

A ROOSTER IN THE HENHOUSE: OR, WHY EDUCATION IS NO-MAN'S LAND

SUBMISSION TO THE ENQUIRY ON TEACHER EDUCATION

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There have been many enquiries on teacher education in Australia in the last forty years or so. It would be comforting to think that all this effort has resulted in improvement in teacher quality. I wish it were true.

In this paper I will focus my attention on some issues which the Committee needs to consider. They include organisation of teacher education; a lack of men in teaching; the lack of positive ideas about males in university faculties of teacher education; and the implications for boys' education

THE ORGANISATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION

To recount the history of teacher education in New South Wales or Australia would be a very complex exercise. Reference to the works of Bruce Mitchell or some of this writer's work on the history of higher education policy may help. I will also lean on a conference paper given by this writer in 1977 (West,1978).

THE TEACHERS COLLEGES

Teacher education used to be conducted in teachers colleges set up by State Departments of Education. Many of us who are still teaching at various levels experienced the teachers' colleges as students and found fusty and bureaucratic institutions. Most of us became teachers so that we could get a university education at no cost to our struggling parents. As young students, we entered teachers' college after signing a bond that made us captives of the Department. Some of us went to Sydney University for 3 or 4 years to do a degree, then did a year's Diploma in Education at Sydney Teachers College. Sydney Teachers College was very bureaucratic, with clerks renowned for their ability to frustrate

and annoy people, reducing almost any student to tears or incoherent rage. Students were rigidly segregated by sex. They were treated almost as primary school pupils at times.

I later became a lecturer at Wagga Wagga Teachers' college. Its principal wielded autocratic power over staff and students alike. Many a student drank too much or committed some unspeakable crime, such as being rude to some outraged authority figure. Soon he found himself (they were usually male) packed onto the Junee train in the middle of the night. I went from there to Westmead Teachers College (1972-) later Nepean college of Advanced Education.

Teacher education was thus conducted outside the universities, for the most part. There were many debates about this, but those who carried the day argued that *teachers ought to rub shoulders with students from other faculties* (West,1978:134). The teachers' colleges on the whole were quite outmoded by the 1970s and were all gradually subsumed by Colleges of Advanced Education. The last of them joined the university sector in 1989.

Despite the obvious faults, some of the features of the teachers colleges are worth noting:

1. Students were employed virtually as apprentices. They worked from 9 till 5 five days a week. In that time, they were engaged in earning about learning, studying psychology, learning Australian history and geography and so on. If students took time off they were threatened with termination of scholarship. The scholarship was a key to tertiary education and was looked on as a valuable thing. Those who put up with the frustrations in doing a teachers college traineeship in two years appear to have learned a great deal about education in that time. Many went on to become well-placed in education in schools, colleges or university.
2. Teacher training was practically-focused. Students benefited because Demonstration Schools were attached to Teachers Colleges. Students would see specially selected teachers demonstrate any number of teaching techniques. Demonstration school staff were expected to be available for advice to lecturers. In my experience the Dem Schools were extremely useful for all these reasons.
3. Some college staff had higher degrees and some did research. However, these were probably the exceptions. Teachers Colleges were practical, hands-on institutions at their best. At their worst, they were excessively bureaucratic, oppressive and restrictive to students, and their staff were hopelessly outmoded and used outdated techniques.
4. Some students learned their craft at university (I learned English literature and history) and learned teaching at teachers college (e.g. how to teach history). The universities were thus the senior institutions; the teachers colleges lesser institutions (West,1978 recounts the unsuccessful struggles of the colleges to become equal with universities).The supposed split between practically-oriented staff and students and theoretically-oriented staff and students was never really valid. "separate but

different”, “different but equal” and so on were pious hopes. And so teachers colleges were seen as inferior institutions.

5. Students rarely if ever complained. On one occasion a student did complain that she had had to read more in one year than she had ever done in her previous life. Seventeen novels and plays in a year were set in English II, I recall; students were expected to know them thoroughly. This was part of a primary teacher’s broad education.

TEACHER EDUCATION MOVES INTO UNIVERSITIES

Teacher education’s move into the universities has left us with advantages and disadvantages. Students are now in a university and get a university education by definition. Teaching needs to be seen as a proper profession rather than a Cinderella profession, in Robert Pike’s words. It is the profession that never really gets proper respect and whose members can only dream of the status received by most doctors, dentists, vet scientists, businessmen and (dare I add) Members of Parliament. Students can now encounter real professors and hear them speak of their research. Theoretically, teacher education students can meet students from engineering or architecture and take part in the excitement of university life.

Unfortunately, the reality has been somewhat less than promised. A few points will have to suffice here.

- Teacher education students spend long hours in many activities besides learning about teaching. Most of my students work ten hours or more earning money. Most spend long hours driving to university campus: some drive to Bankstown from Bondi or Prestons or Cronulla. As a result, hours spent on campus are comparatively few. Students complain vociferously about having tutorials at 2pm or 4pm. These are hours they need to spend in work, or minding children, or some other important activity.
- Students do not seem to ‘rub shoulders’ with students from other faculties. They spend hours with teacher ed students in classes, eat in a hurry, and relax with other teacher ed students or their families. Very few take place in campus activities.
- Professors are busy with their own research. I would guess that not many undergraduate students encounter professors or even associate professors in their first two years of teacher education. Junior staff are often burdened by large teaching loads and in the case of suburban universities, wearisome cross-campus travel as well as teaching.
- The universities have become increasingly bureaucratic. Often this is a reflection of the latest decrees from Canberra, which seem to grow more numerous and weigh heavier each year on academics. There is always another survey to be done on workload, or research, or similar. Staff complain of endless restructures (one

colleague estimates 11 restructures in teacher education or the university as a whole in the last 25 years or so). Subject outlines are endlessly rewritten for no useful purpose. The administration has ballooned: whereas Westmead Teachers College opened with a typist and the Registrar to administer it, most universities have administrative staff and costs nearly equal to university staff.

