um are there are there magazines that boys like?

S: Yeah

I: What what sort?

S: A lot of sport ones

I: So similar to what your interests /

S: | yep a lot of like sports and that yeah
skateboarding, like skateboarding's sort of like the fashion, you know but

I: Oh fashion, ok. What does that mean like /

S: | like it's just in at the moment like a lot
of people, a lot of people like it and like learning new things and that, fun to do. Better than sittin' home on your ass watching telly

I: Yep. Ok, um, do would if I was to ask you what sort of magazines girls would read would it be the same or would it be different?

S: Nah. *Dolly* and all that, *Dolly* like my sister, I'll just say what my sister does like. *Dolly*, and *TV Hits* and that like cos it's got all bands and all that they like, they like people in it and that. Is someone listening?

I: Nah, it's just Mr McDermott walkin' past

S: Good, good teacher

I: So um, it sounds to me like boys usually read one thing / and girls usually read another

S: | yep

S: Yeah, girls, some boys would maybe get *TV Hits* just to like, like *TV Hits* has got a lot of posters in it which girls like, posters and that, but boys, boys like if they got a *TV*

Documents

In addition to the collection of observation and interview data described above, I also obtained various documentary data from students. These were predominantly pieces of students' written work (including research projects, comprehension answers, essays, creative writing, group posters, notes on visual texts and spelling tests) but also included materials produced by the class teacher (such as "hand outs" and reports). Copies of documents were made only with the consent of the respective students.

Documents are considered to be valuable in naturalistic inquiries because they constitute stable, rich, contextually relevant sources of information (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Silverman 1995). As was the case with the other data sources, documents were collected with a view to illuminating the interplay between constructions of masculinity and of English. Work samples are potentially interesting because they constitute the material most frequently used in formal assessment. Such documents may offer insight into the processes by which boys negotiate positions as both masculine subjects and literate subjects in the English classroom, and therefore are of direct relevance to the research topic.

Children's Personality Attributes Questionnaire

To provide an additional data source the Children's Personality Attributes Questionnaire (CPAQ) (Hall & Halberstadt 1980) was administered to all consenting students in the 8B4 class (boys and girls). I considered it appropriate to include a psychological component in the study and therefore broaden the scope of data collection and analysis. As a beginning researcher, I felt that honours-level study offered an opportunity to experience and learn about a variety of research approaches and methodologies. For this reason, despite the predominantly qualitative nature of the study, I wanted to employ an instrument that would normally be reserved for studies more quantitative and experimental in nature and thereby gain exposure to a wider range of methodology. An obvious consequence of this decision was that the results obtained with the instrument had to be treated critically and reflectively, acknowledging their potential limitations in the particular research context. A fuller discussion of this and related issues appears in Chapter 6.

The chosen instrument, the CPAQ, is a self-report inventory containing three scales: masculinity (M), femininity (F) and bipolar masculinity-femininity (MF). It is based on the Personality Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) of Spence *et al* (1974 cited in Lenney 1991). In part the PAQ was developed to provide an alternative to the majority of sex-role instruments which prior to the early 1970s had traditionally represented M and F as opposite ends of a bipolar continuum (for example, scale 5 of the MMPI used in Bernknopf 1980 and cited in Volentine 1981; a critique of this construction is provided by Constantinople 1973 cited in O'Grady *et al* 1979 and also in Lenney 1991). According to the theoretical underpinnings of such scales, the presence of M or F necessarily implies the absence of the opposite. The Spence *et al* (1974) instrument is based on an alternative notion, positing that M and F are two independent, unipolar constructs (Volentine 1981; Gaa *et al* 1979). It has frequently been compared with a similar instrument, the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem 1974). Comparative studies and factor analyses include

Herron *et al* (1983), Pearson (1980), Cunningham & Antill (1980), Gaa *et al* (1979) and Taylor (1983). Together, the BSRI and the PAQ constitute the two most frequently used instruments for scoring M, F and androgyny (Lenney 1991; Lubinski *et al* 1983).

The (unipolar) M scale of the PAQ consists of items that are judged socially desirable in both sexes, but which *males* are believed to possess in greater abundance; for example, competitiveness and independence. Conversely, the (unipolar) F scale contains items that are judged socially desirable in both sexes, but which *females* are believed to possess more abundantly, such as gentleness and helpfulness. The (bipolar) MF scale contains items that are judged differentially socially desirable in the two sexes (Absi-Semaan *et al* 1993). For example, "submission is judged to be desirable in females and dominance is desirable in males" (Pearson 1980:1121). Compared to other scales, the PAQ has relatively homogenous, factorially pure scales. This accords with Spence's intention of measuring the *instrumental* and *expressive* characteristics of the sex roles, respectively, rather than attempting to measure global masculinity and global femininity (Lenney 1991). *Instrumentality* is defined by Spence as "self-assertive traits [such as] indepen[ce,] decisi[veness, and] dominance" whilst *expressiveness* is considered to be "interpersonally oriented traits [such as] emotional[ity], aware[ness] of others' feelings [and] warmth" (Spence 1983:441). Hall & Halberstadt (1980) cite several other labels that have been used by various authors to refer to the masculine and feminine conceptual dimensions. These include: instrumentality and socioemotional orientation (Parsons & Bales 1955); agency and communion (Spence *et al* 1974); and competence and warmth-expressiveness (Broverman *et al* 1972).

Because the PAQ has been so widely used, its validity and reliability have been extensively tested and are considered to be very good (Lenney 1991). However, despite its strengths there are issues related to the use of the instrument with samples of younger people. In discussing the applicability of adult androgyny measures such as the PAQ and the BSRI in relation to their study of 10 to 14 year-olds, Thomas & Robinson (1981) note:

The use of existing androgyny scales for adults has not been completely satisfactory because of the reading level of the terms used in the adult scales. In the present study it was found that seventh and eighth grade students did not understand many of the stimulus words of the BSRI, and responded randomly

p 200

Working in an Australian context, Richmond (1984) modified the BSRI "in terms of item content, language, and scale to make it appropriate to 11 year olds" (p 1021). This instrument was deemed unsuitable for the present research because it represents a deviation from Bem's original constructs. As Richmond says, "It seems inappropriate to refer to these two composite variables as measures of femininity and masculinity ... even though they discriminate very significantly between the sexes" (p 1025). A more promising modification of the BSRI is the Adolescent Sex Role Inventory (ASRI) designed for subjects aged 10 to 14 (Thomas & Robinson 1981). This instrument was ruled out for the present study because of the unavailability of full administration instructions and exhaustive listings of item content.

Writing in 1979, Spence & Helmreich discuss age effects of the PAQ, and propose that the PAQ “measures dispositions that tend to endure over substantial periods of time and to have trans-situational significance” (p 583). In their comparative study which drew on samples of high school students (mean age=16), college students (mean age=20), parents of school children (mean age=36) and parents of college students (age data not available) they found that the only significant age trends were for males on the M scale. They describe this as a trend towards greater instrumentality that reinforces and is reinforced when males “successfully master a series of demanding tasks and responsibilities associated with school, work and family” (p 584).

Other researchers have used the PAQ with a wide variety of age groups without modification or discussion of the potential problems with younger samples (Lenney 1991). The short form of the adult PAQ has been used without modification with British adolescents (mean age=16) after a pilot study was conducted with London adolescents to ensure that the instrument was suitable for use with British samples (Keyes & Coleman 1983).

Hall & Halberstadt (1980) developed the CPAQ in order to overcome the reading-level problems of using the adult PAQ with younger samples. The CPAQ corresponds item-by-item with the PAQ with the exception of three items excluded because they were judged to be inappropriate for children (business skill, knowledge of the way of the world and interest in sex). Both a 21-item and a 51-item CPAQ were developed to correspond to the short and long forms of the PAQ, respectively. The five-point bipolar rating scale of the PAQ was replaced with a four-point scale ranging from “very true of me” (1) to “not at all true of me” (4). The three CPAQ scales (M, F and MF) were shown to be substantially related to their PAQ counterparts.

Silvern & Katz (1986) used the short form of the CPAQ with elementary school students in Years 4 to 6 in the United States. The CPAQ has also been used with twins in pre- and early adolescence (Mitchell, Baker & Jacklin 1989). More recently Absi-Semaan *et al* (1993) used the instrument with a sample ranging from Year 2 to Year 7. Hall & Halberstadt’s original study (1980) used the CPAQ with children to age 12. These and other studies (such as Katz & Boswell 1984 and Thomas 1983, both cited in Absi-Semaan *et al* 1980) have demonstrated the reliability (internal consistency) and validity (both convergent and divergent) of the instrument.

On the basis of these studies it was decided to use the CPAQ in the present research. The mean age of the students in the 8B4 (13.9 years for boys and 14.0 for girls) was slightly older than in the samples in the above studies, but given the wide variety of reading levels in the class the use of an adult measure was ruled out. Furthermore, because Hall & Halberstadt’s (1980) study showed that the short CPAQ (21-item form) “correlated well with the longer form and had comparable internal consistency” (p 278), it was decided to use the short form. This meant that practice questions could be drawn from the long form

and also reduced the time required to deploy the instrument and counteracted the potential brevity of the students' attention spans as reflected in their on task behaviour (Absi-Semaan *et al* 1993).

Several preparations were made before the CPAQ was administered to students. The wording of two items was changed to make them more appropriate for the Australian context: "I do *not* do well in gym" was changed to "I do *not* do well in physical education"; similarly, "I like math and science a lot" was altered to "I like maths and science a lot". Additionally, the two items which referred to "grown-ups" were revised with the term "adults" being used instead as this seemed more age-appropriate. In their study, Absi-Semaan *et al* (1993) conducted a pilot study and found that certain colloquialisms present in the CPAQ were misunderstood by a significant number of children in their sample. To counteract this they made minor adjustments to the CPAQ - for example, "When things get tough, I almost always keep going" was revised to "When things get difficult, I almost always keep trying" - and these changes were maintained in the present study. Finally, as per the advice of Absi-Semaan *et al* (1993), the numerical values assigned to responses were reversed from Hall & Halberstadt's (1980) original scoring system to achieve greater face validity. The scale was thus scored as follows: "very true of me" (4), "mostly true of me" (3), "a little true of me" (2) and "not at all true of me" (1).

The order of these modified CPAQ items was then randomised by computer. Table 4.3 overleaf shows all 21 items in their randomised order. (M), (F) and (MF) have been used to indicate the subscale to which each item belongs. (See Appendix D for the final version of the CPAQ as it was distributed to the sample, including instructions to participants, two example items drawn from the long form of the CPAQ and the four-point response scale.)

Table 4.3: CPAQ Short (21-item) Form

49 ¹	I am <i>not</i> good at fixing things or working with tools* (MF)
8	I almost always stand up for what I believe in (M)
45	I am a quiet person* (MF)
37	I like younger kids and babies a lot (F)
48	I cry when things upset me* (MF)
40	It is hard to hurt my feelings (MF)
14	I am often the leader among my friends (M)
22	My artwork and my ideas are creative and original (F)
33	I like art and music a lot (F)
7	In most ways, I am better than most of the other kids my age (M)
19	It is easy for people to make me change my mind* (M)
29	I try to do everything I can for the people I care about (F)
30	I am a gentle person (F)
4	It is hard for me to make up my mind about things* (M)
10	I would rather do things for myself than ask adults and other kids for help (M)
27	I am a very considerate person (F)
12	When things get difficult, I almost always keep trying (M)
24	I do <i>not</i> help other people very much* (F)
41	I am often very pushy with other people (MF)
13	I give up easily* (M)
28	I am kind to other people almost all of the time (F)

¹ Numbers in the left-hand column indicate the position of the item in the original CPAQ Long (51-item) Form as it appears in Hall & Halberstadt (1980).

* Items reversed in scoring.

3. Delimitations

It was necessary to prescribe certain delimitations for the study in order to ensure that its goals were achievable within the time frame and scope of an honours-level research project. These included:

Confining the Study to One Year Level, and One Class within that Year Level

Although investigating a larger number of students across an age range may have yielded some interesting data, the predominantly qualitative nature of the research design meant that a reduced scope was not only acceptable but desirable. In such research the aim is not to investigate samples sufficiently large enough produce “generalisable” results; rather it is to make closer examination on a smaller scale with a view to producing working hypotheses that can then be transferred to other contexts “depending on the degree of ‘fit’ between the contexts” (Guba 1981:81).

