

Gender Relations in Elite Coeducational Schools

by

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades across the English-speaking world there has been a profound shift to a market model of education. Families are positioned as ‘consumers’, responsible for choosing the school that will give their children an advantage in this new competitive world. Consequently, middle class families experience increased anxiety about choosing the ‘best school’. Schools vary in innumerable ways, many of which are subtle and complex, but the gender context of a school, whether coeducational or single-sex, is a highly visible attribute that has become central to parental decision-making. As a result of a long-standing concern that while coeducation is good for boys it is ‘risky’ for girls, many families who have a choice have sent their boys to coeducational schools and their girls to all-girls schools. This trend has led to elite coeducational schools in Melbourne, Australia, experiencing a gender imbalance in their enrolments.

Despite decades of comparative research addressing the relative merits of coeducational vs. single-sex settings, for girls and/or boys, the results have been inconclusive. It is increasingly clear that within this comparative research paradigm, disentangling the gender context setting from class differences and a range of other confounding variables is almost impossible. Rather than continue to pursue an answer to the question “Which educational setting is better for girls, single-sex or coeducational?” I argue that closer grained analyses of schools to identify whether they promote gender equity and support students to develop positive gender identities provide an alternative way forward.

This multi-case study is located in three elite coeducational schools in Melbourne, Australia. It is located in the qualitative research tradition and employs a feminist theoretical perspective and ethnographic methodology. It explores the interactions and relationships between the organizational

structures of the schools, the staff and the students – both girls and boys. Raewyn Connell's (2009; 2002) four dimensions of gender – power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations – are used as 'thinking tools' to analyse the gender regime of each of the schools. The central questions I investigated were, whether these coeducational schools were sustaining or disrupting the traditional gender hierarchies, and whether they were they still 'risky' educational environments for girls.

In all three schools, although tensions were evident in each of the dimensions of gender, I found that the traditional gender hierarchies were disrupted at many points. Girls and boys worked together as colleagues and friends, developing equitable relationships and gender stereotypes were regularly challenged.

I argue that each of these schools was acutely aware of the negative discourse surrounding girls and coeducational contexts, and had implemented a range of policy and program initiatives to promote gender equity and address concerns regarding the environment in which these students are constructing their gender identities. Consequently, although gender relations in these schools continue to be complex, the concerns articulated by middle class parents that their daughters will be at a disadvantage in coeducational settings appear to be fading and perhaps unwarranted in these elite coeducational schools.

Connell, R 2009, *Gender: in world perspective*, Short Introductions, Polity, Cambridge, UK.

Connell, RW 2002, *Gender*, Polity, Cambridge, UK.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The closing years of the twentieth century saw the rise of neoliberal policies in Australia and other Anglophone countries. This led to significant shifts in the economic and political climate, with an increasing reliance on market forces and valorisation of individual choice, as evident in a wide range of policy areas, including education (Bonner & Caro 2007; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009; Pusey 2003). During the same period there was an increasing reliance on formal qualifications and fierce competition to access courses leading to the most desirable qualifications (Jackson & Bisset 2005). These trends combined to create a set of circumstances that many observers argue has contributed to middle-class parents experiencing increased anxiety about providing the 'best education' for their children (Ball 2003a; Ball & Youdell 2009; Brantlinger 2003; David et al. 1997; Morgan 2009).

Australian schools are categorised as government or non-government schools, and within the non-government sector they are further divided into Catholic and Independent schools. In the period of the rise of neoliberal policies, middle-class parents have increasingly chosen to not send their children to government schools (Bonner & Caro 2007; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009). For parents with access to the resources that enable a choice between schools, a range of factors are likely to play into this decision, but for many the choice between a coeducational setting and a single-sex¹ setting is central to that decision. There is a long-standing concern that while coeducation is 'good' for boys it is 'risky' for girls (Gill 1989; Jackson & Bisset 2005; Pahlke, Bigler & Patterson 2014; Tsolidis & Dobson 2006). As a result, middle-class families, who have a choice, have

¹ The common expression continues to be single-sex, rather than single gender, and I will keep this usage.

tended to send their boys to coeducational schools and their girls to all-girls schools (Ainley & Daly 2002; Ball & Gewirtz 1997; Elwood & Gipps 1999; Jackson & Bisset 2005). This trend has led to independent coeducational schools struggling to enrol as many girls as boys. This imbalance has the potential to become self-perpetuating as parents, concerned that girls will be further disadvantaged if they are in the minority at school and in class, continue to avoid coeducational settings for their daughters.

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminist research raised the alarm about the disadvantages experienced by girls in coeducational settings (American Association of University Women 1992; Mahoney 1985; Spender 1982; Spender & Sarah 1988), and in Australia and across the English-speaking world, a range of programs were put in place to raise awareness amongst school staff, and the girls themselves, about strategies to address female disadvantage. In the decades that followed there were many attempts to compare outcomes for girls in coeducational and single-sex settings. However, the results were inconclusive and it became clear that it was extremely difficult to control for all the potential confounding variables arising in the school experience (Halpern et al. 2011; Mael et al. 2005; Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014; Thompson & Ungerleider 2004). Consequently, it was not possible to attribute differences in educational and other outcomes solely to the gender context (coeducational or single-sex) of the school.

During the 1990s there was a move towards reconceptualising gender as a set of relations rather than the simple binary that underpinned the early comparative research. Gender was 'denaturalised', coming instead to be understood as a construction that draws on the social context and discourses available to the individual. This theoretical perspective drew on post-structuralism, and much of the research within this paradigm focused on individuals and their construction of gender identities. A good deal of this research neglected the school as the setting for the production of gender and social relations, with the school setting often remaining invisible.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) identify a potential problem with this lack of attention to school settings, arguing that since schools are 'thoroughly gendered in their own organisation and practice ... there is a danger in seeing the school itself as some neutral background' (p.114). If schools are 'thoroughly gendered' and active participants in the construction of gender relations, then analysing school settings and the processes within them will be important to understanding how they contribute to students' construction of their gender identities. It is necessary, then, to attend to the 'gendered nature of the contexts, structures and micro-processes of schooling' (Arnot 2002, p.8). Such analysis has rarely been carried out, whether as part of the research that compared outcomes in coeducational and single-sex settings, or the more ethnographic case studies that have focused on constructivist understandings of the development of gender identity and student interactions.

The current study attempts to address this by interrogating the gender relationships in three schools at both the institutional level and the individual level, using Raewyn² Connell's relational theory of gender (Connell 2009; Connell 2002). In *Gender: in world perspective*, Connell argues 'gender is [a] structure of social relations' (p.11). Gender relations in this framework are multidimensional. Connell has identified four dimensions of gender, described as 'tools for thinking' (Connell 2009, p.85). She argues that while they are useful in the analysis of complex gender regimes they are not separate and independent in the life of organisations. These four dimensions of gender are power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations. These 'tools' can be used to describe and analyse the gender orders of communities and societies and the gender regimes within organisations and institutions.

This thesis aims to describe, analyse and compare the gender regimes of three independent coeducational schools in Melbourne, Australia. These

² I have chosen to include the first name of an author the first time I refer to them in each chapter to disrupt any presumption that authors are necessarily male.

schools were part of a rapidly growing educational sector in Australia – independent schools that are ‘consciously coeducational’ (Sadovnik & Semel 2002, p.134) and cater to middle- and upper-class families. The principals and senior staff at each of the schools were acutely aware of the negative discourse surrounding girls and coeducational settings and of the propensity for families to enrol sons, but not daughters at their schools. In discussions with the principals, they would share campaign tales of interviews with families who wanted ‘other people’s daughters to civilise their sons’, of incentives offered to families to entice them to enrol their daughters as well as their sons, and program and policy initiatives designed to ensure that girls were not disadvantaged in their academic or social development. The continuing imbalance was a constant cause of concern not only for senior staff but also for many classroom teachers, who reported that when there was a gender imbalance in class it impacted on students’ experience.

This study explores the interactions and relationships between the organisational structures, staff and students, both girls and boys, of each of the schools, with the aim of answering the two questions at the heart of this project:

- Do these schools sustain or disrupt the traditional gender hierarchies?
- Are these coeducational schools still ‘risky’ educational environments for girls?

This research project was funded by the Australian Research Council under its Strategic Projects in Industry Research and Training grant program, under the title ‘Coeducation in the new millennium: choices, changes and challenges’. It sought to provide a snapshot of life in three independent coeducational schools that was contextualised and multi-layered; it is a study of the practices and meanings of coeducation in specific school contexts.

