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FIFTH FORM BOYS' SENSE OF SELF

AND THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree

of Master of Arts

in Education at Massey University

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1996
ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with how boys grow to be men and the subject positions which the secondary school curriculum constructs, supports, and invites boys to take up. Thirty predominantly Pakeha, high achieving boys from a fifth form class in a single-sex school participated. Two boys in particular were focused on throughout a series of mathematics and English lessons. Using a generative methodology, I investigated and illuminated curriculum enactment as it pertained to the lived realities of these boys. This study supports previous studies which have uncovered the androcentric nature of the school curriculum. It also reveals the contradictory and conflicting subject positions embedded in curriculum enactment in the classroom. The processes of negotiating and mediating these subject positions in the formation of a personal 'sense of self' are complex and involve the curriculum and familial contexts which are class and ethnically located. Two conclusions that I have reached have particular significance for possibilities for change: limited opportunities are afforded by the secondary school curriculum for the boys to develop critical self-reflective skills; those boys whose sense of self is in conflict with a hegemonic masculinity experience little support for their different ways of being in the world. I argue that, through addressing these two issues in curriculum reform, possibilities for change can be created.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the result of forty-five years of learning and growing and thinking. Numerous people have been influential in different ways along that journey. My initial thanks must go to Hugh, Reinhard and Jorg, none of whom would ever understand why this study needed to be done, nor why I, of all people, should do it. Yet, it is the very absence of this understanding that has been a major catalyst for this work. My thanks also to Colin Lankshear whose few words of encouragement meant so much - another catalyst.

My children, Julian, Craig, Aileen, and Robert deserve special thanks. They continue to teach me much about the non-unitary and contradictory nature of sense of self. (I think I have learned enough, now, kids.) They have this belief that life will change magically with the completion of this thesis. I fear they will be disappointed. Completion of a thesis, like giving birth, is the beginning not the end.

Special thanks also to the women in academia who have understood, encouraged and supported me in so many ways. In particular, Judith Loveridge who helped in the early stages as second supervisor, and a big thank you to Marion Court who saw me through to the end. With empathy and warmth, they challenged me to clarify and justify my arguments and discussions. I am the richer for that. An appreciative hug to Jude Roddick, my colleague, who has cheerfully lightened my workload where possible so that I could more readily concentrate on my writing.

Anne-Marie O’Neill, my main supervisor, has been a major influence on the final shape of this thesis. I have drawn on her work extensively and continue to be inspired and challenged by her keen discernment, scholarly acumen and intellectual rigor. I consider myself privileged to have worked with her. I am also very appreciative of her good humour, forbearance and ongoing friendship. Thanks, Anne-Marie.

Finally, my thanks must go to the teachers and the boys who participated in this study. I regard their willingness to open their classroom to me as a very special gift which I treasure. I hope that through their participation they have gained some knowledge of the research process. I hope also that some of them have been prompted to question why 'fifth form boys’ sense of self' needed to be studied.
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