Collecting Data only in English

Subject English is a particularly interesting site for an exploration of gender, because it is an area containing “one of the most marked features of our gender-segmented curriculum” (Teese *et al* 1995:45). Additionally, as a middle school teacher with a specialisation in English, it could be argued that I can

claim familiarity with constructions of subject English, although this in itself requires self-reflexive examination. Although I only collected data in English, I also spent time with the students in other classes (such as drama, art and music) and this further contributed to my knowledge of and rapport with the students.

Conducting Individual Interviews with Male Students and Class Teacher Only

By focussing my investigation on the construction of masculinity rather than the construction of gender *per se*, I was able to delimit the topic so as to make it suitable for study at an honours level. A corollary decision was to interview only the boys on an individual basis. During the course of the study it became clear that an interview with girls also would be required in order to (dis)confirm, challenge or extend the emergent themes and findings of the study. A group of girls from the class was therefore interviewed collectively in order to ensure the timely completion of the study.

4. Limitations

A number of limitations impinged on the study but steps were taken where possible to minimise their effects.

Time Available for the Study

This was the most severe constraint on the study. This not only meant that the time span in which the thesis could be completed was limited, but the balancing of the research with other full-time study commitments meant that I was unable to attend each and every English class for observation (however, I did observe in approximately 80 per cent of all English classes for Term 2 and Term 3).

Lack of Unanimous Participant Consent

Three boys were not interviewed because their parents refused consent for the interview and a fourth boy declined to be interviewed of his own accord. As a result these boys were excluded from the study. The questionnaire was similarly limited in terms of participation, not because of non-consent from students but because of absence from school during the administration of the instrument.

Non-exhaustive Data Collection

It was not possible to make an exhaustive collection of data. This was particularly the case with the collection of documents (student work samples) where not all students were able to supply all pieces of work with the result that documentary data constitute only a minor part of the total data pool. As such, more emphasis was placed during the analysis phase on the interview transcripts and my observation field notes because these represented by far the largest, most complete data sources.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis Procedures

At the end of the data collection period, all data were contained in a stable, analysable, document-based format: either interview transcripts, observation field notes, collected documents (work samples) or questionnaires. This chapter begins with the analysis of the first three sources. The analysis of the fourth source, the quantitative data provided by the CPAQ, is discussed separately at the end of the chapter.

1. Analysis of Qualitative Data

The primary method of analysis involved a set of coding procedures based on those of Strauss & Corbin (1990). Although the procedures that Strauss & Corbin describe pertain specifically to a qualitative approach known as “grounded theory”, they can be usefully employed here because of their rigour and systematisation. According to Holsti (1969), rigorous data analysis occurs when “decisions are guided by an explicit set of rules that minimise - although probably never eliminate - the possibility that findings reflect the analyst’s subjective predispositions” (p 4). He further adds that “the inclusion or exclusion of content or categories is done according to consistently applied rules. This requirement clearly eliminates analyses in which only materials supporting the investigator’s hypotheses are admitted as evidence” (*ibid*).

Various authors (for example, Strauss & Corbin 1990; Lincoln & Guba 1985; McCracken 1988) advocate a stage-based coding approach. Writing in reference to interview analysis, McCracken (1988) states that the ultimate goal of the analysis and coding approach “is to determine the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondent’s view of the world in general and the topic in particular” (p 42), but a similar statement could be made with respect to other data sources in naturalistic inquiries.

In the present study, a simplified three stage model was employed. In the first stage, based on what Strauss & Corbin (1990) would call “open coding”, transcripts and other documents were examined line-by-line and assigned labels and categories, “giving each discrete incident, idea, or event, a name, something that stands for or represents a phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin 1990:63). These tentative codes were reviewed using the “constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss 1967:101-16 cited in Strauss & Corbin 1990:62). Codes that appeared to relate to the same phenomenon were grouped into categories. Names for codes and categories came from three sources: from the literature (some of which is reviewed in Chapter 2), from phrases used by the research participants themselves (in which case they are known as “*in vivo*” codes, Strauss & Corbin 1990:69) and finally from the investigator. Prior to analysis two categories, *instrumentality* and *expressiveness*, were predetermined corresponding to the underlying constructs that the CPAQ purports to measure. As coding proceeded, these predetermined categories provided potential points of linkage between the CPAQ results and the data from other sources.

In the second stage, similar to Strauss & Corbin's (1990) "axial coding", the codes and categories were compared and checked against one another, this time searching for connections between categories with a view to detecting emergent themes. Although I have described the open and axial coding stages separately, in practice I alternated between them during the analysis process. A third and final stage, based on the "selective coding" of Strauss & Corbin (1990), aimed to remove those categories that did not bear significantly on the research questions of the study.

The coding process as a whole was guided by the research questions of the study. I made constant reference to these questions to ensure that my coding was appropriately focussed. Prior to beginning coding I had already determined several broad descriptions of code types that I believed would prove useful in answering the research questions. These broad types were not intended to be mutually exclusive or exhaustive, but to assist the analysis process by drawing attention to the most pertinent data:

- codes about gender construction
- codes about the construction of English
- codes about educational implications
- codes about the interplay between gender and English

Trustworthiness of findings was enhanced by the inherently triangulatory nature of the coding procedures (Lincoln & Guba 1985; Guba 1981; Guba 1978). Because three separate data sources were analysed using coding procedures - each collected using a different method (interview, observation and document collection) - categories and codes could be compared across data sources and collection methods thereby enhancing the credibility of the results. Holsti (1969) argues that "when two or more approaches to the same problem yield similar results, our confidence that the findings reflect the phenomena in which we are interested, rather than the methods we have used, is enhanced" (p 17). It should be noted that different data sources (for example, interview and observation) sometimes yield complementary rather than comparable data; Wolcott (1992) argues that "what people tell us tends to reveal how they believe things *should be*. What we ourselves observe firsthand is more likely to reveal how things *are*" (p 20-1, emphasis in original).

Another way in which trustworthiness was developed was through the use of member checks (Isaac & Michael 1995). Member checks confirm the face validity of analyses by "recycling analysis back through at least a subsample of respondents" (Lather 1986). In the present study member checks were implemented by presenting partial analyses to participants during a visit to the school in Term 4. Two boys and two girls were selected for this purpose. The exchange took place in an informal context, using language appropriate to the age of the participants consulted. In the light of feedback from the participants, the analyses conducted up to that point were confirmed or reviewed and the analysis proceeded. Member checks with the class teacher had occurred on an ongoing and frequent basis and continued right up to the final stages of thesis writing.

Negative and discrepant case analysis (Isaac & Michael 1995), or “revising a hypothesis through applying hindsight until it accounts for all known cases without exception” (p 222) was also used to build the trustworthiness of the study.

Having discussed in general terms the nature of the analysis I will now briefly cover the specific aspects that pertained to each separate data source.

Observation Field Notes

The field notes differed from the other data sources in that they relied heavily upon investigator recollection to capture data. Although I often made the field notes immediately after rather than during the observation sessions, on those occasions where I did make notes in class my experience concurred with that of Nixon (1998), who found that “because the data were produced extremely quickly, it was very difficult to record” (p 73). It was not possible to comprehensively record all that occurred in the classroom and therefore an element of investigator selection was necessary (Murphy & Elwood 1998:168). Reid *et al* (1996) argue that a “researcher’s positioning within the major discourses governing educational practice may have as much influence on what is seen in the classroom as does the researcher’s physical positioning within material reality” (p 87). As such, it is important to be mindful of the *constructed* nature of the data (*ibid*) and not use it unproblematically as the basis for other claims.

Interview Transcripts

Upon transcription the eight interviews with boys yielded just over 39,000 words for analysis. The group interview with the female class members provided another 4,600 words, and the interview with the class teacher an additional 11,400 words. These constitute the largest body of data in the study. Time limitations meant that only the boys could be interviewed individually. However, it was considered important to also interview the girls to broaden the scope of the study. By testing emergent themes and findings about boys and masculinity against the responses of the girls those findings could be reinforced, challenged or extended, thus enhancing the study’s credibility. Points of connection and difference between the male and female responses are treated in the next chapter.

There was a number of issues surrounding the interview data that became apparent during the analysis. In reviewing the interview transcripts I note a tendency to be “question driven”, in which possible avenues of exploration are taken up only partially or not at all - instead I move onto the next question. Another feature of the interviews with some boys is the considerable magnitude of the speaking turn rate. A comparison of the number of speaking turns per page of interview transcript reveals stark differences among the interviews. The interview with the class teacher was characterised by short questions from me interspersed between long sections of response from John Weathers. There was an average of 4.7 speaking turns per A4 page of transcript. The average sentence length was 48 words. In contrast the interviews with boys featured closely alternating sequences of questions and answers, often with clarifying comments by me. In the most extreme case there were 22.0 speaking turns per page, with

the other interviews ranging down to 18.2 turns per page. Average sentence lengths varied between 9 words and 15 words. The group interview with female respondents had the highest turn rate - 23.3 turns per page - mostly consisting of short, overlapping comments by students with minimal questioning by me. The average sentence length was 10 words.

The interviews with male students were quite difficult, and this may be due to what Reay (1996) terms as “the normal adolescent male reticence when talking to adults more powerful than themselves” (p 516). There were points in the interviews where I perceived respondent resistance. These ranged from apparent reluctance to speak to active, if playful, antagonism both of which are illustrated in the excerpts from the first and most difficult interview below:

I: Here's the next one this is Lochie Leonard: Scumbuster. What do you think of a book like that?

G: It's a novel [[slams it on top of other novel]] hate it

Gary, Interview 1, Line 238-40

I: Um [[reaches for sheet]] ok, now I've got a question, you can return that now

G: [[holds sheet away]]

I: Can I please have it. Thanks

G: It's paper. It's paper with writing on it

I: That's right

G: That comes from a computer

I: Correct

G: Ooh, cos you can't write like that

Gary, Interview 1, Line 188-195

Edwards (1999) draws on the work of Scheurich (1995) and Weber (1986) to suggest that “interviewees can push against the goals of the researcher, resist questions and the researcher’s meanings and control the interview in their own ways” (p 22). The reticence of some boys may stem from a number of causes: “The respondent may not know the answer, may be unwilling to give it, or may be unable to express it verbally” (Judd, Smith & Kidder 1991:215). Lincoln & Guba (1985) add that “respondent distrust (the fact that the recording does provide an accurate and unimpeachable record[]) is often more than sufficient to constrain open and candid responses” (p 272). The extent to which the problems with the interviews were due to my own inexperience as an interviewer and to the other factors discussed here (developmental level of respondents, distrust, resistance and so forth) is unclear.

Documents

At the conclusion of the data collection period a number of work samples had been acquired (79 from boys and 56 from girls). In addition to the general coding applied to the other sources, the work samples

were particularly amenable to analysis by frequency counts (in the style of the “content analysis” approach described by Holsti 1969). Consequently, occurrences of particular codes and themes were counted and inform the findings discussed in Chapter 6.

2. Analysis of the CPAQ

My use of the CPAQ was different from the studies of Silvern & Katz (1986), Mitchell *et al* (1989), Absi-Semaan *et al* (1993), Hall & Halberstadt (1980), Katz & Boswell (1984) and Thomas (1983). In each of these cases it was used in relatively large-scale quantitative studies with sample sizes sufficiently large to produce results of statistical significance. The sample size of the present study (12 boys and 7 girls) precluded any such statistical analysis. As such, the results obtained by each student who completed the questionnaire (an M, F and MF score) can only be used for informal comparison against other class members or, alternatively, comparison against the large normative sample results of studies such as that by Absi-Semaan *et al* (1993). Methods for classifying subjects as masculine, feminine, androgynous or undifferentiated, such as the median-split method described in Lenney (1991) are not applicable in the present study because of their lack of relevance to the current research questions and the small sample.