Introducing the three schools

Children and adolescents spend a very large part of their time at school. As Julie McLeod and Lyn Yates (2006) note, 'Schooling is the social institution that we subject all young lives to' (p.228). Consequently, it is important to consider 'what schools are like as settings for the making of masculinities and femininities' (Connell 2008a, p.136) and whether they 'foreground gender and magnify its influence ... [or] put gender further in the background and diminish its influence' (Legewie & DiPrete 2014, p.262). There are many facets of school life that can contribute to gender identity and gender relationships (Hirst & Cooper 2008; O'Flynn & Lee 2010; Riddell & Tett 2010; Smith 2012; Wright & O'Flynn 2007) and consequently there is 'diversity *within* settings and diversity *between* settings' (Swain 2005, p.77).

The three schools participating in this study were, in the Australian context, 'elite' schools: 'schools at the top end of the private school market, whose fees were greater than AUS\$10,000 per annum', where 'Tuition fees did not include ... textbooks, uniforms, stationery, excursions, sports registration, coaching levies, optional accomplishments, enrolment costs (up to AUS\$5300) and 'donations' to building funds' (McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012, p.7). There has been a recent resurgence of interest in elite schools (Kenway & Koh 2015), some of it linked to the economic and political turn to neoliberalism, markets and globalisation. Some examples of this work are the Scottish Independent Schools Project (SISP) (Forbes & Weiner 2008, 2014; Lingard et al. 2012) and Elite independent schools in globalizing circumstances: a multi-sited global ethnography (2010–2014) (Kenway & Koh 2015; McCarthy & Kenway 2014). Although there is 'no standard definition of what constitutes an "elite school"' (Fahey, Prosser & Shaw 2015), much of this work draws on the definition of elite schools provided by Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009). It includes some but not necessarily all of the following characteristics: their identification as elite schools; a wide-ranging curriculum; exclusive social networks; superior grounds and facilities; and selective entrance either through high fees or academic testing. He argues

that there are 'four domains of work, in which all students, to some extent or another, must engage: the academic, the athletic, the artistic and the extra-curricular' (p.1103). As will become clear, many of the characteristics identified by Gaztambide-Fernandez are evident in these schools.

The following descriptions of the three case-study schools in this research set the scene for the analysis of their gender regimes that follows.

Treetops College

Treetops College³ was established as an independent coeducational school without any religious affiliation in the 1970s by a group of enthusiastic and dedicated parents. It was located almost 30 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD on the suburban fringe of the city and sat above the road amongst gum trees. The low school buildings appeared to hug the ridge, spilling down the hill. The main buildings of grey concrete brick were built in the 1970s and formed a central spine, which students travelled along as they progressed through the school: from the junior school down the hill to the senior school. Some specialist classrooms were located within the main building and others in purpose-built centres located around the central building. There were extensive playing fields and sports facilities beyond the buildings. Verandahs ran along much of the length of the buildings, surrounded by garden beds of mostly native plants marked out with railway sleepers and rocks. The general impression was informal and relaxed, with a sense of space as there were views across the surrounding valleys from many points around the school.

In the secondary school each year level was assigned a dedicated area that included an open meeting space, an adjoining teachers' workstation and a number of general-purpose classrooms surrounding it. Specialist classrooms were shared across a range of year levels.

³ The names of the schools and all staff and students have been changed to maintain anonymity.

In 2002 there were 1157 students enrolled at the school, with 895 enrolled in the secondary years. Students were drawn from the suburbs surrounding the school and the semi-rural areas stretching beyond it. It was not a school that students travelled out to from the inner suburbs. Although it fitted the criteria of an elite school, it was not as elite as the other two schools participating in this study. According to the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), the families of approximately 60 per cent of students were located in the top quartile of socio-educational advantage based on parents' occupation and education, with backgrounds in small business, the trades and the professions. Furthermore, the fees here were approximately 20 per cent lower than the fees at the other two schools. As it had been established in the 1970s, the first group of second-generation students commenced at the school during the 1990s, and a small group of alumni and their children who were now at the school were celebrated in an alumni association pamphlet in 2000.

Melville College

Melville College was established in the middle of the nineteenth century as an elite boys school affiliated to one of the Protestant churches. Girls were first enrolled into the junior school in the 1970s. In 2002, it was a large multi-campus college with a total enrolment of almost 3500. The campus that participated in the current research was located not far from the centre of the CBD. The main building, which overlooked a large oval, was imposing, with towers and colonnades running along the front. With the construction of other facilities, courtyard areas developed between the buildings and the only other open space was a soccer pitch. Many of the classrooms looked onto the various courtyards.

The school was a P-12 school however students in Prep to Year 4 were located on a separate property a short distance away. The junior school (Years 5-7) was located in one wing of the main building, while the middle school (Years 8-10) was located in the other wing. The senior college was in

a separate building that had been the boarding house. While both buildings had traditional exteriors, only the senior college had a traditional internal structure: a central corridor with heavy wooden doors to the left and the right. The classrooms of the middle school, on the other hand, were located around an atrium constructed of glass and metal.

In 2002 there were 1536 students enrolled at this campus, with 1143 enrolled in the secondary school (Years 7-12). The central location of this school ensured that students travelled from all over Melbourne to attend, and according to the ICSEA, approximately 75 per cent of students came from families in the top quartile of the index, primarily from business and the professions. The school belongs to the Associated Public Schools (APS) group – a long-standing group of eleven independent schools in the Melbourne and Geelong areas. Originally these were elite boys schools modelled on the English system of great public schools (Power et al. 2003). Melville College was proud of its history and traditions and in 2002 had on staff both a college historian and a college curator. The alumni association, which also had several paid officers and an office on this campus, had a strong profile, both in fundraising and in school politics, raising \$250,000 for the school in 2001. Many students had parents and grandparents who had attended the school.

All Saints College

All Saints College was established as an independent girls school in the late nineteenth century by a group of religious women, and the traditions and religious links continued to be an important part of school life during the period of this study. Enrolment was initially opened to boys in the junior years during the 1970s. A policy of 'gradualism' in extending coeducation meant that it was not until 1984 that the school became fully coeducational (Peel 1999). All Saints College was also located not far from the CBD and the original buildings were double-storey Victorian houses located on a busy arterial road. As the school had grown it had purchased nearby properties

and, consequently, occupied a patchwork of adjoining properties. The school had retained a number of the original large Victorian houses and added two large blocks of classrooms, as well as a sports complex and hall. There was a small oval and a basketball court, with some small patches of grass and paved areas between buildings. There were also several narrow pathways between the school buildings and the adjoining properties. The school also used a number of nearby properties, which students had to cross surrounding streets to reach, with the school employing two crossing supervisors to facilitate students access.

The school was a P-12 school, with the primary school (Years P-6) separate from the secondary school (Years 7-12). However, the secondary school was not divided into designated lower school (Years 7-9) and upper school (Years 10-12) areas, nor was it organised around year level areas, as was the case at the other two schools.

In 2002 there were 1169 students enrolled at the school, with 797 in the secondary school. Like Melville College, All Saints College drew its students from across Melbourne. According to ICSEA, approximately 75 per cent of the students came from families in the top quartile of the index, a mix of professionals and those involved in the media and entertainment worlds. All Saints College was proud of its history, and celebrated those students whose parents or grandparents had attended the school with a group photograph in the annual magazine. However, it seemed the alumni association had not traditionally had the high level of resources or capacity to fund the school as was evident at Melville College. The principal explained that this was a consequence of having originally been a girls school; in the past, few of the female alumni had had access to independent incomes. Consequently, the alumni association was not regarded as a powerful lobby group in the same way as the association at Melville College was.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 2 I explore in more detail the social context of this research, the political and social currents that resulted in the uneven enrolments at these three elite independent coeducational schools, and the decision to use Connell's (2009; 2002) relational theory of gender and four dimensions of gender relations as the analytical framework.

Chapter 3 identifies the qualitative methodological tradition informing this research and, following the taxonomy developed by Crotty (1998), identifies the epistemology underpinning this study as constructivist, the theoretical perspective as feminist, the research methodology as ethnographic and the research method as a multi-case study. This is followed by a detailed report of the data collection and analysis.

The first of the dimensions of gender – power relations – is examined in Chapter 4. This includes analysis of both formal leadership structures and informal power relationships – in the classroom, and in relation to a range of activities linked to physical strength and, finally, sex-based harassment.

In Chapter 5 the focus is on production relations. Staff roles and responsibilities, students' subject choices and participation in extra-curricular activities, and whether students are called on or volunteer to help, are explored in relation to this dimension.

Chapter 6 turns to the dimension of emotional relations. Here the school climate and students' friendships and romances, as well as the way they moderate each other's negative behaviours, are central to the analysis.