- Students have become increasingly demanding. There are endless rules limiting the ways staff give out exams and assignments. Almost nothing can be done unless it is set down in the subject outline which must be printed some weeks before Lecture 1. Students can always complain to counsellors, the Dean of the College, the Students Union and so on. Staff get worn down.
- It would take more than my own resources to discuss the issue of failure. Fail is a four-letter word which is used very, very carefully. Students who fail a subject can once again appeal, complain, make a fuss... and again the tendency is to give in. Many staff, to their credit, do not. Great care must be taken with failing foreign students, women, or anyone who can claim to be disadvantaged. No staff member wants to get a reputation for being racist, sexist, or difficult with students,. Unscrupulous students can level accusations which are difficult to prove.
- There are now no demonstration schools. Instead, we send students out to observe or do a prac. We must pay teachers for this- who works for nothing in 2005? But in the process we have lost the excellent modelling that the dem schools used to provide.
- In sum, teacher education is better in many ways than it was in teachers' colleges. At the same time, there have been losses –particularly in the practical side of students' education.
- Students going into teaching have usually been from working-class or lower middle class families. In my experience they come to us from homes in which there are very few books- perhaps the Bible, the Reader's Digest, or some popular magazines. Other students are well-read. It would be possible to teach classes out of the *Daily Telegraph* and most students would not complain. I have heard senior staff advise juniors that the right level of instruction is “about what you would give Year 8 or 9”.
- Subjects get watered down bit by bit. Many university staff are getting older and older on average and it's easiest just to go with the flow. Anecdotal evidence suggests that we are all teaching just that bit less, year by year. Two hour tutorials become one and a half hours, and then one hour: and then.....??? Many academic staff do seem to be worried about continual reductions in teaching time in teacher education. For some 15 years, all the UWS students had a compulsory subject Australian Studies (mostly history with some civics and sociology). This was scrapped and not replaced.

I add as an appendix a comment by a colleague which documents the decreasing time allowed for teaching methods.

I want to move now from the general organisation of teacher education into the specifics of teaching about gender.

THE CONTESTED WORLD OF GENDER

The world of gender has changed enormously.. When I went to university in the 1960s, women were unjustly ignored. Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte appeared in our English classes, but women as a group were rarely discussed. In the 1980s and 1990s feminists became the new radicals, causing much overhauling and rewriting of university courses and a rethinking among many academics. Feminism has now become one of the orthodoxies of the campus. There is a gender component in many teacher education subjects, and 'gender' usually means women and girls, unless the focus falls on males and their shortcomings. Across the campus "women" are discussed for any number of reasons: International Women's Day is celebrated; though there is no equivalent Men's Day. Women in management courses are offered. There are good reasons for this in terms of numbers of males in senior management. There are good reasons for all the initiatives taken to support women as a class. But at the university classroom level, the emphasis is usually on women and is very feminist-focused. It appears that men as men do not deserve the support or attention.

Men have adapted to this in a number of ways. Some become more feminist than the most ardent feminists. Some grumble and grind their teeth but are afraid to say anything publicly. A small number of us try to talk about men's and boys' issues intelligently. Time and again we have to deal with people who want us to take up a position pro this or anti that - one that suits their own purposes. To piece together an intelligent view of men has become quite difficult because the terrain is so contested. Articles by feminists often seek out the worst examples of men's ideas; this is known philosophically as 'knocking down a straw man'. For example, articles by gender experts refer to the Mens Rights website- a site so extreme that it is not difficult to reject as extreme (Probyn, 2005). With feminism established as an orthodoxy, men become painted as part of the problem rather than as being seen as people who live with, work with and will continue to be involved with women. The media reinforce academic stereotypes about men. If we see someone doing something stupid in a TV show or advertisement it is almost always a man.

Academics like myself who want to write about boys' education have to struggle against the orthodoxy. In theory a university is a place of light, liberty and learning, as Disraeli said. But there isn't much room to move in the universities in regard to gender. Academics are rated on their articles in refereed journals. Only the brave try submitting articles to journals when the articles don't espouse the dominant feminist view. It is quite common to submit an article and receive a 'review' which dismisses the article for having views that are called 'conservative'. In other words, the author is told 'go away: you have the wrong ideas'.

The theme of a recent article is that many academics prevented boys' education from making it onto government agendas because they were opposed to anything being done to help boys learn. (West 2005). In too many journals and too many conferences, all views are allowed, provided that they do not challenge conventional wisdom. Feminism is part of the current conventional wisdom in universities in teacher education, communication, sociology and related subjects. Unfortunately academic careers are built on referees' reports and favourable hearings from the Department of Education (under various names) in Canberra. Successful academics learn not to challenge established orthodoxies.

SOME MATTERS OF CONCERN

The usual attitude has been to see Gender as something which is about women's concerns. Those opposed to boys' education have for the most part worked in teacher education institutions (West,2005). Some education academics put ideas into the teacher education curriculum which are very hostile to males. If students are told that boys are obnoxious, how will they deal with the boys when they arrive at school? Students are being educated to learn about girls' needs- and learn little about those of boys.

Here are some examples.

Brady, L. and Kennedy, K. (2003) *Curriculum Construction*. Sydney: Pearson.

This book is intended for use by a wide range of teacher education and probably other students. It leans on feminist research in many places, especially in a chapter on Equity. Feminism appears in one light as eg the 'well-accepted feminist principle that seeks to have counter-sexist reading material available for girls' (2003:35). Against this we hear about 'the so-called disadvantage ascribed to boys'. There are no further references to the research by Kraemer, Rowe, Mathers, West and others which discusses boys' disadvantages and learning difficulties, but there are substantial lists of feminist reading. The chapter ends with the speech of a little-known male feminist. Perhaps this is done to suggest that men are becoming feminists, but it ignores all the research that shows that men and women have different views on gender. (For a start, see Mackay and West,1996). The concluding speech makes an often-heard request for a theory of masculinity:

We need a theory of masculinity that speaks to men's experience of themselves, while enabling them to honestly acknowledge their complicity in the collective structures of dominant masculinity and gender injustice. We need a sense that change is possible, and that it is going to be good for us, as men, too.

...It means getting boys to recognise the abuse of power which characterises masculine culture. (2003:40).

This is a worrying piece of ideology posing as research. It will not offer any encouragement to anyone who wants to help boys learn; or any male becoming a teacher. What is it doing in a book set for teacher education students? Beginning teachers need material encouraging interest in boys' learning, not turning them against boys' learning difficulties.

Marsh, C. (ed.) (2005) *Teaching Studies of Society and Environment*. Sydney: Pearson.