Each subject’s score on the three scales (M, F and MF) was calculated by a simple addition of item choices within each scale (after those items marked as reversed scored were appropriately reversed). This yielded maximum possible scores of 32, 32 and 20 on the M, F and MF scales respectively (this arrangement is identical to that found in Hall & Halberstadt’s original 1980 study, thus rendering comparisons to normative samples possible). Only the M and F scores were considered in the analysis. With these data calculated for each student, it was possible to make comparative statements such as, “Student ‘A’ rated highly on the M scale when compared with other class members (ie in the top third)”. In the light of these calculations I re-examined data that had been coded using the *instrumentality* and *expressiveness* codes. The CPAQ results could therefore be used to confirm or contradict data coded from other sources (discussed in the following chapter).

3. Concluding Comments

In this and the preceding chapter I have provided a summary of the research design and data analysis strategies of the present study. I have made reference to the trustworthiness of the design. It is important that the authenticity of the findings be established. In recognition of this, several authors (for example, Guba 1985; Garman 1995 in Smyth, Hattam & Shacklock 1997) have proposed frameworks for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic studies. I will summarise how the present study reflects these concepts (borrowed from Guba 1985) - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - in Chapter 7 where I evaluate the study. In the next chapter, however, I will present the major findings of the research.

Chapter 6

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the data collection and analysis was to explore the interplay between constructions of masculinity and subject English in the 8B4 class. The study involved large amounts of data and produced a correspondingly rich variety of findings. At the end of the analysis process, I had employed 174 unique codes, and by grouping together codes that appeared to pertain to the same phenomena arrived at 14 categories. Finally, I identified seven major themes running through the categories that revealed the ways in which masculinities were played out in and shaped by subject English in 8B4.

As an honours thesis this study is subject to limitations of both time and space. Consequently, I confine myself here to a discussion of the major themes only. Section 1 elaborates upon these major themes, drawing on examples from the data to illustrate how those themes operated in the 8B4 class, and making comparisons with theories and findings in the literature. The quantitative results of the CPAQ are reviewed in Section 2. The chapter concludes with Section 3, which notes some interesting points of contrast with the literature that emerged in the course of the study.

1. Research Findings: Major Themes

Multiplicity and Hierarchy

Chapter 2 reviewed some of the attempts in the literature to produce typologies of masculinities, such as Connell's (1989) *cool guys*, *swots* and *wimps*, or Mac an Ghail's (1994) *Macho Lads*, *Academic Achievers*, *Real Englishmen* and *New Entrepreneurs*. The strength of such approaches is that they suggest a *multiplicity* of masculinities and, particularly in the case of Connell's (1996) typology, make visible their hierarchical arrangement. A resounding finding of the present study is that boys in 8B4 took up a wide variety of masculinities at different times. This multiplicity of masculinities meant that each boy related to subject English differently at different times. I explore this idea below by reviewing some of the masculinities visible in 8B4 during the study.

At the broadest level, there appeared to be two clearly demarcated factions within the 8B4 class, each containing boys who took up different constructions of masculinity. Within these groups, however, each boy negotiated a unique, personal construction. It is for this reason that I have chosen *not* to attach labels to these different constructions of masculinity; this could suggest a homogeneity and fixedness within each faction that is not supported by the data.

The two groups were divided according to the primary schools from which the boys came to Southwoods. Those who attended Tewonga form one group and those from Wapinga another, both groups characterised by strong friendship ties. The spatial arrangement of the classroom, in which students chose their own seating arrangements, saw the two factions locate themselves at opposite ends of the room. The

students' awareness of this division is evident in the interview transcripts: many students use phrases such as, "the people at the back" (Russell, Interview 5, Lines 122-3), "those boys that kinda sit down the front" (Belinda, Interview 9, Lines 47-9), "the boys that sit up the back" (*ibid*) and "their group" (Scott, Interview 4, Lines 406-8). The teacher, John Weathers, talks about "social divisions like the Wapinga Tewonga split" (John Weathers, Interview 10, Line 46).

The following comments by John Weathers convey the sense of hierarchy and differential power between the two factions:

J: The other side [of masculinity] is the other group ... I'd say [it's] a more submissive kind of masculinity and it comes across as younger but I don't know that it is. But it's this sense that they're the ones who'll be picked on. They're lower in the kind of a social pecking order

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 612-7

Not only were there differences between the two groups, but the relationships that existed between boys within each group were also characterised by power differentials and contestation. In some cases these involved violence and physical intimidation: according to Nikki, "Dave's just a boner and because he can beat [the others up], he's taller and stronger that's the only reason why he's got friends, cos if not then he'll beat 'em up" (Interview 9, Lines 381-3). John adds, "Dave and his group are the toughies, they're the aggressive kids ... it's kind of the ugly side of masculinity as far as I can see" (Interview 10, Lines 544-5, 558-9).

Despite broad trends in the two groups (for instance, one group privileging active pursuits such as sport and the other particularly valuing certain hobbies, such as cars or computers; one group appearing to be more characterised by rebellion, the other more by conscientiousness, in relative terms) there was considerable variety within each. Two of the boys related subject selections for next year that were strongly counter-stereotypical (in four or more subjects), while four others talked about counter-stereotypical selections on a smaller scale (one or two subjects). Some boys were noticeably more academic in their orientation than the other boys in their group, whether in terms of attitude or capability. This multiplicity of masculinities meant that each boy related to the subject English in different ways.

Dynamism

Strongly linked to this theme of multiplicity and hierarchy is the theme of dynamism. By this I mean that the masculinities to be found in 8B4 "need *not* be seen as 'fixed', unalterable and non-changeable" (Frank 1995:7, emphasis in original). The boys' constructions were dynamic, in a state of continuous production and dependent on context. For example, strong contrasts often existed between the masculinities displayed by boys in class and the masculinities those same boys presented to me in the context of the interviews. Like Hilberdink (1998), I was often surprised at the depth of disclosure some of the boys engaged in during interviews, given the knowledge of the students I had acquired during my prolonged involvement at the school. The following excerpt shows Scott making statements in the context of the interview that contrasted starkly with the classroom observation data, highlighting the dynamic, relational

and context-dependent nature of gender construction:

S: I know a bit of poetry. I know how to write a few poems, like I wrote a few poems and typed 'em out on the computer and done pictures for them and now they're on the back of my nanna's toilet door

I: *Was that for school or did you just do it in your own |*

S: | Oh I just did it cos I like to try and rhyme a lot of things and that

I: *What do other boys think about poetry?*

S: Most of them think it's really boring, like it's a girls thing and that. My friends don't know that I like to write poetry. I've wrote one romantic thing but I won't go into that [[laughs]]

I: *[[Laughs]] So, they don't know |*

S: | They don't know that I like write a lot of poetry

I: *What would happen if they found out?*

S: I think they'd tease me, pay me out in other words

Scott, Interview 4, Lines 317-47

Other elements of dynamism were evident in the boys' historical accounts during interviews. Boys described how their reading habits had changed over time, how their patterns of socialising had altered and how their interests had evolved during recent years. The following exchange from the interview with Marcus illustrates:

M: I used to be good at spelling. Now I'm not so good cos I don't read as much. I used to read a lot, when I was younger. And I used to be a really good speller and now I'm not as good

I: *How come you think you don't read so much any more?*

M: Because I just don't [cos] I'd rather socialise

Marcus, Interview 7, Lines 156-62

I argue that this is an instance of "the idea that young men make their history" (Frank 1995:3), and with it their masculinity. Although each person's masculinity is under a state of perpetual construction and reconstruction, it is possible that the boys' masculinities in 8B4 are in a *particularly* dynamic state due to their status as young adolescents. The literature offers some suggestions as to why this may be so: according to Henschke & Phillips (n. d.) adolescence is a period in which individuals are "seeking values and identity clarification" and are "in *transition* between childhood and adulthood" (p 2, my emphasis). Hillman (1991) says that "the major developmental task of adolescence ... is to develop a sense of identity" (p 6), a point echoed by Manning (1992) who claims that adolescence is characterised by "constant examination of development and the overall 'self', quests for freedom and independence" (p 306). Berk (1996) adds that "during adolescence, cognitive changes transform the young person's vision

of the self” (p 585). Thus, perhaps, I was observing these students in the *process* of constructing their identities and masculinities to an extent that may not occur at other times in their lives.

In addition to the particularities of adolescence another factor which contributed to the dynamism of gender construction in 8B4 was its status as a Year 8 class, poised on the upper side of the primary/secondary divide. It could be argued that a settling process occurred which accounts for the gradual changes in attitude, behaviour and work patterns that were evident in the 8B4 class.

Masculinities and Authority

Among some of the students in the 8B4 class there was a sense of what Connell (1989) describes as the construction of masculinity through contesting authority: “getting into trouble” (p 294). According to Connell, “the authority structure of the school becomes the antagonist against which one’s masculinity is cut” (*ibid*; see also Connell 1993:25). John Weathers describes this process with respect to Dave, a student in 8B4:

J: There’s a danger that [students] justify their non-acceptance you know. That becomes a cult almost and the more we punish Dave the more he’s come back as the big hero and justified that, so the next thing he does will be more outrageous, more deliberate. He’s getting something he needs, he’s getting it from that kind of behaviour

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 588-92

For different boys in the class, “getting into trouble” took different forms, served varying purposes and differed in scope and severity. This variety can be partly explained by the dynamism and multiplicity of masculinities referred to above. For Russell, it meant “acting silly”, “getting up to mischief” and “impressing girls”:

R: Girls are more like grown up than boys are cos boys act silly and all that. And girls are kind of good and they know heaps good to do all their stuff. And plus they grow up quicker than we do

I: ... *What are boys like?*

R: Always up to mischief and all that. And try[ing] to impress the girls

Russell, 5 Interview, Lines 115-20

Other students saw it as “attention getting”, as illustrated below:

G: Russell. He always mucks around partly cos he’s got ADD but partly because he’s just an attention getter ...

I: *What’s in it for Russell in being an attention seeker? What does he get out of it?*

G: People laugh at him, [he] becomes popular I spose. People start to like him

Gary, Interview 1, Lines 493-4, 503-5

A recurring pattern in the field notes is linked with these behaviours: there was often a collective dimension in this “attention getting” and “acting silly”. There were no isolated incidents of misbehaviour in the field notes; each incident was propinquitous to at least one other incident involving a nearby student.

As John Weathers stated, “If Russell is getting attention and Scott is getting attention then Darren’s going to be not too far behind in exactly that kind of behaviour” (Interview 10, Lines 625-7). In their interviews the boys explained this in terms of “wanting to belong” and “feeling left out” if they did not join in (Scott, Interview 4, Line 173). Such behaviour has obvious implications for the learning of the boys involved, but it also impinges on the education of the girls in the class and of the other boys (Collins 1997:6-7).

Reading and Writing Gendered Texts

During the research it became increasingly evident that the 8B4 students were engaged in reading and writing gendered texts on a continual basis. On one level, this means that in their classroom writing they were actively constructing their own gender: in the case of the boys, by producing written work they felt was compatible with their sense of masculine identity (discussed later). However, on another level it also means that in their very behaviour they were writing gendered “texts”. The following comment by John Weathers captures this notion of “self as text”:

J: I can’t walk into a building without seeing it as a text, without reading it as a text. I’ve been accused of reading people as texts. And it’s quite right, nothing is not constructed, nothing is not constructed for a purpose, so therefore everything is a text

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 145-8

In this sense the boys in the class are constantly constructing their own masculinities, “speaking and writing themselves into existence”, to use Frank’s (1995:2) term. Conversely, they were *reading* the texts around them - both the written texts of the formal curriculum and the selves-as-texts constructed by the other students - and making gender-based evaluations of them.

This process of simultaneous evaluation (reading others as a text) and constructing (writing oneself as a text) is evident in the following interview excerpt. In one interview a boy responded to one of the hypothetical scenarios (see page 91) by making comments as I read out the scenario:

I: *[[reads scenario to point about reading books for adults]]*

G: That’s really, um he needs medical attention, seriously

I: *[[laughs]][[continues scenario to point about getting work done on time]]*

G: That’s not me

I: *[[continues scenario to point about computers as only passtime]]*

G: He needs medical attention, seriously

I: *[[continues]] So, my question is what do you think of a boy like that?*

G: Is he on drugs?