The fourth dimension of gender – symbolic relations – is addressed in Chapter 7. There were two key ways in which the schools represented themselves: a range of publications, including marketing materials, and the school uniform. These were the focus of this analysis.

Finally, Chapter 8 returns to the questions posed in this study, arguing that these three schools did have the potential to disrupt the traditional gender hierarchies and that the 'risks' for girls attending these schools have abated.

CHAPTER 2

FEMINISM, GIRLS AND COEDUCATION

As early as the eighteenth century Mary Wollstonecraft identified gender inequity across the economic and social worlds and turned to education as a pathway to improving the situation of women in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792/1992). Ever since, 'feminists have viewed education both as one of the main sites of female oppression and social exclusion and as a site of distinct possibility and therefore a principal target for challenge and activity' (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.37).

Fast forward to the twentieth century when second wave feminists identified women's disadvantaged economic position in the 1970s. Mary Tetreault (1987) recalls it seemed a 'logical first step ... to determine if women's inferior economic status was linked to the education system ... and [we] were shocked at the sexism we found' (p.227). It seemed that the inequalities in the wider society were carried into the classrooms shared by girls and boys, and rather than being ameliorated, as had been hoped, there was a concern that the classroom setting amplified and solidified gender differences (Kenway et al. 1994; Mac an Ghaill & Haywood 1998). A string of studies carried out during the 1970s and 1980s painted a bleak picture, describing in emotive and colourful language a plethora of ways in which inequality played out in the classroom.

In Australia the Schools Commission Report *Girls, school and society* (1975) argued that many schools reinforced gender differentiation in both 'overt and obvious' ways and 'more subtly' as a result of expectations, omissions and actions 'based upon unexamined assumptions' (pp.155-156). It identified a range of ways in which 'schools obviously draw attention to and reinforce the expectations of sex differences' (p.156). In an early British study, Michelle Stanworth (1983) found that both girls and boys said that boys received more

than their fair share of teacher attention. She expressed concern that although girls and boys were following the same curriculum, sitting in the same classes in front of the same teachers, they would 'emerge from school with the implicit understanding that the world is a man's world, in which women can and should take second place' (p.58). In another British report at the time, Pat Mahoney (1983) described boys' 'monopoly' (p.108) of physical space, linguistic space and teacher attention, and identified a range of detrimental consequences for girls as a result of the boys' negative attitudes and behaviour towards them. Consequently, she described coeducational schools as 'schools for the boys' (Mahoney 1985). The gendered expectations of both students and teachers were resulting in classrooms attuned to boys' needs and dominated by them.

Meanwhile, similar findings were reported in America. Bernice Sandler (1987; 1982) documented a range of ways in which males and females were treated differently in classrooms, characterising the classroom climate as a 'chilly' one for girls and young women. A decade later Myra and David Sadker (1994) brought together twenty-five years of feminist work in a volume *Failing at fairness: how America's schools cheat girls*. They concluded that classrooms 'consist of two worlds: one of boys in action, the other of girls' inaction' (p.42) and that the gender differentiated responses of teachers contributed to maintaining this divide.

Dale Spender (1982; 1988), a prominent critic of coeducational settings, argued that the gender stereotypes that students and teachers bring to the coeducational setting – males lead while females follow, males speak while females listen, males are intellectually curious while females are not, males are aggressive, while females are nurturing – were reinforced by the school environment in 'quite pernicious' ways (Spender 1988, p.149). The situation of girls in coeducational classrooms was encapsulated in the title of an edited collection she compiled with Elizabeth Sarah (1988) – in coeducational settings girls were *Learning to lose*. Even those who found fault with Spender's methods, such as Sara Delamont (1984), who accused her of

making 'polemical and unsubstantiated claims' (p.331), agreed with her conclusions that schools were sexist institutions. There was widespread concern that, particularly in coeducational settings, girls continued to provide a 'negative reference group' for boys (Shaw 1980. p.71).

Becky Francis (2000) summarised research findings from this period as describing a 'grim picture of rampant gender inequality in the classroom', with suggestions that girls were 'marginalized and belittled' (p.4). These findings brought into public consciousness the idea that coeducational settings were risky environments for girls, an idea that has continued to have a grip on the public imagination into the present time (Jackson & Bisset 2005; Jackson 2010; Pahlke, Bigler & Patterson 2014; Tsolidis & Dobson 2006), with parents choosing girls' schools for their daughters 'largely out of fear' (Jackson 2010, p.233). In research investigating factors that influence parents choice of single-sex (or coeducational) schools, the fact that a school was single-sex was rated far more highly by parents of girls at single-sex schools than parents of boys at single-sex schools. It was argued that the girls' parents saw a single-sex school as 'a space away' (Watson cited in Jackson & Bisset 2005, p.206) from boys, while the boys were described as potentially 'impair[ing]' the girls' chances of academic success (Jackson & Bisset 2005, p.206). These concerns are also evident in media articles exploring the trials and tribulations suffered by middle- and upper-class parents attempting to choose the 'best school' for their children. Girls schools were described as providing an environment where girls were 'protected from the domination of boys' (Burrows 2011) and could 'shine away from lime-light grabbing, distracting boys' (Sugden 2011), without having to 'compete with boys' (Witchalls 2011). In coeducational settings, it was argued, boys 'tend to dominate the discussions; take more of the leads ... The noisy boys suck up all the air time in the classroom at the detriment of the girls' (McLellan 2014). It has also been argued that boys 'monopolise the positions of authority' (Bennett 2013) and 'play football ... [while the] girls stand around the edge watching' (Witchalls 2011). The picture painted and the language used

crystallise the fears of parents who chose to send their daughters to single-sex schools and their sons to coeducational schools.

Gender equity in schools

Despite the negative picture painted of coeducational schools, Madeleine Arnot, Miriam David and Gaby Weiner (1999) reported that 'it was assumed that schools (and particularly the teaching profession) could be used as agencies of social change in order to reduce if not eliminate inequalities between the sexes in education, and also ideally in the economy and in the family' (p.67). Consequently, in the 1970s, across the Western world feminist educators 'engaged with the project of modernizing gender through the reform of the educational system' (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.viii). In Australia the Schools Commission had a brief for 'social change through education' (Kenway 1997) and commissioned the report *Girls, schools and society* in 1975. It set the stage in Australia for 'a focus on girls' schooling that was taken up vigorously by feminist and educational researchers' (Gill & Tranter 2014, p.279).

Lyn Yates (1998) identified four phases in policy and research over the following decades, the foci of which were:

[initially] 'non-sexist curriculum' and de-emphasising gender in pedagogy; then ... 'girl-friendly schooling' and attention to girls' learning styles; then ... differentiated 'inclusive' practices which were sensitive to other differences as well as gender; [and finally] the construction of gender. (p.162)

This work led to greater awareness of sexist language, behaviour and expectations; programs to encourage girls into 'non-traditional' careers; and changes in pedagogy, resources, curriculum and assessment (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Kenway et al. 1997; Kessler et al. 1985; Yates 1998). By 1996 the Australian report *Gender and school education* found that 'attention to gender issues by systems, schools

and individual teachers does make a difference to the gender experiences of students in schools' (Collins et al. 1996, p.xiv).

However, the changes were not as great as had been expected or hoped for. Second wave feminist policy and research had aimed to remove gender inequity, but this did not prove straightforward. As Jane Kenway and her colleagues (1997) note, 'there was almost always a "mysterious gap" between the hopes represented in such theories, policies and suggestions for practices and what happened in schools' (p.200).

Until the 1990s the focus had been on changing the girls and the curriculum. '[A] great deal of effort and money' (Kenway et al. 1997, p.xxiii) had been dedicated to this project, and 'a strong tradition of Australian policy and research on gender equity and schooling' (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000, p.18) had developed. However, there was very little attention paid to changing boys, or school-wide structures, and there was a growing realisation that the narrow focus of gender equity work in schools may have contributed to this mysterious gap (Gill & Starr 2000), with ongoing research revealing 'the gender hierarchies ... [and] reproductive role of education in maintaining symbolic representations of male rationality and female subservience' (Dillabough 2001, p.14). Nevertheless, this one-sided approach to gender reform – which relied on comparing girls against boys – did leave the door open to a competing discourse.

The 'boy turn' of the 1990s

In the 1990s a new question was rising to prominence: 'What about the boys?' The focus shifted to a range of indicators against which boys, on average, were not doing as well as girls, on average; these included reading, suspensions and expulsions, and end-of-school assessments (Francis & Skelton 2005; Gill & Starr 2000; Kenway et al. 1997). This was not only an Australian phenomenon; Judith Gill and Karen Starr (2000) noted that by the end of the twentieth century in the developed world there was 'widespread

concern about the phenomenon described as boys' underachievement' (p.323).