This book, a how-to-teach primary school social studies (the exact names differ around the States) has run through several editions. There has been some adjustment in the Gender Chapter which has always been written by one or more females. The latest edition's chapter reviews the campaign to start programs for boys with some disfavour as a backlash against girls (2005:347). An attempt is made to review changes which have set up the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Program, but there are inaccuracies- eg the reference to the *Senate* (sic) Inquiry into the Education of Boys. An illustration that is still included in the latest edition shows a boy trying to keep a girl in a box. To his evident anger, she escapes. She has a big S on her chest. Message: boys frustrate girls but they can still become Superwoman.

This book carries many references to feminist literature, but no references to the work of those who have suggested assisting boys (for further discussion see West,2005). The Report *Boys: Getting it Right* made a number of recommendations urging teacher educators to support boys' education, maximise the engagement of boys and girls in schooling and emphasise behavioural skills to help teachers work with boys (2002:xxix). **Thus teacher education remains territory largely unsympathetic to males.** There are very few centres of research which have a male-friendly emphasis. Research done on boys is normally done by feminists and women, ensuring that nobody challenges comfortable ways of thinking.

WHY PRIMARY EDUCATION IS “NO MAN”’S LAND”

Martin Spafford, a high school teacher in London, observes that boys are under siege. “Boys feel continually attacked for who they are. We have created a sense in school that masculinity is something bad”. (Hoff Sommers 2000:57).

WHY BOYS NEED MALE TEACHERS: A PARENT’S VIEW

Patterns of communication between parents and children may be an important factor in educational success (OECD,2001:157) It has often been said that under-fathered boys are at greater risk of educational failure. OECD evidence makes it clear that children from single-parent families achieve significantly less than those from two-parent fathers. (OECD,2001:194) Boys are more at risk than girls from lack of a male authority figure, writes Kraemer in the *British Medical Journal*:

In boys the formation of secure attachment to a caregiver is more subject than in girls to parental unavailability, insensitivity, or depression (2001:4)

It is safe to assume that, in most cases, children from single-parent families have less contact with their fathers than other children. About eighty five percent of single-parent families in Australia are mother-headed. Evidence from many sources shows that children, especially boys, coming from single-parent families are thus already more at risk in school than those from dual-parent families (OECD 2001; Kraemer 2001:193-4).

The difficulties boys are having in school and society are linked with men's difficulties in fathering. Men are struggling to be better fathers in a time of increasing expectations (Russell, 1999). Men struggle to express their love for their sons in a time in which even mentioning sexual matters to a son is suspected (Walsh, 1999; West, 1996: 105-6, 86ff; West, 1998b). And boys are looking to fathers to encourage and guide them through the difficulties of urban and rural Australian life. The problem of under-fathered boys is being highlighted by our reading of the current literature on boys' disaffection from school and general under-achievement. Under-fathered boys are more likely than other boys to be hostile to authority and often become hyper-masculine in their search for an acceptable way to be male.

Many parents have told me that they want their children – often boys – to have men in schools. One writes:

I have a daughter and then I had three sons. The oldest is twelve. My daughter was quiet, well-behaved, popular with teachers and did well at school. My three sons are loud, physical, push each other around, climb trees and fences, jump on their bikes and race off in all directions making a racket. My daughter's needs were met at school, and I am thankful for that. My sons' needs have not been met. They need a male voice to hear and sense their needs and acknowledge their maleness. If they only hear female voices all day, that's unbalanced. Women just preach at them and talk at them: words, words, words. My boys want a man who raises his voice, laughs with them and plays outside with them. That means soccer, riding bikes, chasings, anything with a ball. It's all physical. Playing with a hammer or a ball or bits of wood is how boys learn to express themselves as a man. They smash things down and build them all over again. They are going to get jobs and they will need to use their hands as well as their heads. Men understand all that boy stuff. If the boys only have female teachers, how will they learn to be men?

(personal communication)

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLASSROOM RELATIONSHIPS

What compounds this for under-fathered boys is the **crucial difficulty for boys of forming strong, useful attachments at school**. A principal commented

Secondary school leaves many boys totally miserable. Their years seem to be wasted. Retention rates increase, but the model of secondary schooling seems to be frustrating some boys
(West, 2000a: 50)

More children are being kept at school than in past decades, in which troublesome boys left to become apprentices or join a trade or the steelworks. These male, working-class jobs are fast disappearing (*The Economist*,1999). More boys are thus kept in the straitjacket of school. Boys' own comments echo that of their principals. This is an extract from the Boys, Sport and Schooling Project:

Q. What are the rules of being a boy in Australia?

You can't do lots of stuff. You can't show emotions. You have to win. You have to have the last laugh (West,2000a:51)

And boys complain consistently that nobody asks, nobody listens, nobody cares about their feelings anyway. (Slade and Trent, in West, 2002). Meanwhile boys are being asked at school to write down for critical review what they think about Shakespeare or Jane Austen or *Bladerunner*. Boys' vulnerability around emotions is heightened by their alexythimia, or lack of an appropriate emotional vocabulary.

Boys' relationships at school are thus critical. The OECD found that the top two factors in educational performance were teacher-student relationships and disciplinary climate.The third was a demand for high achievement. These three factors working together explain about 31 per cent of the variation between schools within countries in the OECD. (OECD:2001: 294). Hence the key importance of relationships. (See also Bartlett Report, 2002:160ff)

As Martin explains (2002: 156) school is a place where boys learn what it means to be a boy and a man. Thus school can be , he says, an ideal context in which diverse kinds of men are celebrated in a way that gives permission for boys to be whatever kind of man he wants to grow into.

In private schools, artistic males are available for boys to interact with, as well as more outdoors-focused males, sport -playing males, and so on. Most of the GPS schools have many males who can be seen around the school yards and sportsfields. And – not coincidentally - an atmosphere which summed up by giving permission to climb trees and use playgrounds. This are pleasures many other boys would be jealous of .But most boys see only one or two men in the school, and these have little contact with the boys' experience of learning in classrooms. Thus boys and girls conclude by daily observation that teaching is women's work. Education and the whole world of learning become feminised in a boy's eyes. Women read books; men leave school and go out into the world. These ideas are not helpful if we want boys to enjoy a healthy inner life which embraces poetry, novels, art and music; or if we want boys to understand the complex interplay of men and women in a modern marriage or relationship. Boys need male teachers most of all in the vital area of behaviour. They seem to put more weight on what they see males doing and also saying than on some of their female teachers. (*Boys: Getting it Right* 2002:161).