I: *I dunno, that’s not included, you think there’s something |*

G: | does he go to a psychiatrist?

I: No

G: Cos he needs to

Gary, Interview 1, Lines 464-76

In this excerpt we see both the gendered evaluation of the boy in the scenario and the public vocalisation of that evaluation. In distancing himself from the boy in the scenario with comments such as “that’s not me” and “he needs medical attention”, Gary is simultaneously constructing a masculine self which he in turn expects me to “read” and thus form an opinion of his masculinity. In this example, Gary uses a verbal strategy to achieve his goal, but at other times he and other boys constructed their masculinities through more physical means. The boys’ activities and bodies became “arenas for the making of gender patterns” (Connell *et al* 1998:61). Connell describes this process in the following way: “The physical sense of maleness ... involves size and shape, habits of posture and movement, particular physical skills and the lack of others, the image of one’s own body, the way it is presented to other people and the ways they respond to it” (Connell 1987:84) and Frank writes, “They manipulate their bodies and strategise their social circumstances to achieve stability, protection and privilege” (Frank 1995:4-5). This ongoing construction of the masculine self through the reading and writing of gendered texts lies at the heart of the interplay between masculinity and subject English. Clearly, everything that occurs in the classroom is both interpreted by the students and is produced as part of the ongoing construction of their gendered selves.

Another way in which boys in 8B4 wrote gendered texts was in their academic work. Claims exist in the literature that boys tend to draw on a relatively narrow range of subjects in their creative writing (Gilbert 1992). For example, Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) write, “Boys’ stories ... are notoriously different from girls’ in their use of violence ... It is far more likely for boys to ... focus on an external public world of battle, aggression, retribution” (p 212). In the case of the boys in 8B4 this was borne out. In the most extreme example, a free choice story based around time travel, all twelve boys wrote stories that featured armed combat or physical violence (this contrasts with the girls, of whom none wrote stories with a violent component). There may have been an element of what Connell (1996) terms the collective construction of masculinities. In the situation described the boys were working closely together in the computer room and all were aware of what the others were producing due to their proximity and frequent spoken exchanges. Many boys saw this as a natural part of being male. Some said things like, “We can write stories [because we’ve got] sick minds, about shooting stuff and like weapons” (Alex, Interview 8, Lines 352-8), whilst others distanced themselves from violence and the boys who endorsed it, for example Scott, who said, “[The other group], they like killing stuff” (Interview 4, Line 407-9).

Although all students in 8B4 were engaged in the processes of reading and writing gendered texts on a daily basis, the boys in 8B4 displayed varying degrees of insight. For some it would appear that the processes of construction and interpretation are happening automatically, or almost subconsciously. In

some cases, interview questions related to gender were met with blank stares or replies of, “I don’t know”. For example, in his interview Gary resisted my questions about boys on the grounds that he did not want to make generalisations:

I: *What are boys like you who are in year 8 interested in?*

G: I can’t say cos I’m only one boy and there’s lots of boys

Gary, Interview 1, Lines 357-9

Gary’s reticence could be active resistance, or perhaps he had no interest in and had not thought about the questions posed before. A fourth alternative is that gender had become so naturalised as to be invisible and unnoticed. Clark’s (1989) work may explain some boys’ lack of insight into gender in terms of the normalisation and naturalisation of hegemonic constructions of gender. She explains how “highly gendered [behaviour] differences are so ‘normal’, so ‘natural’ as to be unnoticeable” (p 253).

Yet the fact that Gary was thinking in gendered terms was evident elsewhere in his interview where he described one of the books I had brought in as a “girl book” (Line 270). In fact, all eight interviews with boys contained references to either “girl” or “girlie stuff”. Therefore, even those boys who had chosen not to or could not talk about certain aspects of being masculine or a boy demonstrated that they were constantly making evaluations of the gender-appropriateness of the texts around them and were presumably constructing their own masculinity on the basis of what seemed most appropriate.

Although I have dwelt on gender in this discussion, other factors play parts in the processes described here. The texts are not merely gendered, but are also mediated by factors including class, race, ethnicity, sexuality and (dis)ability (Pallotta-Chiarolli 1995). There are implications here not only for English but for all school subjects. The major finding is that these factors, of which gender is but one, pervade each individual’s experience of schooling at every moment in complex ways in the reading and writing of their own bodies, acts and practices as texts.

The “Culture of Underachievement”

The class teacher describes the “Culture of Underachievement” visible among some of the boys in the 8B4 class:

J: We have a system where we reward them with the majority of As and it’s by and large the girls. Sometimes it gets embarrassing to watch the number of girls go out and get [certificates]. George has just got four As and he’s had a word with me already that he doesn’t want to receive the certificate, and this is the coolness of not achieving, or the uncoolness of achieving. And he had a word with me quite privately and I said, “Did you get four As?”, and he didn’t even want to say that. He said, “Look do you have to go out and get [the certificate]?”, and I said, “Look, who are you talking about? Did you get four As?”, and he said, “I just wanna know if you have to go out if you get four As”, and I said, “No”, I said, “We don’t want to embarrass people by doing that”, and eventually he said, “Well I got four As and I don’t want a certificate”, and I said, “Well, what we’ll do is we’ll still give you a certificate but we won’t ask you to go out”, and he seemed happy with that. It’s that kind of comment, the boys don’t like to go out and get those. And I think I’d be

prepared to generalise on that, that there's a sense of embarrassment about going out and getting them

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 346-62

These impressions are supported by data on achievement levels. Achievement data in English were available for 20 students in 8B4 in the form of end-of-term reports. When these reports were ranked according to overall score, females were disproportionately represented in the top half of the rankings. Only one girl ranked in the lower half of the class. The highest ranked boy was seventh. Some of the girls in 8B4 were keenly aware of this as illustrated in the following interview excerpt, which captures the twin foci of the culture of underachievement: the lack of achievement and the lack of effort:

N: I think we're more intelligent than they are

*: [[Laughter]]

N: I seriously do, cos they don't show like any enthusiasm when it comes to any of it. But no, we actually do some of our work, they don't do anything

L: I did all my work this term

B: They're just like, "who cares?"

N: And they think it's like one big joke when it's not

B: They say they leave [their work until the last minute]. But I do all of my work at the very end anyway and get a better [mark]

N: But they just don't do their work at all

Nikki, Lisa & Belinda, Interview 9, Lines 55-64

This general trend could be accounted for by the "cool to be a fool", non-academic style of masculinity referred to by authors such as Connell (1989), Gilbert & Gilbert (1998b) and Epstein (1998). This situation is obviously fed into by the 8B4 class' wide reputation as the "dumbest class in the block". Within this context, some of the boys have constructed a valued identity for themselves as "cool fools". Alex said that his friends would start to think of him "as a square, a goodie-goodie or a teacher's pet" if he worked conscientiously in English, and said, "They'd probably pick on me and try to beat me up and stuff" (Interview 8, Lines 370-1, 374). Others, like Gary, thought that "being dumb" could attract a desirable kind of "funny attention" (Interview 1, Lines 511-4) from peers.

Other boys, however, adopted alternative positions in the 8B4 class. Glen, who ranked most highly among the boys in the English assessment, was recognised by the teacher as one of the hardest-working members of the class. I observed no harassment of Glen on the basis of his diligence in English, nor did he or any of the other students in 8B4 mention such. Other boys talked about unselfconsciously working hard in other subjects; for George it was Physical Education and for Leigh it was Visual Art. The sense was that on the whole these boys were able to pilot a course through school in which their work habits were accepted, approved of, or at least tolerated by their peers.

Centrality of Relationships

John Weathers' conduct in the class (discussed in Chapter 3) and his comments in the interview illustrated that for him there was a sense of the centrality of relationships in the learning of students and the management of the class:

- J: They've got a reputation as being a bit of tough class but I don't believe anything works unless you've got a relationship with the students. But I also think in particular with students like [those in 8B4] nothing works unless you've got a relationship with them. It's just an exaggeration of what I already see as a principle in teaching. That you teach through respect, friendship, concern. And the respect needs to be two-way. A lot of teachers don't do this, they think the respect is all one way. But this sense of respecting something about the kid and and it varies from student to student

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 98-107

This position of John's was evident in all his teaching, both with male and female students. My field notes record numerous occasions in which potentially explosive situations were defused by John, many of which appeared to rest on the foundation of his established relationships with the students involved. Given that contestation with authority played a role in the construction of masculinity for some boys in the 8B4 class, this ability to deal effectively with misbehaviour had important consequences. I argue that, most significantly, the quality of the relationships permitted conflicts to be resolved with minimal antagonism and disruption to other students in the class. Examples of the students' perceptions of their relationships with John Weathers include Marcus' description of John as "easy to get along with" (Interview 7, Line 39), and in Interview 9, Belinda's statement that, "He actually talks and listens to what you're saying" (Line 144).

Gender Aspects of Teacher-Student Relationships

Although discussion has focussed on the gender of students, the gender of the teacher was a constant factor in the daily activities within the class. John's interview revealed his awareness of the part his own gender played in his interactions with students. Speaking about the girls in the class, he said:

- J: You know their ability to handle relationships with other people, their sense of adulthood, their sense of being willing to engage, sometimes that can be quite sexual and both in terms of me as a male teacher and in terms of other students in the class. Not overtly sexual but just this sense that there's some kind of privilege involved there because of their gender. They might get a particular hearing or they might be able to smile their way out of things or something like that

- I: *So what's your response when you get this sense that they think they might be able to smile their way out of something?*

- J: My response is to tell them they're not gonna smile their way out of this one and then they'll laugh

John Weathers, Interview 10, Lines 261-73

This awareness of the gender occupying an important place in teacher-student relationships was mirrored by Nikki in the girls' group interview:

N: [Teachers] judge boys. Youse find it easier to judge boys and we find it easier to manipulate you into giving us the marks that we want

Nikki, Interview 9, Lines 81-2

Both extracts illustrate the participants' awareness of the pervasive influence of gender on their classroom interactions. Although they were not always able to articulate their reasons, several students stated that they felt things would be different if they had a female teacher, and that their relationship with Mr Weathers differed significantly from those with their other teachers, some male and some female. Donna, for example, stated that "If we had Mrs O'Leary for a teacher she'd give all the girls As and all the boys Bs" (Interview 10, Line 72). Marcus said of one female teacher, "I don't like her. Cos she picks on me a lot, I don't know why but she just does. I always get in trouble for people behind me" (Interview 7, Lines 48-50).

2. CPAQ Results

On the day of the CPAQ administration all 16 students who were present took part. The response set was complete (each student filled out all questionnaire items with no omissions or duplications). Scores for each student on the M (masculinity, or *instrumentality*) and F (femininity, or *expressiveness*) scales appear in Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1: CPAQ M and F Scores Sorted in Descending Order

<i>M-scale (Instrumentality)</i>			<i>F-scale (Expressiveness)</i>		
Name	Gender	Score	Name	Gender	Score
George	M	23	Scott	M	24
Alex	M	22	Marcus	M	24
Jeremy	M	22	Donna	F	24
Scott	M	21	Jane	F	24
Nikki	F	20	Sarah	F	23
Darren	M	19	Glen	M	23
Marcus	M	19	Belinda	F	22
Glen	M	19	Russell	M	21
Lisa	F	19	Nikki	F	20
Sarah	F	18	Gary	M	20
Dave	M	18	Lisa	F	20
Belinda	F	18	Alex	M	16
Jane	F	18	Darren	M	15
Donna	F	17	Dave	M	14
Russell	M	16	George	M	14
Gary	M	15	Jeremy	M	12

On both the M-scale (sample mean=19, SD=2.19) and the F-scale (sample mean=19.75, SD=4.18) results were evenly spread across the range. There were no obvious outliers. Because of the narrow distribution - many students' results did not differ markedly from others' - comparisons could only be made between people at opposite extremes of each scale. However, connections existed between the CPAQ and the other, qualitative data.