Marcus Weaver-Hightower (2003) coined the term the 'boy turn' to describe this shift, describing it as a 'convenient double entendre', referring to both a turn towards boys and (away from girls) and a reference to boys 'finally having a "turn", a share of research and policy attention' (p.472). This encapsulated the competitive nature of the discourse that had rapidly developed. As Becky Francis and Christine Skelton (2005) argued, many people came to believe 'that feminists have "won" and girls are now doing well but boys have paid the price for this progress' (p.40). Eva Cox (1995) described this as 'competing victim syndrome' (p.304).

The 'discovery' that boys were the 'new oppressed in schools' (Mills & Keddie 2010, p.407) was taken up by the media and quickly developed into 'a moral panic' (Epstein et al. 1998; Lingard, Martino & Mills 2009, p.7). The data showing differences on average scores and performances came to be understood as 'all boys are being outperformed by all girls' (Keddie & Mills 2009, p.29). Much of the discussion treated girls and boys in schools as distinct groups in competition with each other; that it was 'a zero sum game' (Gill & Tranter 2014, p.280). David Zyngier (2009) argued that this was 'untrue and unhelpful' (p.113). Furthermore, this framing of the issue as girls' gains being at the expense of boys fed into the 'politics of resentment, or backlash, against feminism [that had] been growing since the early 1990s' (Mills & Keddie 2010, p. 417). Francis (2010) argued that there were 'misogynist overtones' in much of this discussion, with girls and female teachers blamed for boys perceived 'failure' (p.1).

In the decades following the release of *Girls, school and society* a string of reports and policies addressed girls' disadvantage. However, in 1997, in the wake of 'the boy turn', the Australian government released the new *Gender equity framework for Australian schools*, the shift to 'gender' in the title of this new policy 'a signifier that boys were now to be included in the remit of the

policy' (Kenway et al. 1997, p.x.), reflecting 'a clear shift in policy focus' (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000, p.23). The titles of all previous policies had explicitly mentioned girls.

As attention shifted to the 'failing boys' (Epstein et al. 1998), many strategies pioneered by feminist educators were implemented (Gill & Tranter 2014): 'boy friendly' curriculum, self-esteem building, single-sex classes. These approaches continued to rely on 'an essentialising of boys (and girls, implicitly)' (Lingard, Mills & Weaver-Hightower 2012, p.408). However, many of these strategies valorised hegemonic masculinity and were inherently traditional and conservative, reflecting an approach that 'reinforced, defended and wished to recoup the patriarchal gender order and institutional gender regimes' (Lingard, Mills & Weaver-Hightower 2012, p.407, see also Keddie & Mills 2007; Martino, Mills & Lingard 2005; Weaver-Hightower 2010). Francis (2010) believed that these approaches were in fact counter-productive, arguing that:

many of these 'boy friendly' strategies are actually detrimental to boys' learning, and encourage the stereotypical productions of gender that contribute to underachievement ... The existing strategies to support boys' achievement that are based on 'common sense' – stereotypical assumptions about gender difference – risk exacerbating existing inequalities, both in patterns of achievement and in educational experience. (p.2)

In *Answering back*, Kenway and her colleagues (1997) argued that gender reformers made 'a strategic error when they mobilised and popularised generalisations about girls' poor performance' (p.61). Drawing on essentialised notions of girls had opened the door to 'the positioning of boys as the new disadvantaged in gender equity debates' (Keddie 2007, p.21).

In reality, the representation of boys as a group who were 'failing' did not match the data: it 'ignores the outstanding results of many boys and masks those most at risk. There is an enormous range of achievement among boys (and girls), which cannot be reduced to an average score for the entire group' (Zyngier 2009, p.112). A focus on 'boys', or 'girls', that reduces them to homogenous groups began to be challenged.

Which boys? Which girls?

In a careful analysis of Australian senior secondary results *Who wins at school?* Richard Teese and his colleagues (1995) concluded '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). This is identified in the literature as the real and substantive question (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Blackmore 2001; Myers 2000; Thompson & Ungerleider 2004; Tinklin 2003). Cherry Collins and her colleagues (2000) conceptualised this as a task where 'we need to attend to the gender jigsaw in addition to the gender see-saw' (p.38).

When the issue was rephrased in this way and a more fine-grained analysis undertaken, it became clear that within-group differences (differences between boys and differences between girls) were larger than differences between girls and boys (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000). Despite widespread public concern over gender differences in achievement, research indicated that greater disparities were related to class and ethnicity. Students from high SES backgrounds and white Anglo backgrounds, whether girls or boys, significantly outperformed other students (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Legewie & DiPrete 2012; Power et al. 2003; Ryan 2004; Teese & Polesel 2003). In Australia, Teese and his colleagues (1995) reported that gender differences 'were weakest where individuals enjoy the greatest cultural and material advantage ... But as we descend the social scale, the gender gap widens' (p.109). Across the English-speaking world, educational researchers have repeatedly reported that gendered outcomes in schooling are smallest in students from high SES backgrounds and greatest amongst students from more disadvantaged backgrounds (American Association of University Women 1992; Gillborn & Youdell 2000; Teese et al. 1995).

The intersection of class and gender

In the analysis of academic success and educational advantage and disadvantage, gender intersects with class, and it turns out that class is the larger contributor to inequality. Middle- and upper-class families have always valued academic success for their sons, who have consistently done well at school; the boys from these families were not the boys who were failing in the 1990s (see, for example, Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Epstein et al. 1998; Gilbert 2000). Closer analysis of school achievement data revealed that there were more boys achieving the highest and the lowest grades and fewer scoring in the middle range, described by Teese as a 'saucer' pattern (1995, p.52). This pattern of performance for boys was in contrast to that of girls, whose performance tended to be more evenly spread. These differences were evident over an extended period (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Teese et al. 1995).

Since the 1970s, when middle-class girls looked towards a career beyond marriage, their families have valued academic success for their daughters as well as their sons (Connell et al. 1982, p.97). At the time this shift was occurring, girls were reported to be experiencing 'fear of success' (Horner 1972), afraid that if they appeared intelligent or successful they would scare off eligible young men. However, by the end of the 1990s research was suggesting that girls from upper-class schools now 'aim for and achieve the highest educational levels', no longer worrying that it would have a negative impact on their relationships with boys of their acquaintance (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.112). By the 1990s there was evidence that it was these middle-class girls, rather than working-class girls, who had benefitted most from the gender reforms that had led to the perception that girls were "dominating" in the final school examinations' (Gill & Tranter 2014, p.280).

Given that middle- and upper-class families value academic success (David 1997), it is not surprising that researchers have found that middle- and upper- class schools are more likely to promote gender identities that 'celebrate and reward academic achievement' (Power et al. 1998, p.139).

Teese (2000) argued that middle- and upper-class parents know that they need 'fortified sites where the advantages of education and culture can be deposited, pooled and pedagogically multiplied' (p.7).

Research for this thesis was undertaken in three elite coeducational Melbourne schools. At the time fieldwork commenced, the dominant discourse around gender and education was that of 'failing boys'. However, the boys at elite schools were not failing. In their VCE results (final year of secondary school), they were amongst the highest achieving students. The gender-related issue these schools mostly faced was the struggle to enrol as many girls as boys, despite that being their stated aim.

Uneven enrolments in middle- and upper-class coeducational schools

In Australia, and across the English-speaking world, parents have tended to believe 'that co-educational schools are "bad" for girls and "good" for boys' (Jackson & Smith 2000, p.410), with other people's daughters seen as 'a civilising influence' on the boys with whom they share classrooms (Tsolidis & Dobson 2006, p.215). As explored earlier, these beliefs draw in part on the research from the second half of the twentieth century that found that girls were second-class citizens in coeducational settings (Mahoney 1985; Sadker & Sadker 1994; Sandler 1987; Shaw 1980; Spender & Sarah 1988; Stanworth 1983). An English study found that parents believed that while single-sex schools had academic benefits for their daughters, boys benefited socially from a coeducational environment (Jackson & Bisset 2005). In the Australian context, this has led to there being more all-girls independent schools than all-boys independent schools over several decades (Association of Independent Schools of Victoria 2007; Independent Schools Council of Australia 2007, 2015; Independent Schools Victoria 2015). At the time of this research, more families were choosing to send their daughters to single-sex schools while sending their sons to coeducational schools. Not

surprisingly, a group of British researchers reported that there were more boys than girls in each of the coeducational schools participating in their study (Ball & Gewirtz 1997). Meanwhile Australian research reported that while 29% of girls completed their final year of schooling in a single-sex setting, only 19% of boys did; the authors argued that this was a consequence of parents believing that single-sex education is 'more important' for girls than boys (Ainley & Daly 2002, p.243). These attitudes have led to a 'paradox' (Elwood & Gipps 1999, p.7), since without the presence of girls there can be no coeducational setting for boys.