BOYS BECOMING MEN IN A CLIMATE HOSTILE TO MALES

The American writer Christina Hoff Sommers makes some insightful comments about males growing up in the USA. She attacks those who want teachers to practise girl empowerment and diminish the opportunities given to boys. Some of the material is somewhat overstated or polemical. However, it is material worth considering. Too often, proponents of social change have brought their political agendas into classrooms. She calls this the ‘tiresome misandry that infects so many gender theorists who never stop blaming ‘the male culture’ for all social and psychological ills” (2000:134). And some social change activists link violence by rapists or wife-bashing men to the actions of schoolboys. Many of these comments by Hoff Sommers have relevance to Australia.

A boy today, through no fault of his own, finds himself implicated in the social crime of “shortchanging” girls. Yet the allegedly silenced and neglected girl sitting next to him is likely to be a better student. She is not only more articulate, she is probably a more mature, engaged, and well-balanced human being. He may be uneasily aware that she is more likely to go to college. He may believe that teachers prefer to be around girls and pay more attention to them. At the same time, he is uncomfortably aware that he is considered to be a member of the unfairly favored ‘dominant gender’.

*More and more schoolboys inhabit a milieu of disapproval. Routinely regarded as proto-sexists, potential harassers, and perpetrators of gender inequity, boys live under a cloud of censure, in a permanent state of culpability. Martin Spafford, a high school teacher in London, ..observes that boys are under siege. “Boys feel continually attacked for who they are. **We have created a sense in school that masculinity is something bad’.** (2000:44,57)*

We need to be cautious about reading too much into this. But it does resonate for those of us who listen to radio debates about masculinity, or debates among Australian educational researchers. There are strong voices supporting women and girls in most schools. But where are the voices supporting men and boys? As submissions to the NSW Inquiry on Male Teacher Numbers said, we need some pro-masculine men engaged with boys in classrooms and in school playgrounds to help boys grow into balanced men themselves. And this means more sympathetic treatment for males both as teacher education students, and the boys that the teachers will engage with.

A LACK OF MALES AND THE LINK TO BOYS’ DIFFICULTIES

Research by Simon Barron-Cohen at Cambridge indicates that there are characteristically male ways of learning. Males lean towards understanding systems; women, about relationships (2003). This does not mean that all males (or females) learn in the same way. Males often prefer to learn actively, to take risks, to experiment, to concentrate on tasks, and to work on “right or wrong” answers. Clearly there are signs that the whole question of raising boys, their lives at school and in the workplace and the

quality of their lives as adults concerns a wide range of people. In the process, the roles of men in boys' lives comes up incessantly. And this occurs in one country after another across the western world. (OECD, 2003; Wilson, 2003; Martin, 2002; Aitken, 1999).

There is evidence that concern is increasing as evidence mounts up about boys' difficulties. The evidence ranges from a historically high suicide rate among young men (Fry et al., 1999) to declining motivation in, and performance of, boys in school leaving examinations. Despite the unfortunate lack of data from some governments, there is evidence that boys are overwhelmingly in the majority in school suspensions (Anon, 1999). We can readily agree with the assessment of John Head looking at related difficulties of young males in the United Kingdom (1999:4-9). Looking at the evidence which confronts us of so many young men suiciding, being suspended from school, in trouble on the streets and struggling to achieve at school, any sensible person would have to conclude that young males are in considerable difficulties. Not all young men, but sufficient young men to cause concern. The puzzle for future generations will be why it took governments so long to act.

Boys' difficulties are entangled with two related issues: better fathering (as we saw earlier) and the lack of males in teaching.

* Boys and older men.

Boys' struggle to become balanced, achieving men is linked with the isolation of older people in our society, as discussions with the Council on the Ageing have shown. Older men who contact welfare agencies offering their services as mentors have too often been turned away. While boys suffer through lack of encouragement, older people often feel shut away from younger people, especially after their children divorce. Discussions with Aboriginal people confirm that Aborigines (as well as many other societies) take a great deal of care with the ways boys become men. Too often our young men in need of support and guidance are left for the whims of the internet and the media (West, 2000a). *Certified Male* magazine, March 2000 argued that there was a great shortage of men volunteering to be a Big Brother for under-fathered boys. Macallum and Beltman (1999) suggest that older males may be attracted to school to act as mentors. Grandfathers and other retired males may be available for this purpose, provided certain safeguards are observed.

* Boys and Discipline

Teachers get nine months older every year, on average according to the Baumgart report on teaching in NSW. They can find themselves weighed down by the problem of persuading boys to stay quiet in classrooms which were never designed for large numbers of semi- and sub-literate young people. The UK literature says that it is easier to teach girls because girls behave better, keep quieter and are more biddable. Boys dislike being told continually to 'sit down, shut up, write this down' (West, 1996a: 38; West, 2000a).

Many sit at a desk all day dreaming of the football game they will play that afternoon (West, 1999a). Many boys act out, are more difficult for an ageing teaching force to keep quiet, and create more problems for teachers. This appears to be linked with boys' high rates of suspension and low marks (see West, 2000a for principals' comments on boys).

It can easily be seen that boys' underachievement is linked with the preponderance of boys among school suspensions and expulsions (West 1996a, chapter 2; West, 1996b; West, 1999b, West,2000a:48; Anon, 1999) Schools are less and less able to maintain authority over pupils. Boys are less able to be 'controlled' in class by teachers who are embattled, enfeebled and disempowered. The UK research indicates that teachers may like boys less, and encourage boys less than girls. Some of these arguments were picked up and given respectability by the Report on Boys' Education, (2003;xxix)

Sebastian Kraemer in a thoughtful piece 'The Fragile Male' argues that males may be more sympathetic to young males because they, too, were once male. He writes further:

The modern male is now more often seen as lacking qualities associated with females, such as self-regulation of emotions or reflectiveness (2001:4).