At the end of the qualitative data coding process, the predetermined *instrumentality* and *expressiveness* codes had been employed at numerous points in the data set, thus providing linkage between the qualitative data and the results of the CPAQ. As one example of this code in use, the following passage from the interview with Marcus was coded as “expressiveness (-)”. Negative and positive signs were employed to denote the relative strength (+) or absence (-) of the attributes.

M: I don't have a very good imagination

I: *What's it like for you writing a story?*

M: It's kind of difficult cos if I get an idea I can't really express it. But if someone else gives me an idea, I still can't do it, but if someone starts me off like say the first paragraph, then I can change it all

Marcus, Interview 7, Lines 173-7

At the conclusion of the analysis, these codes predominantly contributed to the themes of *multiplicity* and *reading and writing gendered texts*. They contributed to the former theme because of the wide variations among the boys in terms of instrumentality and expressiveness. It was clear that for some boys instrumentality was central to their masculinity, for some this was accompanied by a dearth of expressiveness, and for others expressiveness was an important attribute. Thus the sense that there was a multiplicity of possible masculinities was reinforced. The latter theme - *reading and writing gendered texts* - was informed by these codes borrowed from the CPAQ because it was evident that, for some boys, evaluations of instrumentality and expressiveness were utilised in their reading of gendered texts. For example, two boys in the study made the statement that boys might like more “hands on” activities in English but girls would not. The sense was that, for these boys, instrumentality was a masculine but not feminine trait.

A final application of the CPAQ results was to compare subject responses to individual questionnaire items with statements in interview transcripts to confirm or triangulate data and findings. For example, with boys who stated that they liked working with their hands or doing Technical Studies, comparison was made with their score obtained on CPAQ item one, “I am *not* good at fixing things or working with tools”. Claims that given individuals were leaders within their peer groups were checked against responses to the CPAQ item, “I am often a leader among my friends”. Beyond this, the *overall* scores obtained using the CPAQ were of little application to the study because of the difficulty of mapping these numbers onto the rest of the qualitative data. The CPAQ purports to measure a static, fixed personality trait. This conceptualisation is incompatible with the findings of the study about dynamism and active construction. The overall score provided by such an instrument can claim, at best, to provide a snapshot of respondent attitudes at a particular moment in time.

3. Contrasts with the Literature

In the course of the data collection and analysis I encountered some “counter-expectational” data (McCracken 1988:31). According to McCracken, “The investigator who is well versed in the literature

now has a set of expectations the data can defy. Counter-expectational data ... signal the existence of unfulfilled theoretical assumptions, and these are ... the very origins of intellectual innovation" (p 31). In the case of the present study, the following counter-expectational data were most evident.

No boy in the study constructed English as feminised, effeminate or for homosexuals only. No boy made a statement such as, "English is for gays", or, "English is for girls". Only two boys said that girls liked English more than boys. This runs counter to the predictions of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, epitomised by the oft-quoted statement of a male secondary English student in Martino's study: "Most guys who like English are faggots" (Martino 1995b:354).

It would appear that the boys in the study felt they were able to negotiate a path through the 8B4 English classroom that permitted them to preserve their masculinity intact. There was no sense of irreconcilable conflict or tension between their masculinity and subject English. It seems that the 8B4 class was accommodating of the variety of masculine subjectivities that were taken up by the male students.

Related to this is the finding that almost all students in the 8B4 class viewed English with an attitude that was, if not positive, then not overtly negative. In response to the question, "What do you think of English overall?", all students interviewed responded in terms that could be considered positive. As interviews proceeded, students who did make criticisms limited them to specific components of English, such as particular texts or types of activity. Students may have moderated their opinions due to perceptions about the interview and my role as interviewer. As Comber (1999) argues, "Young people are very skeptical of adult requests for their opinions, reading our invitations as about fulfilling our intentions" (p 46). I assured respondents of the confidentiality of the interviews and emphasised that I was interested in their opinions and views, whether positive or otherwise. Despite this it is possible that students constructed their response in ways that seemed appropriate yet which may only loosely reflect their underlying, private perceptions. However, the data contained no evidence of this.

These counter-expectational findings raise some important questions: What is it about John Weathers and the 8B4 class that allows these boys to view English without negativity? What is happening around their reading and writing of gendered texts in the 8B4 environment? How would the boys think (and act) if they had a different teacher, or if they had encountered John Weathers not in Year 8, but at a later stage of their schooling?

The data were collected in the particular context of a Year 8 English classroom, a context which constituted the first exposure to subject English for many students. Several boys stated that they did not know what "English" was until they arrived at Southwoods High School. Their primary school experiences had been of spelling, word lists, silent reading and grammar. Students came to 8B4 with few preconceptions about English so *a major source* for their ideas about subject English was their experience of English in John Weather's class. This was clearly communicated in the girls' interview:

L: We don't know what English is

N: Yeah

L: Except what Mr Weathers [has] given us so we don't actually know what else you could do

B: Cos we didn't do English as a subject in primary school, it's just like spelling tests sometimes

Lisa, Nikki & Belinda, Interview 10, Lines 250-4

Students then arrived at their personal constructions of English, their notions of what English is and should be, in the context of the 8B4 classroom. As already stated, this was a context in which relationships were central. Furthermore, it was a context characterised by considerable flexibility and accommodation for the reading and writing of different, gendered texts. As described in Chapter 3, the classes were characterised by a high degree of variety and student autonomy. John Weathers said:

J: I guess compared with a lot of English teachers I think my range of what's permissible [in terms of content] in the class is fairly broad ... The other side of things [is] kind of breaking of routines

John Weathers, Interview 10, Line 433-6

A clear example of how John's flexibility permitted a student to write a gendered self-as-text - one that was acceptable to that student - occurred at the end of the data collection. The student in question, Scott, described how he did not like people watching him while he read, and how his personal strategy for dealing with this was accommodated by Mr Weathers:

S: Well, when Mr Weathers tells us to read our books, like most of the time I just go somewhere on my own cos I don't like people watching me and all that. Sometime's I'll go under the desk and that and just read where no one can watch me reading

Scott, Interview 4, Lines 84-7

However, this was not flexibility without limits. There were clear boundaries placed upon what sort of behaviour and submitted work would be accepted. Two examples, one from either side of the boundary, serve to illustrate. The first was a modified fairy tale by one of the boys entitled, *Little Red Riding Whore*. The boy was told that such work would not be accepted because it was offensive, and was required to start again. A second example which evoked a different response is described by John below. In this case John reacted enthusiastically to one boy's creation of a text influenced by popular culture (see Doecke & McClenaghan 1998:49):

J: Dave did some wonderful writing that I'd be horrified if parents saw because it's full of swearing. But he had the rap, the black hood, he had the dialect down, he had the situation down, he had the attitudes down. It was just an amazing piece of writing in terms of that genre. Just that it's not an acceptable genre is a whole other issue but I was able to give Dave a lot of praise in that and a lot of interest. He may have started to do it as an aggressive thing or as a confronting thing but I think that's the way. It's almost a Judo principle, you don't use force, you use their force to achieve aims

John Weathers, Interview 10, 600-8

Clearly, John's approach worked for the boys in the 8B4 class. Equally clearly, it is by no means a perfect solution. The 8B4 boys may have held non-negative attitudes towards English as a whole, but the unproblematised permission to read and write gendered texts, even within limitations, can potentially produce problematic consequences. It may have implications for both boys and girls in terms of permitting the continuance of limiting gender stereotypes. Furthermore, there are still the problematic issues of hierarchy and hegemony, competition and harassment to be considered (Australian Council for Education Research 1998). Nevertheless, the acceptance of English by boys in 8B4 suggests that further, more in-depth, research is desirable to explore whether some of the phenomena observed in the class may be suggestive of one way forward.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

1. Summary of Findings

The major research questions for the study probed the ways in which masculinities were taken up (constructed) within the context of the 8B4 English classroom. Specifically, they asked:

- How are masculinities played out in and shaped, constrained or enabled by subject English?
- What is it about being "masculine" that mediates students' relationships to subject English?
- What is it about the way subject English is constructed that interacts with being masculine?

Within the limitations of the study, the research findings illuminated these questions in various ways. Chapter 6 discussed the seven major themes identified in the data collected from the 8B4 class. The data revealed a multiplicity of masculine subject positions. These were hierarchically arranged, relational and context dependent. There were elements of dynamism in these masculinities, with boys producing different subjectivities in different contexts. This dynamism existed on a moment-to-moment basis, as well as over a longer, historical period. The data supported the claims of authors (for example, Connell 1989) who theorise a connection between authority and the construction of masculinity. The theme that emerged most strongly was that of reading and writing gendered texts, which demonstrated the pervasive way in which gender was continually "written" (produced or constructed) and "read" (interpreted or evaluated). The data also showed a prevailing "culture of underachievement" which many of the boys in 8B4 embraced, at least publicly. Another theme emerging from the data was the centrality of relationships, wherein the quality of the relationships between the class teacher and the students was shown to interact significantly with the ongoing construction of masculinity by boys in 8B4. The gendered aspects of these teacher-student relationships constituted the seventh and final theme. In addition to these themes there was a number of counter-expectational findings that contrasted with the reviewed literature. In particular, there was a notable absence of negativity towards English amongst the boys in 8B4. It was suggested that this was due in part to the flexibility and accommodation of the class teacher and the resultant construction of English.

Efforts were made throughout the study to maintain an appreciation of the contextual factors impinging on the investigation. This began at the broadest level with the review of the sociopolitical and historical context for the study (Chapter 2) and continued through data collection and analysis, where the research design enabled the detailed exploration of the local class context. This thesis as a whole and each of the findings in Chapter 6 emphasise that masculinities are actively constructed in contexts. The major contribution of this thesis, then, is that it provides a *contextualised* exploration of masculinity, with particular respect to the English classroom.

2. Implications and Possibilities for Future Research Arising from Study

While positivistic, experimental research concerns itself with hypothesis *testing*, qualitative studies such as this thesis seek to *generate* working hypotheses (Silverman 1995:21) for testing in other contexts (Guba 1981). I discuss here three major implications that arise from the study within the specific context of the 8B4 class. There is scope for future research in other contexts to explore whether these implications are relevant at different schools, in different English classes and with students of other ages.

Pervasiveness of Gender

The data suggested that gender played a pervasive role in classroom activity. Students were reading and writing gendered texts on a continual basis. Gender influenced their relationships with each other, with their teacher and with the curriculum. I strongly argue that teachers require an awareness of this permeation of the classroom by gender. It is my hope that the findings of this thesis will convince teachers and readers of this thesis of the need for such understandings. The delimited nature of the study opens up possible avenues for future research. For example, further studies could comprise detailed explorations of femininity as well as masculinity; the mediating role of class, ethnicity, locality and so forth with respect to gender and English could be investigated.

Critical Awareness

I put forward that the awareness of gender referred to above needs to be a *critical awareness*, one that fully appreciates the importance of context and the dynamic nature of gender construction. As the data and other authors suggest (eg Connell 1995; Frank 1995), masculinities are always changing. They are dynamic. Contexts too can change. Haywood & Mac an Ghail (1996) argue that the interplay between masculinities and contexts can be complex: "As the curriculum changes, so will masculinities [but] the interplay between the curriculum and masculinity does not work in a deterministic way; students can effectively renegotiate curriculum agendas" (p 58). As such, this critical awareness needs to be moment-by-moment. Furthermore, this critical awareness needs to beware of potential pitfalls. As Mills (1997) and others (eg Gilbert & Gilbert 1998b; McClean 1995, 1997a, n. d.; UNESCO 1997) argue, the most desirable way forward is not necessarily to make schools more "boy friendly" (Mills 1997:22). Rather, a critique of the role of schools in producing and maintaining particular constructions of masculinity is needed. A critical, circumspect view of gender that appreciates the full complexity of the issues involved and adopts an approach to equity that seeks to better the educational outcomes for all boys and for all girls is required.