Enrolments in Victorian independent coeducational schools have reflected this pattern; since the 1970s most of these schools have enrolled more boys than girls. This imbalance was so problematic that one Melbourne school, not part of this study, took out a full-page newspaper advertisement in 2007 when it enrolled equal numbers of girls and boys into Year 7 for the first time. The text accompanying the photo acknowledged it had taken 28 years to reach this balance (having changed from a boys school to a coeducational school in the 1970s) and, after arguing the case for coeducation, thanked those families and students who had supported the coeducational 'endeavour' (*The Age* 10/3/07). Since previously boys had outnumbered girls, this message was clearly aimed at the parents of girls. In 2015, this school is still foregrounding the even enrolment of girls and boys in their advertising (*The Age* 28/2/15).

Within the independent sector where parents are actively choosing the 'best school' for their children, gender context – coeducational or single-sex – continues to be a highly visible distinguishing characteristic. It 'constitutes a focal point around which issues of gender, choice and educational decision-making coalesce' (Watson cited in Jackson & Bisset 2005, p.196). To understand why gender context has become such a powerful factor in parents' choice of schools, we need to understand the current education market and the need to make good school 'choices', as well as community views about coeducational settings, particularly for girls.

The education market and school ‘choice’

Across the Anglophone world school systems are typically a mix of government and non-government schools. However, since the 1980s there has been a shift in government policy and community attitudes, leading to ‘the market alternative in education ... gaining ground’ (Ball 1993, p.3). In Britain, Stephen Ball and Deborah Youdell (2009) see that as a result of these market reforms parents are positioned as ‘consumers’ (p.79), while on the other side of the Atlantic, in Canada, Alison Taylor and Lorraine Woollard (2003) interviewed parents and students, identifying a ‘common reform theme’ (p.617) based on ‘the discourse of choice and the “positional competition” that it promotes’ (p.626). In the Australian context, Rosemary Morgan (2009), investigating school choice in rural markets, identifies an ‘intensification of school marketisation through policies of choice’ (p.30) and argues that ‘there has been a “seachange” in public attitudes towards notions of “the market”, “choice”, “user pays” and “competition”’ (Angus cited in Morgan 2009, p.87). As Amanda Datnow and Lea Hubbard (2007) argue, these changes reflect broader political movements: ‘Fueling the choice movement are conservative social and political arguments regarding the power of the free market to inspire educational innovation, improve achievement, increase accountability ...’ (p.787).

The argument mounted by supporters of school markets revolves around a ‘tantalizingly simple idea’ (Smith 1995, p.461). If parents can choose the school that their children attend, ‘competitive pressure’ will be applied to all schools, which ‘will raise their game to attract business’ (Burgess, Propper & Wilson 2007, p.129). Because a market rewards ‘efficient and productive’ suppliers, mediocrity will be punished and excellence promoted (Doherty 2007, p.276). Furthermore, the enthusiasts maintain that a free market will ‘inspire educational innovation, improve achievement [and] increase accountability’ (Datnow & Hubbard 2007, p.787), driving up standards as schools search for new customers to ensure their survival in the marketplace

(DiMartino & Jessen 2014; Forsey 2007; Lubienski 2007; Morgan 2009). What commentators do agree on is that in this new world of markets and choice each family must take 'responsibility for its own actions' (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009, p.85).

Until the 1970s most families in Australia accessed their local, government or Catholic parish school (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009). In more recent decades 'a crisis in confidence in public schooling' has developed, led by conservative commentators and the media (Bonner & Caro 2007, p.44). This situation is not unique to Australia. In the USA, Paul Manna reports that 'For the past two decades ... a rhetoric of failure has hounded the nation's public schools' (2002, p.441), while in Britain, Ball describes the 'continuing political and media critique of state schooling' (2003b, p.166).

This decline in support and confidence in public schooling has been part of a wider conservative movement 'reshaping social institutions and practices around economic rather than social democratic imperatives ... [in which] concepts of "citizenship" are being shaped by neo-liberal discourses of individual rather than collective responsibility' (McGregor 2009, pp.346-7). At the centre of neo-liberal discourse is a focus on the right to choose and individual freedom (Aitchison 2006; Ball 1993; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009; Doherty 2009; McGregor 2009). This emphasis on individual choice brings with it not only individual responsibility, but also individual risk (Pusey 2003).

In Australia, as in other nations, the education system has been 'shaped by neo-liberal beliefs that demanded greater competitiveness' (McGregor 2009, p. 348), and 'the pursuit of competitive familial advantage is naturalized as both legitimate and necessary' (Wilkins 2012, p.72). In this environment, individuals and families are responsible for their future and nothing is guaranteed. Craig Campbell and colleagues (2009) argue that it has become 'absolutely clear to the middle class' in Australia that success at school is 'crucial' for the long-term success and security of their children (p.105). If middle-class families are to maintain their positional advantage, there is 'a

growing imperative for [them] to seek *excellent* schooling for their children' (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009, p.105). Repeatedly, researchers across the Anglophone world report that middle-class parents, who want the best for their children, are strategic in their choice of schools. The three factors they most emphasise are academic quality, perceptions of the peer group in the school and the more abstract notion of school image (see, for example, Aitchison 2006; Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz 1995; Bonner & Caro 2007; Brantlinger 2003; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009; Morgan 2009; Reay & Ball 1997; Taylor & Woollard 2003). In this way they attempt to provide 'insurance' for their children in the 'dangerous world' they find themselves in (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009, p.11).

In this market environment parents have 'no choice but to choose' (Taylor & Woollard 2003, p.632), and the 'good' parent has increasingly become linked to making 'good' school choices (Ball, Bowe & Gewirtz 1995; Bonner & Caro 2007; Brantlinger 2003; Taylor & Woollard 2003). This has led to 'a "mass decampment" of middle-class families into private [non-government] schooling' (Power et al. 2003, p.17). There are frequent reports of parents buying houses to facilitate access to desirable schools (Brantlinger 2003; Burgess, Propper & Wilson 2007; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009; Morgan 2009) and in Melbourne's suburbs, access to these schools is a favourite sales slogan for real estate agents. This prioritising of school access in choosing where to live reflects the importance placed by many middle-class parents on their children attending the 'best school'. Not surprisingly, since the 1990s the research has been replete with reports of anxious parents variously reported to be 'agonizing' over the decision (Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe 1995), 'fearful' and experiencing 'panic' (Ball 2003b), feeling 'desperation' (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009) and 'powerlessness' (Aitchison 2006) and being 'overwhelmed' (Taylor & Woollard 2003). As Ball reports, they 'know a great deal about schools and schooling, but never enough' (Ball 2003a, p.171). Inevitably 'the flipside of taking parental responsibility seriously is guilt' (Taylor & Woollard 2003, p.623).

Melbourne, where the three schools in the current study are located, has always had relatively high levels of participation in private schooling (McCalman 1993), and a culture in which the school you attend matters (Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009, p.86), but non-government schools have grown strongly as a result of the shift to an education market. The high stakes involved in these decisions and the emotions they invoke have been evident in media reports of parents struggling with the school choice conundrum; typical headlines from Melbourne newspapers include 'A minefield of choices' (Cresswell-Myatt, *Herald-Sun*, 27/4/1999), 'Parents tell of sacrifices' (Webber, *Herald-Sun*, 9/12/2000) and 'Moment of decision' (Guy, *The Age*, 8/9/1998). Tellingly, many of these articles focus on the choice between coeducational and single-sex settings; for example, 'Boys, girls or both?' (Hodder, *Herald-Sun*, 27/3/2000), 'Co-ed or single-sex?' (Richards, *The Age*, 31/3/1998) or 'Co-ed or single sex? Boys and girls together: the choices' (Dunn, *The Age*, 23/6/2001).

Parents trying to navigate this difficult territory aim to choose schools that will maximise the benefits and minimise the risks for their children (for example, Aitchison 2006; Doherty 2009; Jackson & Bisset 2005; Morgan 2009; Pusey 2003; Taylor & Woollard 2003). This is where the fear that coeducational schools may be risky environments for girls becomes pivotal.

Is coeducation risky for girls? What is the evidence?