Australian school principals report that many boys are being suspended and expelled, often for "violence" (West 2000a : 48). But what does "violence" entail? I have seen queues of children in a school, and told that they were the children who had been reprimanded or sent out of class. On some occasions, all were male. Some common reasons appear to be:

- * shoving another child in the lunch queue,
- * raising a voice against a teacher,
- * pushing, and so on.

As Olweus' and Kraemer's research makes plain, pubertal and pre-pubertal boys are physical creatures. They have testosterone belting around inside them. Adolescent boys do have big bodies, and they want to see what those bodies can do. No wonder boys commonly detest classwork but greatly enjoy sport (West, 2002). Of course there are exceptions. But we should not be surprised if males bully physically, while girls bully verbally and by excluding other girls from an in-group (Olweus 1993). But if all the available teachers are female, this common, probably normal male behaviour will be seen as bad and punishable. **Thus low numbers of male teachers works against boys and indirectly pushes them out of the education system. Education is increasingly feminised, in part because of this, from pre-school to university.**

The Report on Best Practice in Boys' Education suggests that a much more active approach to learning may be part of the answer. Schools that engage boys usually have a young, energetic staff, some of whom are male. And engagement is a key part of what binds people to education. Of course, many effective teachers of boys and girls are female. But males understand boys' need for active learning and active recreation. School principals report that whereas a female will often try to quieten boys down, a male will say "Oh you boys! Run down to the end of the playground and kick a football for ten

minutes and get rid of all that energy!”. Or some can take boys out for a swim on a hot day before settling them down for quiet reading (Dalleywater, 2001 and Best Practice in Boys’ Education Report, 2001). Private schools ensure that there are large numbers of young males and young families in and around the school. **Thus private schools have increasing numbers of males. State schools’ male teacher numbers steadily decrease** (Ramsey Report ,2000:)

* Changes in the Workplace.

It is no accident that boys are having difficulties in school at the same time as men are having trouble adjusting to a workplace increasingly emphasising teamwork, communication and multi-skilling. Working-class boys were once able to leave school for an apprenticeship, a job in a factory or unskilled labouring. As Daniel Goleman argues, we all need to be more emotionally literate. Working-class boys, coming from traditionally-constructed families, and with few models of actively-involved, culturally-rich men in their lives, leave school ill-prepared for the current world of work with its increasing emphasis on co-operation, teamwork and communication. It is working-class boys who most need men around them who can work with their hands and can relate to boys. It is precisely these boys who are least likely to find them in impoverished State schools.

In this way, the decline of men in teaching is linked with many current tensions in society relating to problems in masculinity.

ARABIC BOYS AND MALE TEACHERS

The current concern over Arabic boys in the media is relevant to these discussions. There are indications that many boys from Middle Eastern communities are very difficult to discipline in New South Wales State schools. The difficulty here is disentangling nationality, race, and religion in pinpointing why males act as they do. But immigrants from countries like Iraq, Syria and Lebanon appear to raise males who are hyper-masculine. Many of these boys excel in football, in kick-boxing, or in other hyper-masculine sports. They have little regard for formal schoolwork. Many go into bodybuilding; more than a few are tempted by the Faustian bargain of steroids. One such case study is provided in West (1996:116). Boys from these cultures seem to be taught that women belong in the home. They do not respect women who are not under constant supervision by a relative. Males learn how to be a man from other males, not from females. If these young men are to learn a gentler form of masculinity, they will have to do so from other males. Learning how to be a man from a female is anathema to them. We need to find ways of getting some Middle Eastern males into teaching- a profession they seem to shun as women’s work. Much more research needs to be done about how boys are raised in ethnic communities, and what can be done to raise them more intelligently.

WHAT UK RESEARCH SHOWS ABOUT USING MEN TO TEACH BOYS

Boys are bodies in perpetual commotion. In the UK much useful work has been done at Kirklees by Gary Wilson *et al.* to use males to catch boys' interest and lead them towards sound education and good outcomes. Gary Wilson explains how :

The street culture that exists within some communities needs to be fully understood by staff- its negative elements challenged and its positive elements celebrated.

Carefully employ strategies to involve boys in extra-curricular music, drama and art activities, as well as sport. This might involve inviting positive role models, as well as considering male-only groups of singers or performers...

Boy-friendly book displays could be a regular feature in libraries, based on research within the school and beyond, avoiding stereotypes and incorporating books from a wide range of genres and cultures.

Posters and bookmarks showing men as readers, and book reviews by male teachers and members of the local community, could be used in the library and classrooms.

PE departments need to be aware of the image they generate. Highly competitive or macho departments will tend to confirm many boys' suspicions of what being a man is all about, and will do little to help create a caring masculinity. (2003:28,35)

Thus successful schools for boys have males modelling for boys the way in which they can become educated men. Again we can see that it is important for boys- and girls- to see enacted before them, models of thoughtful men who read and enjoy reading.

WHY DOESN'T TEACHING ATTRACT MEN?

There is a flight of men from teaching. Figures from the Department of Education, Employment and Training show that in the last ten years, the number of men entering teaching has gone down from 1 in 3 to 1 in 4. Yet males under 35 are the group leaving teaching the fastest. Teaching is an attractive career for women because it is relatively well-paid. The following comment might be very widely felt:

Teaching: it would be a great job, if I was a woman

-comment from a male student teacher in a study by Burn (1999).

Why isn't teaching an attractive career for males?

* Feminism is so well identified with progressive, enlightened thinking that it has become unthinkable to have university subjects which do not include it, at least in the humanities and social sciences. I do not have time to detail the many ways in which feminism impacts on teacher education students.

But the Committee might reflect on how all this affects male students becoming teachers. Is it giving them the message that they are welcome in school classrooms and staffrooms?