The Construction of Contexts

Central to this thesis is the notion that masculinities are situated phenomena; they are taken up within, shaped, constrained or enabled by their surrounding contexts. I argue there is a need to recognise that the contexts of different classes are *constructed*, and that the teacher of a given class can play a significant role in that construction. In the case of the 8B4 class, John Weathers contributed to a context in which none of the boys espoused negative attitudes towards English, contrary to expectations created

by the literature reviewed for this thesis. The data suggests that this may be due in part to his accommodation and flexibility within limits, and to the centrality of relationships in his teaching. I therefore argue that teachers should seek to engage in critical reflection on their own role in constructing the contexts of their classes.

Due to the delimitation of this thesis there is considerable scope for future, broader research. An obvious question is how transferrable are these findings and implications to other contexts? If my research design were replicated elsewhere, what findings would arise? This thesis has particularly focussed on the interplay between masculinity and subject English. There is scope for more extensive research that looks more broadly at the role of race, class, (dis)ability, locality, sexuality as well as gender. If a central finding of this thesis was that students were continuously and pervasively engaging in the reading and writing of gendered texts, then might it also be the case that these texts are racialised, classed and sexualised?

3. Evaluation of Research

The delimitations and limitations of this research were discussed in Chapter 4. This section reviews the weaknesses and strengths of the study and briefly summarises the steps taken to build trustworthiness in the findings.

Weaknesses

The first weakness was my own inexperience as a beginning researcher, particularly important given the role of “investigator as instrument” (Guba 1981:75; Thorpe 1999). In addition to this, I was a solitary researcher, and this limited the amount of data that could be collected, and the amount of time available for analysis. Related to this, it could be argued that a third weakness was the plethora of data generated in the study as the sheer bulk of information was difficult to process.

Strengths

Conversely, it could also be argued that the volume of data was in fact a strength. It ensured that there was sufficient data to generate “rich” or “thick” findings, and to generate themes from these. There was large scope for triangulation within and between data sources. Each source made a contribution to the study. The interviews were valuable because they permitted an exploration of participants’ perceptions with respect to masculinities and subject English. Prolonged, in-class observation not only triangulated the interview data but provided an opportunity to view the dynamic construction of gender in the real context of the study. The documentary data made a supplementary contribution to the research, embodying an area in which boys wrote gendered texts (in the literal sense). Finally, the CPAQ - although subject to certain limitations in the context of naturalistic inquiry - was beneficial to the study because it provided additional triangulation, and enriched the theoretical basis for analysis by contributing the codes of *instrumentality* and *expressiveness*.

My review of literature covered many studies of masculinity, but this thesis differs from these in several aspects. It explored how masculinities are constructed within the English classroom, as opposed to within schools more generally. It makes a contribution to the research literature because of its emphasis on context. It situates the construction of masculinities within the specific context of the Year 8 English classroom, and it brings in a variety of influences and considerations to the analysis.

Trustworthiness

Chapters 4 and 5 drew on a variety of methodological literature to ensure that the research procedures were rigorous and well theorised. Lincoln & Guba (1985) describe criteria that can be used to establish trust and confidence in the results of naturalistic research. These criteria - credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - correspond to the positivistic constructs of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity respectively (Isaac & Michael 1995). Table 7.1 below summarises the major features of the research procedures that were incorporated to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings.

Table 7.1: Treatment of Trustworthiness in Study (after Guba 1981:83)

<i>Credibility</i>	Prolonged engagement at site Persistent observation Peer debriefing (with supervisors) Triangulation (between data sources and data collection methods) Collection of referential adequacy materials (interview recordings, documents) Member checks (with students and class teacher)
<i>Transferability</i>	Collection of thick descriptive data
<i>Dependability</i>	Overlap methods (different methods used in tandem) Audit Trail (raw data, field journal)
<i>Confirmability</i>	Triangulation (between sources and methods) Practice reflexivity (field journal, statement of researcher position)

4. Concluding Statements

This research was made possible by the participation of John Weathers and the students of the 8B4 class. John's generosity was considerable in allowing me to access his class for such a long period, and in submitting his professional practice to such prolonged, intensive scrutiny. It was John's willingness to become involved in the research and engage in collaborative reflection as the study proceeded that resulted in such a rich, voluminous body of data for analysis.

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Appendix A

Letters of Introduction and Consent Forms

Summary of Included Letters and Forms

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Letter of Introduction to Parents

Dear Parent/Caregiver

This letter is to introduce Greg Hurrell, an honours student in the school of Education at Flinders University. He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of masculinity and subject English.

I would be most grateful if you could assist in this project by giving permission for your child to participate. Mr Hurrell proposes to make observations within the 8B4 class during his forthcoming teaching prac and administer a questionnaire to all students. In addition he intends to make recorded interviews with and collect work samples from male students only.

Any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis or other publications. Either you or your child are entirely free to discontinue participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since Mr Hurrell intends to make a tape recording of the interview he will seek your consent (on the attached form) to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications on the condition that your child's name or identity will not be revealed. The recording will be made available only to Mr Hurrell's two supervisors; Associate Professor Alan Russell and myself.

If you consent for your child to participate in this or any other part of the study please indicate this on the form and return it to school.

Any enquires you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 3330.

This study has been approved by the Department of Education, Training and Employment and the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University. The secretary of this committee can be contacted on 8201 3513.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Wilkinson

Consent Form (sent to parents)

Consent Form

As the legal parent or guardian of, I hereby consent to his/her involvement in Greg Hurrell's research project on masculinity and subject English.

I have read and understood the letter of introduction on the above project and understand that my child is being asked to fill out a questionnaire, provide work samples and participate in a recorded interview.

I understand that my child may not directly benefit by taking part in this research.

I understand that while information gained in the study may be published, my child will not be identified and all individual information will remain confidential.

I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any stage up until the end of the collection of data.

I understand that there will be no payment for my child taking part in this study.

I am aware that I should retain a copy of the letter of introduction and consent form for future reference.

I consent to my child being involved in this project.

Signature:

Date:

Relationship to child:

Name of child:

Letter of Introduction to School Principal

π

Mr Wayne Smith
Principal
Southwoods High School
Main Road, Southwoods
SA 1234

Dear Mr Smith

This letter is to introduce Greg Hurrell, an honours student in the school of Education at Flinders University. He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of masculinity and subject English.

I would be most grateful if you could assist in this project by granting Mr Hurrell an opportunity to conduct a portion of this research at Northwest High School. The proposed research involves the following:

- Mr Hurrell observing one Year 8 English class during his forthcoming teaching practicum, with the possibility of additional observations in Term 3
- Mr Hurrell collecting samples of work from consenting students in that class
- Consenting students from that class completing a questionnaire
- Consenting students from that class participating in a recorded interview
- Mr Hurrell conducting a recorded interview with the class teacher with given consent

As Mr Hurrell will explain, any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis or other publications. Participants are entirely free to discontinue their participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions. There will be no adverse consequences of non-participation.

Since Mr Hurrell intends to make a tape recording of the interview he will seek consent from students' parents/guardians to record the interview and use the recording in preparing the thesis or other publications. The name and identity of participants will not be revealed. The recording will not be made available to any other person. A sample consent form is attached.

Any enquires you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 3330.

This study has been approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University. The secretary of this committee can be contacted on 8201 3513.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Wilkinson

Letter of Introduction to Class Teacher

Mr John Weathers
Southwoods High School
Main Road, Southwoods
SA 1234

Dear John

This letter is to introduce Greg Hurrell, an honours student in the school of Education at Flinders University. He is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis on the subject of masculinity and subject English.

I would be most grateful if you could assist in this project by granting Mr Hurrell an opportunity to conduct a portion of this research in your 8B4 English class at Northwnt High School. The proposed research involves the following:

- Mr Hurrell observing 8B4 during his forthcoming teaching practicum, with the possibility of additional observations in Term 3
- Mr Hurrell tape recording an interview with you
- Mr Hurrell collecting samples of work from consenting students in that class
- Consenting students from that class completing a questionnaire
- Consenting students from that class participating in a recorded interview

As Mr Hurrell will explain, any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and none of the participants will be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis or other publications. Participants (both you and the students) are entirely free to discontinue their participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions. There will be no adverse consequences of non-participation.

Since Mr Hurrell intends to make a tape recording of the interview he will seek your consent to record the interview and use the recording in preparing the thesis or other publications. Your name and identity will not be revealed. The recording will be made available only to Mr Hurrell's two supervisors: Associate Professor Alan Russell and myself. Transcriptions of the interview will be provided to you for checking. You will have the right to delete passages, clarify comments made in writing, or change constructions which cloud your meaning. Within the timeline of the project, Mr Hurrell will make every attempt to show you a draft of the thesis.

Any enquires you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 8201 3330.

This study has been approved by the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University. The secretary of this committee can be contacted on 8201 3513.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Lyn Wilkinson

Consent Form (for class teacher)

Consent Form for Observation of Professional Activity

I hereby give my consent to Greg Hurrell, an honours student in the School of Education at Flinders University and whose signature appears below, to record observations of my teaching activities as part of a study of masculinity and subject English.

I give permission for the use of these data and of other information which I have agreed may be obtained or requested in the writing up of the study, subject to the following conditions:

- Any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and I will not be identifiable in the resulting thesis or any other publications
- The data will be made available only to the researcher's two supervisors: Associate Professor Alan Russell and Lyn Wilkinson
- Interview transcript(s) will be provided to me for checking. I have the right to make deletions, provide written clarification of comments made, and change constructions which may cloud meaning
- I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without adverse consequences

My participation in this study is voluntary, and I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature:
(participant)

Date:

Signature:
(researcher)

Appendix B

Pilot Interview Schedules

Summary of Included schedules

(1) Round 1 of Pilot Interviews (20 August 1999)	80
(2) Round 2 of Pilot Interviews (24 August 1999)	82
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Schedule for Round 1 of Pilot Interviews (20 August 1999)

Preamble:

I am doing a research project at this school and I am interested in three things:

- English
- Boys
- Girls

and the way these things relate to each other.

I will actually be doing this project with 8B4, but before I do that I want to have a practice run with you to make sure I am asking the right sorts of questions. I'd like to ask you some questions about these areas and make a recording of our conversation. This is not a test. This recording will not be made available to anybody apart from my two supervisors at uni. Your confidentiality will be protected: that means that your name and identity will be kept secret. If there are any questions you don't want to answer then we can skip over them. If you wish to withdraw from the interview at any time you can do that too. Although I have a list of questions that I'd like to ask you, please feel free to ask any questions of me. My aim is to uncover as much information as possible, so the best way you could help me is to talk in detail. Say as much as you can about each question.

Questions:

- So how long have you attended this school?
- Now, remember that no one else will hear your answers. What do you think of this school?
- Which schools have you been to before Southwoods?
- I'd now like to ask you some questions about English. Who teaches you for English?
- What sort of work do you do in English?
- I know that there are a few things that get done in English. I'd like to ask you what you think of these things. For instance, reading novels, writing stories, writing play scripts, doing poetry, giving speeches, spelling, comprehension. Which of these activities is your most favourite?
- What is it that you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What about boys in other classes and at other schools?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say?
- Other classes, other schools?
- Which sort of activity is your least favourite?
- What don't you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- The girls?
- Now I'd like to find out about the sorts of texts that get used in English. Could you tell me the things you've read or watched for English in this term?
- Do you do any reading outside of English?
- Do you do any reading outside of school?
- What sort of things do boys read out of school?
- Girls?
- What about writing? What sort of purposes do you use writing for outside of school?
- What about other boys?
- Girls?
- Now I'd like to ask you about how well you think you do in English. How hard or easy do you think English is for you?
- What things can you do best in English? In other words, what are your strengths in English?
- What about the other boys in your class? What are they good at?
- What about the girls?
- What are the things that you find difficult in English?
- What about the other boys?
- The girls?