The merits of coeducation have attracted debate amongst educators and in the community generally ever since the 19th century, when the education of girls in public schools began to gain acceptance (Hansot & Tyack 1988). Although the case for coeducation continued to be argued through the first half of the twentieth century (Grant & Hodgson 1913; Meakin 1907; Hall cited in Mensinger 2001), current concerns can be traced to the 1960s. The classic American work *The adolescent society* by James Coleman was published in 1961. His phrase, 'the cruel jungle of rating and dating' (1961,

p.51) has echoed down the decades, crystallising the fears of parents and educators about the coeducational environment for adolescent students.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, second wave feminists in the 1970s were shocked by early findings of disadvantage and sexism in schools, particularly coeducational schools. Consequently, 'the reform of coeducational state schooling [became] a major area of focus of feminist activity in education in the UK' (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.69), and much of the research on coeducational schooling (and comparisons with single-sex schooling) during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s was driven by these feminist concerns with a focus on outcomes for girls. Many feminists became enthusiastic supporters of single-sex schooling for girls, arguing that it provided better educational environments for girls (Sandler 1987; Shaw 1980; Spender & Sarah 1988).

There were many comparative studies of coeducational and single-sex schooling during this period. In order to gain an overview of this large body of research, I have examined major reviews of the research rather than undertake a detailed analysis of the original studies. This strategy was employed to manage the large number of studies reported in the literature: a 2005 review identified over 2000 studies on an initial search (Mael et al. 2005). There have been three systematic and comprehensive reviews in the last decade. The two earlier reviews are *Single sex schooling – final report* (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) prepared by the Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilisation (CCKM) at the University of British Columbia, and *Single-sex versus coeducational schooling: a systematic review* (Mael et al. 2005) prepared for the US Department of Education by the Policy and Program Studies Service (PPSS), which both focused on single-sex schools. Neither of these reviews employed meta-analysis, with Fred Mael and colleagues (2005) declaring that it was 'nearly impossible to conduct a meta-analysis on any outcome area' (p. xvii) due to the small number of studies which reported descriptive statistics or effect sizes. These two reviews, particularly the PPSS review, have been regularly drawn on in more recent

reviews of the research (Bracey 2006; Halpern et al. 2011; Smithers & Robinson 2006). Since 2006 there has been a 'boom in federally funded single-sex schooling programs in the United States' (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014, p.1044) due to legislative changes and an increase in research reported in the literature. The third review, by Erin Pahlke and colleagues (2014) was able to draw on the earlier research as well as this more recent body of work to conduct a meta-analysis that included both single-sex schools and classes. Each of these reviews explicitly described the search criteria used to identify relevant studies and the criteria by which they excluded unsound research, which has been a chronic problem in this area, and will be discussed in more detail below.

Research focus in comparative studies

In these reviews the areas most consistently investigated were academic achievement, subject preferences and choices, measures of student adaptation and socio-emotional development, and gender stereotyping and sexism. The fear was that in each of these areas girls were disadvantaged in coeducational settings as a result of being 'second-class citizens'.

Of the studies reported in these reviews, the largest number reported on academic achievement (CCKM report: 14 studies; PPSS review: 47 studies; and Pahlke et al. meta-analysis: 92 studies). One of the major claims of proponents of single-sex schooling has been that girls achieve better academic results in single-sex schools. Both the earlier reviews reported mixed results and referred to the difficulty of isolating a school's gender context from other potentially important influences. The CCKM Report (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) pointed to a trend, concluding that, increasingly, research is finding no significant differences in achievement levels once other potentially confounding variables, such as socio-economic status and prior achievement, are controlled for, stating that 'study after study demonstrated no significant differences' (p.12). A similar trend emerged when the data in the PPSS Review (Mael et al. 2005) was disaggregated into

pre- and post- 1995 studies. In the decade between 1995 and 2004, only 17% of studies reported findings supporting the claim that girls achieve better academic results in single-sex schools, whereas between 1980 and 1989, 77% of studies supported that claim. The more recent meta-analysis of research reported results across a range of sub-categories related to academic achievement over the period 1965 to 2013. The majority of these reported a trivial or small effect size between single-sex and coeducational settings. In order to explore whether there was a change over time the studies were again disaggregated by date and those studies that found medium or large effect sizes in favour of single-sex settings identified. A similar but less pronounced trend was identified (prior to 1989, 43% of studies, between 1995 and 2004, 23% of studies). This meta-analysis also includes studies from the time period 2005 to 2013, in which 25% reported an advantage in single-sex settings, very similar to the results in the preceding decade, suggesting the changes may have plateaued. However, returning to the results of the meta-analysis, the authors reported differences between single-sex settings and coeducational settings were 'close to zero' (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014) in well-controlled studies for mathematics performance (p.1059) and science and verbal performance (p.1060), and a very small advantage to girls in single-sex settings for general school achievement (p.1061). Furthermore, a very large meta-analysis of learning outcomes more generally reported 'there is very little compelling' evidence of either gender context leading to improved academic outcomes (Hattie 2009, p.96).

Historically, subjects have tended to be gender coded, with maths, science and technology regarded as masculine and English, LOTE and the arts coded female (Blickenstaff 2005; Colley & Comber 1994; Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Horne 2000). Feminist researchers initially concentrated on girls' take-up of traditionally male subjects, because those subjects were regarded as providing more successful avenues to further education and employment (Kelly 1981). There are fewer studies of this question than of academic achievement, but again the results were mixed (this was not

included in the 2014 meta-analysis by Pahlke and colleagues (2014)). In the PPSS report (Mael et al. 2005), of the eight studies since 1995, half found gender context had no effect, three found students at single-sex schools chose either non-traditional subjects or more difficult options, and one found the reverse effect. The CCKM review (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) reported that while most studies found single-sex settings had 'a positive influence' on attitudes and enrolment in non-traditional classes, they cautioned that 'other [confounding] variables may be influencing students' choices and behaviour' (p.11).

Proponents of single-sex schools have argued strongly that in addition to academic benefits for students there are benefits for student adaptation and socio-emotional development, most often assessed using self-reports of confidence and comfort and measures of self-concept, self-esteem and locus of control. However, research in this area has again been inconsistent, plagued by the ongoing issue of confounding variables. Each of the reviews implemented slightly different frameworks, reviewing different subsets of research. The CCKM review (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) reported that outcomes varied for girls and boys, with outcomes for girls tending to be more positive in single-sex classes, while the reverse was the case for boys. The authors of the PPSS report (Mael et al. 2005) struggled to make reliable comparisons and concluded that the whole area lacks 'a conceptual framework to tie together the myriad academic-attitude outcome measures ... [and] self-concept and self-esteem' (p.84). Finally, the 2014 meta-analysis (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014) reported either insufficient numbers of studies or effect sizes 'close to zero' across a range of measures in this domain.

Throughout the twentieth century a major focus in debates on coeducation and single-sex schooling was whether coeducational settings increase or reduce gender stereotyping and sexist behaviour. Again the empirical evidence has been mixed. An earlier review, *Separated by sex* (American Association of University Women 1998), found 'no consistent relationship between school type and degrees of sex stereotyping' (p.19), while the 2014

meta-analysis (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014) was the only one of the more recent reviews that included a relevant analysis. On the basis of a small number of studies, it reported girls in coeducational settings were either 'moderately more likely to endorse gender stereotypes' or the effect size is close to zero, depending on whether the analysis undertaken was weighted or unweighted. Consequently, they 'recommend interpreting these results with caution' (p.1061). In relation to sexism, single-sex environments were consistently identified as problematic, being described as having 'persistent ... and rampant sexism' (American Association of University Women 1998, p.6). Of the more recent reviews, the CCKM review (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) was the only one to address sexism, concluding that in some all-boys environments, boys are learning sexist attitudes. The paucity of recent comparative research in relation to sexism in classrooms means that the most consistently reported study continues to be Valerie Lee, Helen Marks and Tina Byrd's (1994) from 20 years ago, which reported sexist events were more likely to occur in single-sex settings and that the worst examples of sexism were in boys schools. They also described a 'pernicious form of sexism' (p.92) found in all-girls schools where girls were positioned as non-academic and dependent. This suggested that single-sex school contexts are not inherently or inevitably risk-free for girls, particularly if we take a long-term perspective.

Despite claims and assumptions to the contrary drawn from earlier literature, these substantive reviews provide very little support for fears that the gender contexts of schooling make a consistent difference to academic achievement, subject choice, students' adaptation and socio-emotional development or the occurrence of gender stereotyping and sexist behaviour. However, the range of topics investigated provides key information about the areas of concern identified in relation to coeducational contexts. These concerns inform the research plan for this thesis.

Problems with comparative research

As can be seen from this brief overview, although there is a large body of comparative research, it has failed to provide conclusive answers to the question *Which gender context leads to better outcomes for students – girls and/or boys?* A number of problems can be identified that contribute to this lack of clarity.