Of course it is not. It tells them loud and clear that for a male to walk into a staffroom he will have to expect to be attacked as a man. That is, unless he is so ineffectual and apologetic that he will agree with everything that he is told. School staffrooms are typically where a male teacher realises that he is outnumbered, and if the discussion turns to gender, he is up against it. Few men want to engage in such a discussion in their lunch hour. The notices on school staffroom walls typically contain a number of notices relevant to women's health, domestic violence, and so on; there are few if any sympathetic to men. In the case of Paul- a male training as a teacher in the UK- it started with an introduction to teaching:

It's OK for women to say things about men. You just- like – you get used to it. It started from the access course. It was predominantly women and they were a very strong team and they used to have a go at men sometimes. So there is lots of 'men bashing' throughout the whole thing and it continues (Burn,1999)

The teacher education curriculum is deliberately girl-friendly. Because of the profound influence of feminism on the social sciences, teachers are being greatly influenced by feminism — many good university women teachers are feminists. Unfortunately, there is almost no teaching of men's issues — unless masculinity is seen as a problem to be fought against. So teachers are having the difficulties of girls in education explained to them. Issues of masculinity are not usually explained to them, unless it is done through a negative perspective. Males in education and the social sciences mention quietly that they often feel targeted by material or comments which appear to be anti-male. One student teacher commented on his teacher education: 'It was a war against men' (Burn, 1999:5). Probably this statement is an extreme one. However, it is true that most male students do not know how to defend themselves against such material. Nor is this the only difficulty faced by males in preparation for teaching. Early childhood educators at UWS report that few males survive the early child education course, especially after practical experience.

A postgraduate student writes:

I am a 25 year old postgrad male from Brisbane. I have completed a bach of behavioural science and have just about finished a masters in human resource management. I work with children part-time in an afterschool kids group. I thought you might be interested in the views of a young guy seriously considering the career of teacher(I' ll have to complete a post-grad in education to do so).

My reasons for considering teaching:

- 1. I have found from the kids I work with that many boys are falling behind (particularly in reading).*
- 2. I associate well with kids. I have a brother nine years younger than me, so am used to the younger ones. I must say that I haven't ruled out middle school or high school yet.*
- 3. The desire to contribute to the community.*
- 4. I have held jobs such as music teacher(in private academies), and gym instructors and know I am suited to a teaching role as a person.*

My reasons for not considering teaching:

1. Low pay. In the event, I find a job in HR I could easily make twice what I could as a teacher. Suffice to say, one does not become a teacher for money, but pay is a consideration with the high cost of living.

2. Low social status of a male primary teacher. This is a serious concern to many males considering teaching as a profession. Its sad because I believe young people ,boys and girls, require good male role models in an era of single-parent households. You would think society would recognize this, but it prefers to hold a self-serving lawyer(for example) higher than a primary teacher.

3. Fear of being labelled a pedophile. There are four male staff and around twelve staff members where I work. All staff maintain the highest level of standards, but the male have their own policies(as a group) to try not to give kids hugs(try saying this to a crying six year old!) or anything like this. I myself will send a crying child to seek solace from a female staff member.

From my background in psychology, I remember reading a report about how male children -from day one- do not receive as many hugs etc as female children as society's gender laws take effect and shape behaviour. I often wonder how a male child is supposed to grown into a caring man if they have not been exposed to the same level of affection as a girl growing up.

4. Primary teaching perceived as "women's work". When I told my father I was asked as to why I wanted to 'look after little babies'. My dad is a very educated man, but I was a bit taken aback by this statement.

(personal communication)

Studies going on in this university and elsewhere suggest some of the many problems that teaching is having in attracting men (Lewis et al, 1999). First, teachers are telling their students not to enter teaching. Second, it is now compulsory for people entering teaching to sign a declaration that they are not guilty of child abuse. Men are much worse at defending themselves against such accusations because their emotional language is poorer than women's (West, 1996). Males interviewed by Lewis felt very deeply the lurking accusation that any male who wanted to teach young children was morally suspect. Burn reports that a child in the UK said good afternoon to her male teacher and was told by a parent "not to talk to strange men". (Burn: 1999). The stories about pedophile clergy and the long-running saga of Michael Jackson are also giving unfortunate messages to men who might see teaching as a career. This may not be the key factor in what does not attract men to teaching, however.

* Work by Burn (1999) and McCumstie raises many issues for males going into teaching. They argue that primary teaching, in particular, is culturally coded feminine. This is relevant to an inquiry on boys' education because in boys' education workshops the issue of male role-modelling comes up almost every time. Further, West has argued that in a feminised environment, boys feel pushed into the masculinised world of sport (1996a; 2000a). It is clear that expectations of beginning male teachers are different from

those of beginning females. A comment from Burn is indicative. A male casual teacher is talking to a woman teacher:

It's all right for you. You don't go for interviews and get asked 'can you do the cricket and keep the little b.....s quiet?' Or 'we need a man to lift the heavy boxes'.

Do male and female teachers do the same job? Even asking that question would offend many in the educational establishment. One submission to the Inquiry on Male Teacher Numbers was as follows:

As a male, you are expected to train all the sports teams- bar netball -; organise all the sport; and always given the difficult classes year after year.

The males Burn interviewed were given a disproportionate number of troublemakers, often boys. Reports from my former students suggest that many of these boys are under-fathered. This would support American research on fathers' contributions to a child's sense of wellbeing and achievement. Conversely, a male who is under-fathered often becomes introverted or hyper-masculine (see Fathers' Day article on the www.menshealth.uws.edu.au website).

Men who taught Kindergarten had to put up with "Look at that big man teaching those little kids! Isn't he sweet?"

Smedley and Peperall argue that caring is seen as a woman's domain. Because caring is identified with primary teaching, men tend to be excluded:

Assumptions that women are natural carers, coupled with statistical evidence, can lead to the re-affirmation of stereotypes: the result is a narrow, essentialist conception that primary teaching is, and should be, solely women's work. This may be problematic for the minority of men who do work as primary teachers and have a responsibility and commitment to care, although male teachers' status can be advantageous, for example in career progression. (2000:263).

This is true for those males who survive in teaching. Because of poor status and salary and perceived incongruence of primary teaching with masculinity, many do not.

Men who do enter teaching feel they are the only rooster in the henhouse. Like many other State teachers, especially in NSW, they feel neglected. They tend to gravitate into administration. Following a career path is an acceptably masculine task for males, who are still following the traditional script. In brief, a man's life is about work (West, 1996). As one young male teacher commented to Burn

Men need to bond with men and if there are not enough men in the profession...they are surrounded by members of the opposite sex...it's difficult
Burn 1999:28

Another submission to the NSW Inquiry on Male Teacher Numbers was:

The whole set up and working conditions in State schools are specifically designed for someone who wants a reasonable second wage, have school age children at home to look after. It is not meant for someone who wants a primary family income or career.