- Who do you think likes English better? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who really likes English?
- Who doesn't like it?
- Who do you think tends to do well in English? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who is really good at English?
- What about someone who struggles?
- How do you think that boys behave in the English class?
- How does this compare to girls?
- Have you had any female English teachers here or at primary school?
- What's good about having a female English teacher?
- What's good about having a male English teacher?
- Are English teachers any different from teachers of other subjects?
- What are your favourite subjects at school?
- Your least favourite subjects?
- What would most boys say is their favourite subject?
- What would most girls say?
- What is different about English from other subjects?
- You've told me a bit about what is different. I wonder could you tell me what is similar about English and other subjects?
- Now I am interested in asking some general questions about the differences between boys and girls. What do you see as the main differences between girls and boys.
- How do boys spend their time?
- What would happen to a boy at school if he acted very differently from other boys?
- What would happen to a girl if she acted differently?
- Some people say that there are ways to be a "real boy". What do you think it takes to be a "real boy"?
- Do you know any boys who aren't like that? What are they like?
- What do you think the benefits of being a boy are?
- What about the disadvantages of being a boy?
- To finish off with I'd like to ask you a couple questions about English. If you could change English so that you enjoyed it more, what changes would you make?
- What changes would you make that would help you to be more successful?
- Do you think girls would enjoy that too?

Conclusion:

- Thankyou
- Feedback

Schedule for Round 2 of Pilot Interviews (24 August 1999)

Preamble:

I am doing a research project at this school and I am interested in three things:

- English
- Boys
- Girls

and the way these things relate to each other.

I will actually be doing this project with 8B4, but before I do that I want to have a practice run with you to make sure I am asking the right sorts of questions. I'd like to ask you some questions about these areas and make a recording of our conversation. This is not a test. This recording will not be made available to anybody apart from my two supervisors at uni. Your confidentiality will be protected: that means that your name and identity will be kept secret. If there are any questions you don't want to answer then we can skip over them. If you wish to withdraw from the interview at any time you can do that too. Although I have a list of questions that I'd like to ask you, please feel free to ask any questions of me. My aim is to uncover as much information as possible, so the best way you could help me is to talk in detail. Say as much as you can about each question.

Questions:

- So how long have you attended this school?
- What do you think of this school?
- I'd now like to ask you some questions about English. Who teaches you for English?
- What sort of work do you do in English?
- I know that there are a few things that get done in English. I'd like to ask you what you think of these things. For instance, reading novels, writing stories, writing play scripts, doing poetry, giving speeches, spelling, comprehension. Which of these activities is your most favourite?
- What is it that you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What about boys in other classes and at other schools?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say?
- Which sort of activity is your least favourite?
- What don't you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say about this?
- Now I'd like to find out about the sorts of texts that get used in English. Could you tell me the things you've read or watched for English in this term?
- Do you do any reading in subjects other than English?
- Do you do any reading outside of school that's not for homework?
- What sort of things do boys read out of school?
- What sort of things do you think girls read out of school?
- Now I'd like to ask you about how well you think you do in English. How hard or easy do you think English is for you?
- What things can you do best in English? In other words, what are your strengths in English?
- What about the other boys in your class? What are they good at?
- What are the girls in your class good at in English?
- What are the things that you find difficult in English?
- What do you think the other boys find difficult in English?
- What do you think the girls in your class find difficult in English?
- Who do you think likes English better? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who really likes English?
- Who doesn't like English in your class?
- Who do you think tends to do well in English? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who is really good at English?

- What about someone who struggles at English?
- How do you think that boys behave in the English class?
- How do girls behave in the English class?
- Are English teachers any different from teachers of other subjects?
- What are your favourite subjects at school?
- What are your least favourite subjects?
- What would most boys say is their favourite subject?
- What would most girls say is their favourite subject?
- What is different about English from other subjects?
- You've told me a bit about what is different. I wonder could you tell me what is similar about English and other subjects?
- Now I am interested in asking some general questions about the differences between boys and girls. What do you see as the main differences between girls and boys.
- How do boys spend their time?
- What would happen to a boy at school if he acted very differently from other boys?
- What would happen to a girl if she acted differently from other girls?
- Some people say that there are ways to be a "real boy". What do you think it takes to be a "real boy"?
- Do you know any boys who aren't like that? What are they like?
- What do you think the benefits of being a boy are?
- What about the disadvantages of being a boy?
- To finish off with I'd like to ask you a couple questions about English. If you could change English so that you enjoyed it more, what changes would you make?
- What changes would you make that would help you to be more successful?
- Do you think girls would enjoy that too?

Conclusion:

- Thankyou
- Feedback

Schedule for Round 3 Pilot Interviews (12 September 1999)

Preamble:

I am doing a research project at this school and I am interested in three things:

- English
- Boys
- Girls

and the way these things relate to each other.

I will actually be doing this project with 8B4, but before I do that I want to have a practice run with you to make sure I am asking the right sorts of questions. I'd like to ask you some questions about these areas and make a recording of our conversation. This is not a test. This recording will not be made available to anybody apart from my two supervisors at uni. Your confidentiality will be protected: that means that your name and identity will be kept secret. If there are any questions you don't want to answer then we can skip over them. If you wish to withdraw from the interview at any time you can do that too. Although I have a list of questions that I'd like to ask you, please feel free to ask any questions of me. My aim is to uncover as much information as possible, so the best way you could help me is to talk in detail. Say as much as you can about each question.

Questions:

- So how long have you attended this school?
- What do you think of this school?
- What are your favourite subjects at school?
- What are your least favourite subjects?
- I'd now like to ask you some questions about English. Who teaches you for English?
- What sort of work do you do in English?
- I know that there are a few things that get done in English. I'd like to ask you what you think of these things. For instance, reading novels, writing stories, writing play scripts, doing poetry, giving speeches, spelling, comprehension. Which of these activities is your most favourite?
- What is it that you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What about boys in other classes and at other schools?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say?
- Which sort of activity is your least favourite?
- What don't you like about it?
- What do you think the other boys in your class would say about this?
- What do you think the girls in your class would say about this?
- Now I'd like to find out about the sorts of texts that get used in English. Could you tell me the things you've read or watched for English in this term?

[Response to sample texts: What do you think of this book/anthology/magazine?]

- Do you do any reading in subjects other than English?
- Do you do any reading outside of school that's not for homework?
- What sort of things do boys read out of school?
- What sort of things do you think girls read out of school?
- Now I'd like to ask you about how well you think you do in English. How hard or easy do you think English is for you?
- What things can you do best in English? In other words, what are your strengths in English?
- What about the other boys in your class? What are they good at?
- What are the girls in your class good at in English?
- What are the things that you find difficult in English?
- What do you think the other boys find difficult in English?
- What do you think the girls in your class find difficult in English?

- Who do you think likes English better? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who really likes English?
- Who doesn't like English in your class?
- Who do you think tends to do well in English? Girls or boys?
- Can you give me an example of someone in your class who is really good at English?
- What about someone who struggles at English?
- How do you think that boys behave in the English class?
- How do girls behave in the English class?
- Now I am interested in asking some general questions about the differences between boys and girls. What do you see as the main differences between girls and boys.
- How do boys spend their time?
- What would happen to a boy at school if he acted very differently from other boys?
- Do you know any boys who aren't like that? What are they like?
- To finish off with I'd like to ask you a couple questions about English. If you could change English so that you enjoyed it more, what changes would you make?
- What changes would you make that would help you to be more successful?
- Do you think girls would enjoy that too?

Conclusion:

- Thankyou
- Feedback

Comprehension

Spelling Test

Reading a novel

Writing a response to a novel

Watching a film or television show

Working in groups

Working alone

Writing a book review

Writing an essay

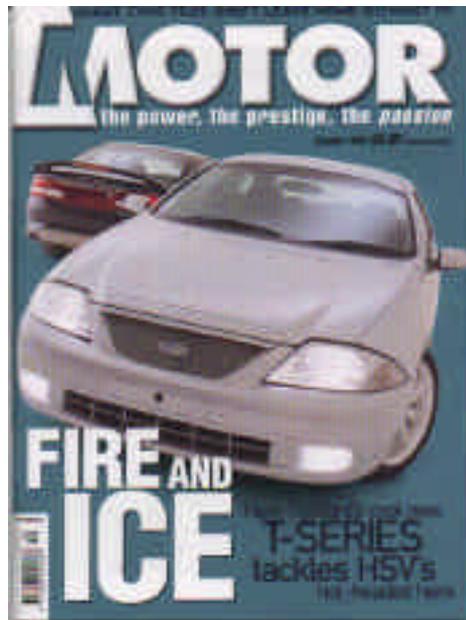
Writing a story

Poetry

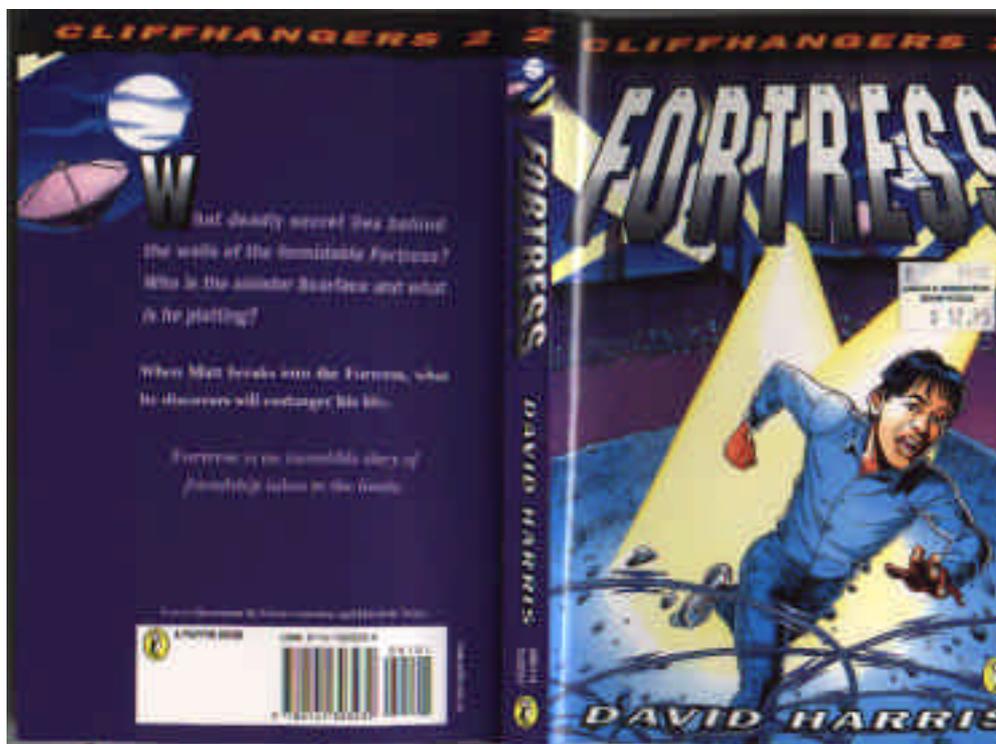
Giving a speech

Texts Used in Interviews

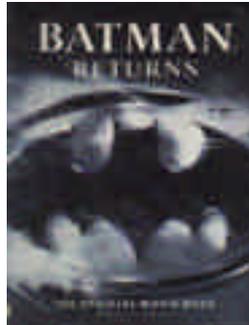
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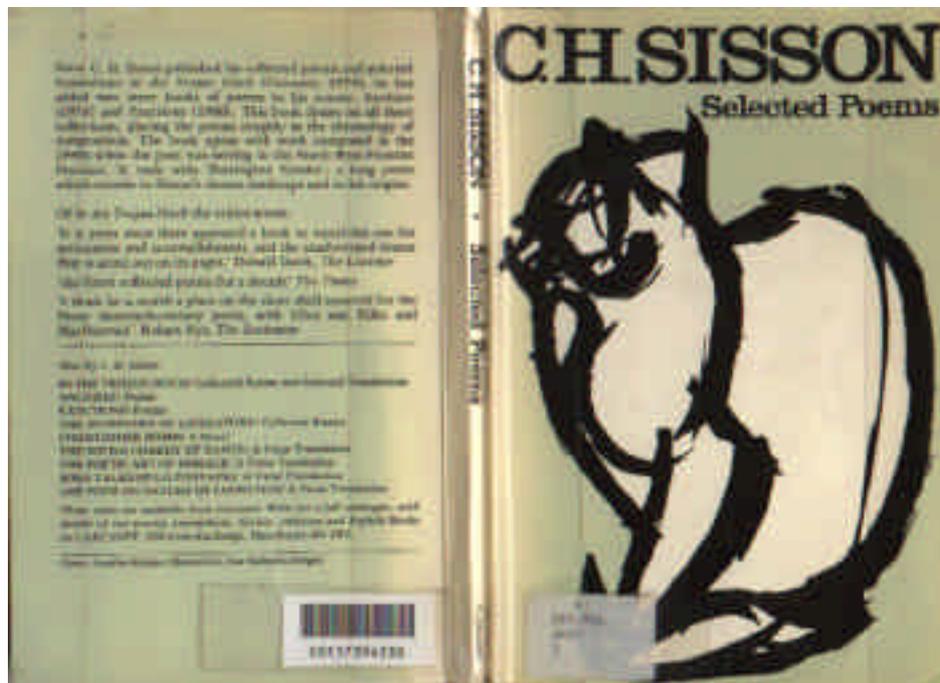
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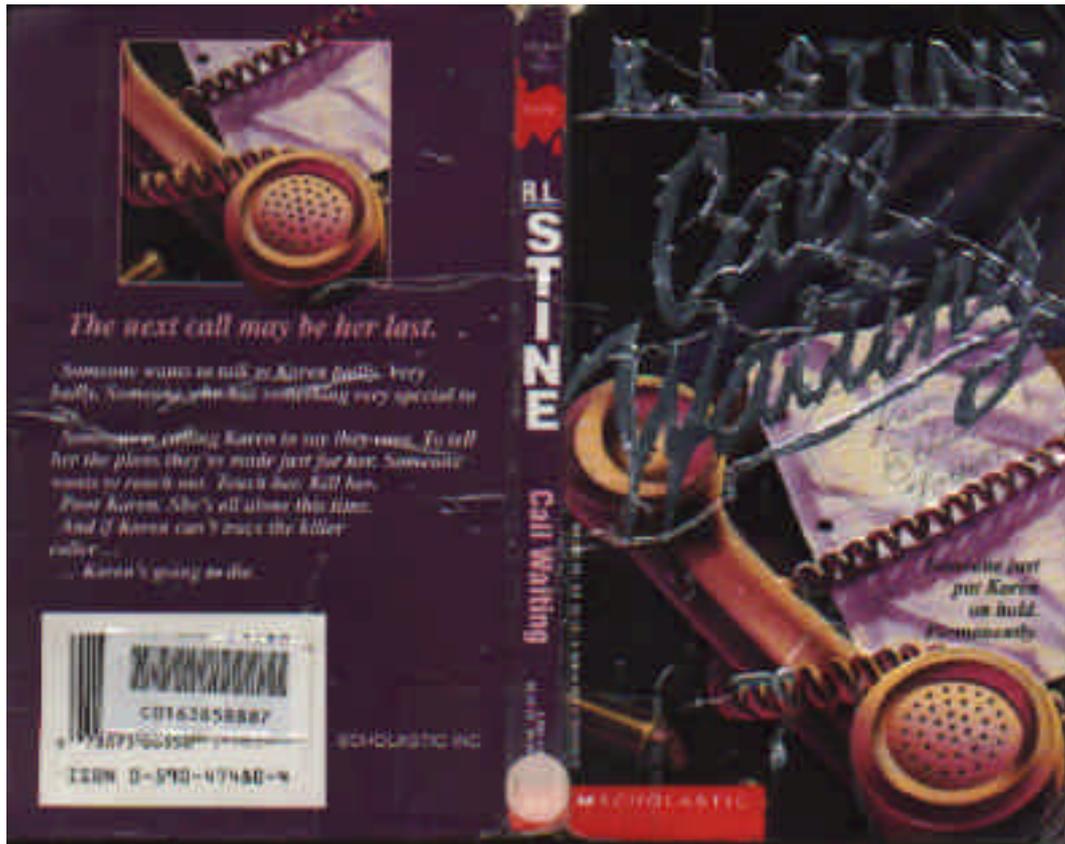
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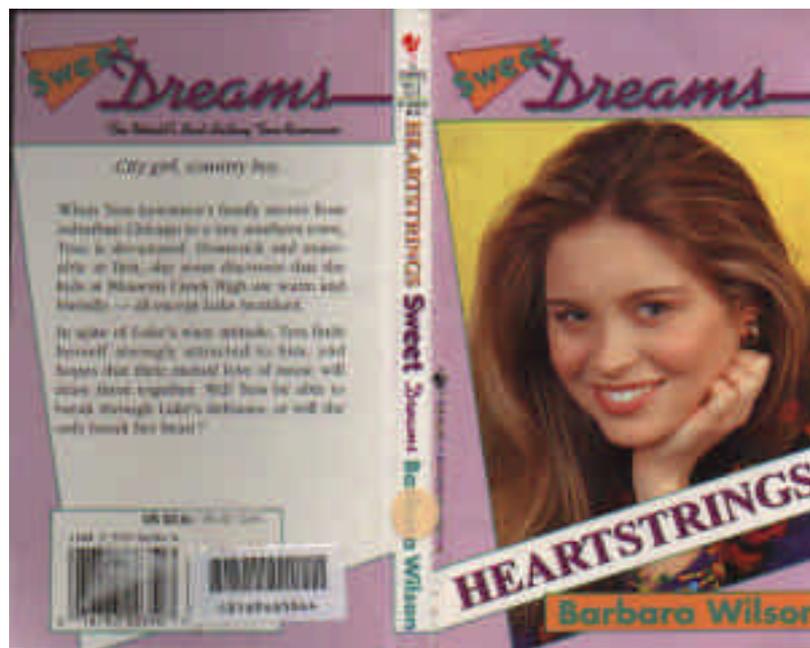
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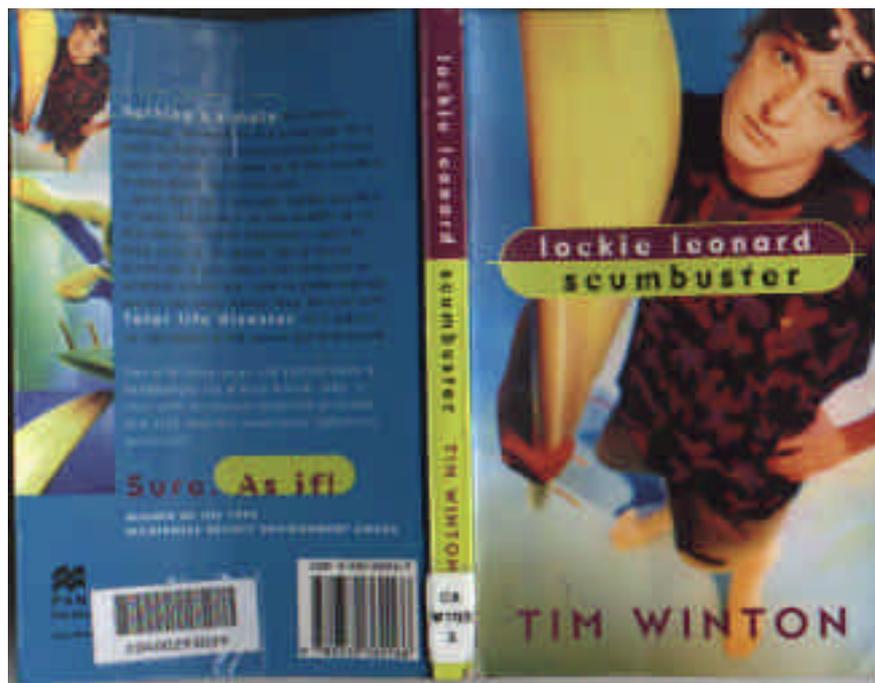
Stine, RL (1994) *Call Waiting*, New York: Scholastic.



Wilson, Barbara (1994) *Heartstrings*, New York: Bantam Books.



Winton, Tim (1993) *Lockie Leonard: Scumbuster*, Sydney: Pan Macmillan.



Interview Sheet: Scenarios

[ACTIVITY - Scenarios]

(1) Corey is one of the tallest people in his class. He's very good at sport, and because he's bigger than most other boys he's a powerful football player. You can tell he's starting to take an interest in girls because they talk to him a lot and he seems to like it. He's actually pretty popular with the girls.

Corey says he hates school but that's not exactly true because there are a few subjects he likes. He likes tech and sometimes he likes science, but not all the time. He says he doesn't like reading. He only reads when the teacher makes him do it. At home he reads magazines. He doesn't really try in English. He spends a lot of time mucking around, avoiding work and looking for excuses to get out of the classroom.

His hobbies are sport (mostly football), skateboarding and music. His music is pretty heavy - his parents hate it but it is popular with a lot of other students.

(2) Kevin only has one friend at school. He gets picked on a lot because he has glasses and is pretty fat. He used to spend all his lunchtimes in the classroom but now the teachers won't let him. He hates going outside because he often gets teased and he's very unco so there's no way he can play sport. So he just sits outside reading books. It's usually Doctor Who books that he reads. Sometimes he reads big fat novels that are written for adults. Some people reckon that he's only *pretending* to read those because they're so complex.

You can tell he wants to be the 'teacher's pet' because he's a bit of a square. He always gets his work done on time. He usually gets it done early in fact. He almost never mucks around in class.

He only has one pass-time and that is using computers. He's a bit of an expert on them: he has the Internet at home and basically uses the computer as soon as he gets home from school until he goes to bed.

Appendix C

Interview Order

Table C.1: Interview Order

Individual Interviews with Male Students:

(1)	21 September 1999:	Gary
(2)	22 September 1999:	Darren
(3)		Leigh
(4)		Scott
(5)		Russell
(6)	23 September 1999:	Glen
(7)		Marcus
(8)		Alex

Group Interview with Female Students:

(9)	23 September 1999:	Belinda, Donna, Nikki, Lisa, Jane
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Individual Interview with Class Teacher:

(10)	12 October 1999:	John Weathers
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Appendix D Children's Personality Attributes Questionnaire (CPAQ) Forms

Below appear scaled down replications of the three A4 sized sheets that were distributed to respondents in the 8B4 class. The instructions and examples are modelled on the format of Antill, Cunningham, Russell & Thompson's (1981) Australian Sex-Role Scale.

QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME:

DATE OF BIRTH:

This task asks you to describe *yourself*. Below is a list of statements. Please use these statements to describe yourself. Indicate on the scale of 1 to 4 how true of you these various statements are. Draw a circle around the number that describes you. Please do not leave any statements unmarked.

	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME

Example: I like maths and science a lot

Circle 1 if it is NOT AT ALL TRUE that you like maths and science a lot
 Circle 2 if it is A LITTLE TRUE that you like maths and science a lot
 Circle 3 if it is MOSTLY TRUE that you like maths and science a lot
 Circle 4 if it is VERY TRUE that you like maths and science a lot

Example: I like meeting and talking to new people

Circle 1 if it is NOT AT ALL TRUE that you like meeting and talking to new people
 Circle 2 if it is A LITTLE TRUE that you like meeting and talking to new people
 Circle 3 if it is MOSTLY TRUE that you like meeting and talking to new people
 Circle 4 if it is VERY TRUE that you like meeting and talking to new people

I am <i>not</i> good at fixing things or working with tools	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I almost always stand up for what I believe in	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I am a quiet person	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME

I like younger kids and babies a lot	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I cry when things upset me	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
It is hard to hurt my feelings	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I am often the leader among my friends	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
My artwork and my ideas are creative and original	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I like art and music a lot	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
In most ways, I am better than most of the other kids my age	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
It is easy for people to make me change my mind	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I try to do everything I can for the people I care about	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
I am a gentle person	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME
It is hard for me to make up my mind about things	1	2	3	4
	NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME

I would rather do things for myself than ask adults and other kids for help	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
I am a very considerate person	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
When things get difficult, I almost always keep trying	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
I do <i>not</i> help other people very much	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
I am often very pushy with other people	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
I give up easily	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME
I am kind to other people almost all of the time	1 NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	2 A LITTLE TRUE OF ME	3 MOSTLY TRUE OF ME	4 VERY TRUE OF ME