We found an effect, but what is causing it?

The reviews of the research comparing single-sex and coeducational settings agree that while there have been many research studies since the 1960s, relatively few were well-designed or implemented. In an earlier review, Mael (1998) summed up the research literature on coeducational and single-sex schooling as 'voluminous and also varies greatly in quality' (p.105), while the CCKM review (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) described the scholarly literature reviewed as 'rather weak' (p.6), finding 'few studies which met the criteria of good research' (p.15). Pahlke and colleagues 'were dismayed ... by the number of studies with weak designs' (p.1064). Confounding variables, including student and family socio-economic status, prior academic achievement and the religious affiliation of students and schools, were identified, along with school history and academic traditions, parental educational levels and support, and ethnicity.

The statistical methods of most comparative studies rely on an assumption of random assignment of subjects to the groups or situations being compared. Ideally such research is 'designed and carried out ... to eliminate as far as possible all the effects except the effect being measured' (Whiteley 2006). However, in the research comparing single-sex and coeducational schools it is not possible to randomly assign students (or for that matter teachers, facilities or policies) to each type of school and it has proven extremely difficult to 'eliminate' the potential of other factors contributing to the observed effects. The PPSS report (Mael et al. 2005) identified this problem

of confounding variables as a 'primary criticism' (p.5) of the research literature on single-sex schooling.

In this review (Mael et al. 2005), an initial collection of 379 studies that purported to address the question in English-speaking school-age cohorts was reduced to 44 studies once studies that did not 'include statistical controls to account for' a range of confounding variables (p.xi) were excluded. If the strict criteria recommended by the What Works Clearinghouse (auspiced by the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences) had been applied, 'virtually no studies' (p.87) would have remained to be reviewed and 'therefore ... a conscious decision was made to relax these standards' (p.5). Despite this loosening of the criteria, the 44 studies that met the new criteria ranged over 1982 to 2005, less than two studies a year. As Gerald Bracey (2006) argues, 'It is extraordinarily difficult to conduct scientifically acceptable research on single-sex schools. The mere fact that all such schools are schools of choice means that from the outset, no random assignment is possible' (p.16). This speaks to the difficulties researchers face given the range and complexity of factors beyond gender context that may influence schooling outcomes.

If in fact overlapping confounding variables are making statistically significant contributions instead of or in addition to the gender context, it is hardly surprising that research results have been inconsistent.

How recent is relevant?

The widely held community understandings of coeducational and single-sex schools stretch back to research from as long ago as the 1960s. The world changed significantly in the second half of the twentieth century, and women's lives and the relationships between women and men were part of these changes, particularly in relation to gender roles and gender relations. By the late 1990s, researchers investigating single-sex and coeducational settings were beginning to report shifts in the patterns they were

documenting. These shifts were a strong theme at the American Association of University Women conference in 1998. Patricia Campbell and Ellen Wahl (1998) argued that 'Conditions in the larger society around gender roles and expectations have changed dramatically since the research on gender was initiated in the early 1970s' (p.70). Two of the key researchers during the 1980s and 1990s – Valerie Lee (1998) and Cornelius Riordan (1998), who were also at the conference – both reported that their own earlier research may have been superseded. Pamela Haag (1998) hypothesised that attention to gender equity issues in both coeducational and single-sex schools was a reason for the shift in academic outcomes. In Britain, Arnot and her colleagues (1999) hypothesised that changes in students' expectations and aspirations may have influenced school behaviours, particularly for girls. Historical context is important, but society changes and it is inappropriate to simply assume that findings from earlier research apply to contemporary settings. Nevertheless, these earlier findings still resonate with today's parents.

Despite these wider societal changes, findings from the earliest research are regularly included with more recent studies in discussions of the relative benefits of coeducational and single-sex settings. The PPSS Review (Mael et al. 2005) did not explicitly address changes over time and included studies from 1982 onwards, while the 2014 meta-analysis (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014) included studies from 1965 onwards. However, it was possible to disaggregate the data according to the year the research took place and, as reported above, the changes became evident in areas such as achievement. On the other hand, although the CCKM report (Thompson & Ungerleider 2004) did not explicitly discuss the question 'how recent is relevant?', it did limit its scope to research reported from 1990 onwards.

Given there have been substantial changes over time, then, the patterns of results will change and appear to be inconsistent, making it impossible to generalise from studies conducted across many decades.

The intersection of class and gender context

As discussed above, students from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds experience different school outcomes, with high SES students and those from white Anglo cultural backgrounds outperforming other students. There is growing consensus among researchers that class intersects with the gender context of schooling. Some researchers argue that while no advantages appear to accrue to middle- and upper-class girls (or boys) from single-sex settings, there may be some advantage for students who are economically or culturally disadvantaged. As early as 1998 Riordan (1998) rather colourfully explained:

The academic and developmental consequences of attending one type of school are virtually zero for middle-class or otherwise advantaged students; by contrast, the consequences are significant for students who are or have been historically or traditionally disadvantaged ... We need to understand that all the hollering about types of schools applies only to these students. (pp. 53-4, emphasis added)

This view is supported by a range of other researchers (for example, Hannon et al. cited in Elwood & Gipps 1999; Lee 1998; Riordan 2002; Salomone 2003; Singh & Vaught 1998; Tsolidis & Dobson 2006). However, the most recent meta-analysis was unable to identify enough 'controlled studies conducted with ethnic minority youth' to test this hypothesis (Pahlke, Hyde & Allison 2014, p.1065). As was the case with changes across time, it is possible that there are systematic differences related to advantage/disadvantage, which make it difficult to generalise across studies that report on outcomes for different cohorts of students.

Contemporary research and community understandings

Research undertaken in the 1970s and 1980s comparing coeducational and single-sex schooling contexts encouraged the view that girls achieved better academic results and were more likely to take up traditionally 'male' subjects in single-sex schools. There was a tendency to attribute these outcomes to the absence of boys enabling girls to prosper. However, subsequent research has revealed that confounding variables were not taken into

account and the 'apparent advantages [of single-sex schooling] dissolve when outcomes are corrected for preexisting differences' (Halpern et al. 2011, p.1706). There is also evidence that differences diminished over time as gender relations in the broader society changed. Finally, by the late 1990s researchers were arguing that any advantages from single-sex settings were not evident for all girls or all boys, but were linked to the class location of the students and confined to economically disadvantaged and minority students. As discussed earlier, many in the community continue to believe that single-sex settings have advantages for girls generally, leading Alan Smithers and Pamela Robinson (2006) to declare that, 'The paradox of single-sex and co-education is that the beliefs are so strong and the evidence is so weak' (p.31).

These findings have particular relevance for the current study, which focuses on elite independent schools at the turn of the millennium. The research reviewed here would suggest that in the early 2000s, the gender context of schooling would not lead to significant differences for the privileged, high SES students attending elite schools. However, the fact that the results of this very large body of research have been inconsistent and inconclusive, and the statistical argument about confounding variables not amenable to simple explanations, appears to have resulted in the understandings from early research persisting in the community.

The 'risks' associated with single-sex settings

One of the key feminist arguments against single-sex educational settings, whether they are schools or classes, is that they rely on and reinforce essentialist understandings of gender, reifying the differences and eliding the similarities. The meta-message is that girls and boys are so different that they need to be in segregated classrooms and schools for the serious work of learning, only joining together for less important activities and socialising (Fabes et al. 2015; Goodkind et al. 2013; Halpern et al. 2011; Jackson 2010). As Richard Fabes and colleagues (2015) argue, single-sex settings

‘perpetuate stereotypes and myths that boys and girls are so inherently different they cannot be expected to get along or be taught together’ (p.441); or as Barbara Heather (2002) argued more than a decade ago, ‘By definition, single-sex schools treat gender as real. Their very existence may operate to perpetuate hegemonic truths about gender’ (p.320).

Although male and female are often conceptualised as separate entities, leading to a focus on gender differences, Janet Shibley Hyde (2005) argues for the Gender Similarities Hypothesis. In an article in the *American Psychologist*, she provided an overview of 46 meta-analyses and concluded that the ‘extensive evidence ... supports the gender similarities hypothesis’, which argues that ‘males and females are alike on most – but not all – psychological variables’ (p.590). This reflected the findings of Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin (1974) 30 years earlier, which concluded that gender stereotypes were ‘powerful things’ (p.355) which were not easily undone. Furthermore, these stereotypes more often than not work to limit the opportunities available to young people on the basis of gender, doing injustice to many (Broadley 2015; Cohen & Levit 2014; Derks & Krabbendam 2013).