Teaching, if considered by males at all, is seen as a last resort – the equivalent of the French Foreign Legion. We need to find ways in which males can be teachers without compromising their sense of what it means to be a man. Looking at the way the Army markets itself to young people, one can only groan at the weak way in which teaching must appeal to males who want to be physical, play sport, be more muscular and feel attractive to other people. As *The Economist* argued in a landmark article in September, 1996, it is foolish to imagine that one can understand the problems experienced by boys without understanding the problems experienced by men. Girls' education has been very much tied up with issues of women's expectations of equality. Similarly, boys' education must be seen as very much involved with issues of masculinity and the directions in which men are headed.

RESEARCHERS' CLAIMS THAT MALE TEACHERS ARE NOT A PRIORITY

The educational establishment and well-placed educational researchers sometimes ridicule claims for increasing male teacher numbers. Too often, they use a technique known to philosophers as "knocking down a straw man". They find the silliest versions of these arguments for increasing male teacher numbers, and lampoon them. They argue that we need quality teachers, as if the arguments for male teachers meant that ANY male teacher was better than a good female teacher. Of course, he is not. We do not need ANY male teacher. **We need good quality teachers of both sexes.** The Catholic Education Office, Sydney has made this clear. This is what parents demand. But teachers work in a job market. As the job market for males pays better than that for females, employers will have to treat the two types of teachers differently if they want to give parents male teachers for their children.

WHAT WOULD NEED TO CHANGE BEFORE MORE MEN WENT INTO TEACHING?

We have argued that the paucity of males in teaching is connected to a number of other difficult issues: a decline in school discipline, and the disengagement of boys from schooling.

But what do we have to do to get more men into teaching? Despite much clacking of tongues about needing more men in teaching, few have been able to answer this question. When I taught at Wagga Wagga Teachers College in 1970-71, the primary education

sections were almost equal in male/ female ratios – perhaps 40 or 45% male. How was this achieved? Places were allocated to females, according to a cut-off point in current school leaving scores. Places were then allocated to males according to a different cut-off. Whether this could be done again in the present era is debatable.

However, the matter could be solved at school level. In private schools, Headmasters deliberately target males. Headmasters seek out promising males and offer inducements. These include: salary packages, assistance with accommodation, and other considerations (Dalleywater, 2000). Private schools decide what kind of school they want. Rudolf Steiner schools enact a complex philosophy which spells out that all pupils should play actively, stretch out growing bodies, enjoy music, art and dance. Many private schools are busy, active places in which boys are engaged by a variety of teachers of both sexes. In the process, boys create a mess, get untidy, and crawl all over the place. But they are being engaged by people who understand male energy. Probably, this is part of the reason that parents find private schools attractive: they offer males a sound disciplinary framework which channels boys' energy instead of containing them at desks, and accusing physical boys of 'violence'. The disciplinary sanctions are important, too. Boys from one wealthy school commented that while other boys might tell teachers to "go **** yourself", 'you can't get away with that sort of thing here'.

If males can be targeted in private schools, why not in State schools?

Getting more men into teaching is not impossible. Some approaches to the problem do seem politically difficult. It is simply a matter of what the community wants to regard as its priority. If private schools attract significant numbers of males, it will be clear that if parents want the full range of teachers for their children, they will have to choose private schools instead of State schools.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR BOYS' EDUCATION

All the above has worrying implications for the education of boys. Let us remember what the problems are with a couple of quotations from established researchers:

There is now compelling evidence that there are gender differences in students' engagement, motivation, achievement and students' relationship to work and school. For the most part, the differences are not in boys' favour. (Martin 2002:15).

the evidence indicating that boys, on average, achieve at significantly lower levels than girls on ALL areas of the assessed cognitive curriculum throughout their primary and secondary schooling is not in dispute (Rowe,2000:2).

being a boy, with all its attendant qualities of noisiness, risk and adventure, does not typically mesh very well with what teachers expect of children who are in classrooms. (West,2005)

and many practitioners agree, judging from workshops I conduct with school principals and teachers around Australia. Tony Butz commented to the Inquiry on Male Teacher Numbers that

Some boys never have a male teacher for the first 6-7 years at school. They are not surprisingly the ones least likely to make a successful transition to high school and adolescence. Boys made up over 81% of the 41,000 suspensions from NSW schools in 1999

Few academics tell students about this research which shows that boys struggle to learn in many classrooms. In fact I sometimes hear from people whose university teachers attack these ideas with great venom. West (2005) shows that many education academics have indeed been outspoken in their attacks on the idea that ways might be found to help boys learn:

For well over a decade, West shows (2005), many education academics opposed to boys' education defused the arguments for boys' strategies. They heaped scorn on their presenters and ignored their thoughtful comments, choosing instead to ridicule their arguments by pointing to the simplest presentation of them in mass media. At best, they suggested that there were no simple answers. But even this carefully avoided answering the questions which boys' advocates had raised in the media and elsewhere: why aren't more boys engaged by school? How can we help boys learn- especially Aboriginal boys, dark-skinned boys of all types, Arabic boys and working-class boys?

In the period 1992-2002, established interests were trying to kill off the boys' education issue by whatever means they could. The whole recalled the arguments of Marx and Lenin who would present the views of Comrade X or Y in savagely ironical terms, and then dismiss them as fundamentally flawed, incorrect and an insult to the proletariat. A detailed exposition of the correct way of seeing things would then follow. In this sense, the arguments about boys' education were highly ideological. Girls' education had become sacred in the educational citadel and it was heresy even to ask whether boys' strategies should be added to them (adapted from West ,2005). I wonder how much this has changed. Evidence from teacher education textbooks suggests it has not.

Education should not be territory in which males are afraid to speak or act in masculine ways. Compare the ways in which female learning styles (writing journals, sharing, and so on) are valued throughout education at all levels today; but masculine ways (active learning, risk-taking, experimenting, seeking adventurous solutions) commonly are not. Ways must be found for universities to teach male-sympathetic learning styles.

CONCLUSIONS

- 1 .Careful attention must given to roles played by fathers and other men in encouraging boys and girls to learn. More research is needed on what happens to boys (and also girls) who grow up without adequate attention from a father. Fathers' voices need to be heard by schools.
2. Pilot schemes should begin to find ways of nurturing men who are entering teaching. The aim would be to assist and encourage men to stay in teaching and help them with problems hindering them. The first step would be to listen to male teacher education students and assist them with their difficulties.
3. Too little has changed since the Report *Boys: Getting it Right*. Teacher education programs should be made more male-friendly and less male-hostile. There ought to be subjects in the teacher education curriculum which examine boy-friendly learning and ways of successfully engaging boys .**Teachers in schools still have enormous gaps in their knowledge about what it means to be male. In workshops, teachers often seem startled by some of the medical literature detailing boys' common patterns of growth and development.**
4. State primary schools should be encouraged to target some positions for male teachers. This could be done in some pilot schools and carefully evaluated. Parents might be able to offer advice and assistance.
- 5.Careful study should be made of Gap students who act as surrogate teachers in some private schools. Gap students have finished school in the UK or elsewhere and spend a year attached to a school as sports coaches or similar. This is one way of bringing more males into schools.
- 7.. Older males may be attracted to schools to act as mentors, as a recent Commonwealth Report shows (Macallum and Beltman,1999).
- 8 .Sustained research ought to be done on enhancing the work done by males in raising and educating boys.
9. Teachers need much more reward for effort. Ambitious males will not stay in a profession in which high-achievers get the same rewards as minimal performers.
10. **We must understand that if many – perhaps most- boys see school as “ a complete waste of time” (West, 2002) – then there is no reason at all for boys to wish to remain in schools for the rest of their lives as teachers.**

The Research Group on Men and Families is a group of researchers at the University of Western Sydney. It provides workshops for schools, parents and others. It stays in touch with research worldwide. Its research findings are disseminated through a wide network of media contacts. Its work includes better fathering, improving boys' education, and men's health (especially emotional health and body image problems). Seminars are provided for parents, adolescents and teachers, mainly in Australia. It has links with:

- * The Men's Health Information and Research Centre at UWS
- * The Council on the Ageing and Older Men: New Ideas
- * State schools in the Parramatta region
- Catholic Education Office, Sydney
- Independent schools in Australia and the UK
- Cognate researchers in the UK and USA

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APPENDIX

**MUSIC EDUCATION HOURS AT UWS AND UWS MACARTHUR
DEIDRE RUSSELL-BOWIE 2002**

Over the past twenty-two years UWSM (in its various forms) has provided its teacher education students with a broadly based Creative Arts education, both at the undergraduate level and the post-initial level. The subjects and courses offered were varied, catered for a range of interests and abilities, and were backed by quality resources and staffing. However, recently, this has also changed dramatically.

For example, in the most recent UWSM undergraduate BEd program, students had 24 hours of compulsory music education and a wide selection of innovative and practical electives; within the post-initial BEd award, students could complete a specialist degree BEd(Creative Arts) and thereby be recognised for their expertise and experience in this area. However, over the past few years, the BEd (Creative Arts) had been dismantled and in the new BEd UG course compulsory music education units and hours have been decreased so that students have only **nine** hours of music education in the whole four year course. Given their significant lack of background in formal music education on entry into UWS, this amount of hours to teach students how to teach music, given their background, seems farcical, especially compared with the hours other NSW universities allocate to music education, (See Table 1).

In each of the dozen or so reports into arts education in Australia over the last thirty years, widely acknowledged problems have been identified which prevent primary teachers from implementing effective Creative Arts programs in their schools. These include lack of confidence, lack of resources and lack of training and skills. One major recommendation arising from each report to overcome these problems has been to increase the number of teacher training hours for student teachers in the arts. However, as can be seen in the table below, these recommendations have not been heeded and teachers continue to lack confidence, resources and skills and so, in general, do not implement effective creative arts programs. **The decrease in music education units and hours is also reflected in a similar decrease in hours in each of the other Creative Arts education areas.**

Table 1: Compulsory Music Education Hours in NSW University Primary Teacher Education Award Programs.

University	1980	1987	1992	2000	2002
University of Newcastle	130	130	96	40	21
University of Technology, Sydney	60	60	66	30	30
Charles Sturt University (Riverina CAE)	64	68	52	48	48
University of New England	52	64	60	39	15
Wollongong University	111	91	45	15	15
University of Sydney	48	48	36		
Macquarie University	107	60	28		
Australian Catholic College	NA	108	24	36	36

Charles Sturt University (Mitchell CAE)	NA	39	24		
University of Western Sydney (Macarthur)	68	60	16	20	9
University of Western Sydney (Nepean)	117	NA	22	6	9
University of New South Wales	NA	52	4	-	-

Given that the NSW *Education Reform Act* (1990) specifically states that all primary school children every year must be given courses of study in both music and art, as well as the other Key Learning Areas, I believe that we are doing our student teachers a significant disservice by decreasing the amount of access they have to training within the arts, thereby setting them up to feel inadequate in implementing the Creative Arts syllabus in their classroom.

Meeting the needs of the SW of Sydney

Our University has prided itself on meeting the needs of its local community within the Greater West of Sydney. Our local community is the South West of Sydney which, research clearly indicates, is one of the least artistically well-off areas, with very few outlets for people to be involved in the arts. In the local primary schools, students are significantly less likely to have any sort of arts education compared with students from areas with higher SES and lower NESB populations.

When our primary teacher education students are compared with similar students from Namibia, South Africa, Illinois and Ireland, they score significantly lower in relation to their background in music and other arts subjects than students from these other countries. Therefore in responding to the community’s needs we should be offering them a wide range of creative arts opportunities to make up for this deficit.

However, this has not happened. Instead, all music, drama, and now Fine Arts award courses as well as the Academy of Music, have been removed from the Bankstown and Campbelltown Campuses. Added to this, the University has now significantly decreased the amount of Creative Arts education hours within the new B.Ed degree.

Late last year the then Mayor of Bankstown, Kevin Hill, expressed his great concern that now South West Sydney has no artistic presence within the University. It is clear that these decisions not only affect staff and students, but the local community who we are meant to be serving. Thus, no matter how much passion and commitment I have to teaching the arts in the local area, my hands are tied as one by one significant and effective areas of arts education are removed from the campuses which serve this community and our schools.

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 [NB Since this was written, the number of hours of music teaching has been further reduced. It is currently under three hours in the degree B.Teach. -PW]