A wide range of research confirms the fear that single-sex schools can lead to students holding stronger gender stereotyped views (Datnow, Hubbard & Woody 2001; Fabes et al. 2015; Fabes et al. 2013; Hilliard & Liben 2010; Karpiak et al. 2007; Klein 2011; Pahlke, Bigler & Patterson 2014; Rivers & Barnett 2011). Christie Karpiak and colleagues (2007) argue that ‘... This should not come as a surprise – decades of social psychological research on stereotypes and prejudice instruct us that separation facilitates problems in understanding and interacting with the “other” group’ (p.288) (see, for example, Bigler & Liben 2007; Hodson 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp 2008). Richard Fabes and colleagues (2013) found that the more time students spent in single-sex settings ‘the *more* gender stereotyped they became’ and argued that there ‘appeared to be a dosage effect’ (pp.318-9), while increasing contact between girls and boys has been found to have the

opposite effect, reducing sexist attitudes (Keener, Mehta & Strough 2013). Single-sex schools cannot provide the daily routine opportunities for young people to test gender stereotypes, by experiencing the similarities between girls and boys and the diversity within groups, that is possible in coeducational settings.

A system impact of establishing single-sex schools (or classes) is that it inevitably leads to changes in the gender composition of other schools (or classes) in that system. Despite this inevitability, most research has focused on the effects in the single-sex school (or class) in isolation and very little research has attempted to assess the consequences of the flow-on effects and the outcomes for all students. As the authors of *Separated by sex* (American Association of University Women 1998) noted almost two decades ago, 'What [a single-sex class] does to the rest of the school is sometimes not even really thought of' (p.9). This has continued to be the case in much of the research into single-sex settings despite ongoing reports that all-boy groupings tend to reinforce hegemonic masculinity (Francis & Skelton 2005; Gray & Wilson 2006; Keddie 2007; Keddie & Mills 2009; Klein 2011; Mills 2004). There are currently more all-girls schools than all-boys schools in Australia (and Britain and the United States) (Independent Schools Council of Australia 2015; Independent Schools Victoria 2015; Lavy & Schlosser 2011; Leonard 2006; Pahlke, Bigler & Patterson 2014; Sullivan 2009), leading to the gender imbalance in enrolments that characterises these three coeducational schools.

Finally, girls schools might set out to change girls and improve outcomes for them, but they do not have any leverage to change boys or the wider society. As Arnot (2010) argues:

Promoting substantive, and not just formal gender equality, involves the reframing of gender relations in the sense of transforming masculinities and empowering women. Empowering women is a necessary goal, but it is not sufficient for realising gender equality. Gender equality is about engaging with gender relations and male power ... Gender identities lie at the core of social progress and social justice. (p.3)

Consequently, the effectiveness of girls-only strategies is ultimately limited (Arnot 2010; Willis & Kenway 1985). Gender equity will inevitably involve changing girls, boys and the relationships between them.

When the fear that coeducational schools are 'risky' environments is raised, there is an inherent comparison being drawn on. Implicit in the question is the suggestion that single-sex settings are risk-free or, at the very least, less risky than coeducational settings. The arguments outlined here clearly show that when viewed in the broader context of working towards healthy gender relationships and gender equity, single-sex settings are not risk free. So the relevant question becomes one of the comparative risks – are coeducational settings more risky for girls than single-sex settings?

The problem of uneven enrolments, with more boys than girls in middle- and upper-class coeducational schools in many Anglophone countries, including Australia, is a well-documented problem. I have argued that gender context has become a powerful factor in school choice for many parents for two reasons. The first is the shift to an education market that has occurred over the last generation as part of a wider shift to a 'consumer democracy' (Doherty 2007, p.281), and based on neo-liberal ideology in which choice is 'the pivotal concept' (Aitchison 2006, p.1). Now the middle class feel a heavy responsibility for making the right choice for their children and Ball (2003a) reports there is a 'palpable sense of ... risk' (p.161) in interviews with parents. The second is a long-standing view in the community that coeducational settings are risky for girls. This is despite there being little evidence that single-sex schooling is advantageous for middle- and upper-class girls in the new millennium (Mael et al. 2005; Pahlke, Hyde & Allison

2014; Thompson & Ungerleider 2004), but the pattern of results is not amenable to a simple story that can be disseminated in the wider community. Consequently, girls schools continue to be seen as advantageous for girls.

Schools vary in subtle and complex ways, but the gender context of a school, whether it is coeducational or single-sex, is a highly identifiable attribute. The combination of fear of making the wrong school choice, combined with doubts about coeducational settings for girls, means that a school's gender context has become pivotal in the choices parents make for their daughters.

Shifting theoretical frameworks

The comparative research reviewed above is typically objectivist and positivist, prioritising measurement and survey methods, and the search for statistical significance, whilst drawing on biological and psychological understandings of gender. During the 1990s, as it was becoming apparent these approaches were unable to answer many key questions, theorists and researchers moved to 'a more relational understanding of gender, turning their attention to social interaction and social relations' (Wharton 2005, p.9). As Francis and Skelton (2005, p.29) explain, 'there is no conception of masculinity without a femininity to compare and contrast it to' (p.29), while Arnot (2002) describes masculinity and femininity as 'a pair which exist in a relationship of complementarity and antithesis' (p.56).

This theoretical perspective seeks to 'denaturalise' gender categories and instead to understand them as constructions based on the social context and discourses available to the individual. Francis (1998), in describing the process, argues that people '... do not take up gender positions because of some inherent urge but because of dominant discursive practices which position us all as either male or female' (p.10). This understanding of gender as relational, and produced through discourse, drew on post-structuralist

theorising, which argues that language is not neutral or transparent. Rather, 'Language contributes to the construction of reality rather than simply reflecting reality' (Marshall 1997, p.18), and discourses refer to 'patterns of language or text that describe and position people and things in different ways' (Francis 2000, p.19). Michel Foucault, a dominant figure in post-structuralist theorising, describes discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak... Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention' (Foucault cited in Kenway 1995, p.132). Within this framework, individuals' understandings of their identity and the power relations between these individuals are maintained through discourse. Gender, masculinity and femininity, are not fixed attributes, but are defined in relation to each other through discourse.

The research prompted by this post-structuralist turn thus focused on the subjectivity of individuals. In place of the emphasis on large numbers of subjects to enable generalisations about the differences between girls and boys or between different contexts, such as coeducational and single-sex schools, there was a renewed interest in case studies of how groups of individuals navigated this territory. But post-structuralist informed research paid scant attention to broader organisational and societal structures. In *Answering back*, Kenway and her colleagues (1997) argue that,

In concentrating on discourses, post-structuralism tends to overlook the broader patterns which emerge as the ongoing result of discourses in conflict and concert. It tends to see through rather than to see culture. (p.208)

Raewyn Connell (2012) critiques both objectivist/positivist and post-structuralist approaches to understanding gender. She argues that categorical conceptualisations of gender, evident in biological and psychological understandings, are 'close to the common-sense essentialist view of gender in European-derived cultures' that have 'underpinned several decades of gender reform' (p.1675). While 'many of these reforms have been

hard fought and valuable' (p.1676), she draws on the work of Hyde (2005) to argue that the differences between the sexes/genders are small when compared with the differences within (Connell 2012, p.1676). She says that within this framework there is no space to conceptualise 'the *dynamics* of gender: that is, the historical processes in gender itself, the ways gender orders are created and gender inequalities are created and challenged' (p.1676). Turning to post-structuralist approaches to gender, she acknowledges that they have been 'brilliantly successful as a critique of gender essentialism' (p.1676).

Seeing gender identities 'not [as] expressions of an inner truth but ... subject positions in discourse – which are open to change', (2012, p.1676), discourses provide a way to theorise multiple femininities and masculinities. Gender identities are not fixed in discourse, but rather display 'fluidity, instability and provisional character ... as different discourses intersect and people move between them' (p.245). Connell adds more recently that the use of descriptors like 'fluid', 'unstable', 'shifting' 'might suggest that gender is an illusion', but that she argues would be an error since gender is not 'insubstantial' and has real effects in the real world (Connell 2012, p.1676). Broadly, she holds that:

As a critique of old-style essentialism, and as a way of emphasising the complexity of gender arrangements and the possibility of change, this has all been to the good. ... But there are very serious limits to what discursive and deconstructionist gender analysis can do. (2008b, p.245)

These limits refer to post-structuralist approaches not having 'much to say about economic processes, organizational life, material interests, or non-discursive forms of power' (Connell 2012, p.1677) and while they draw attention to the fluidity of gender identity, there is no attention to the historical processes underlying that fluidity – 'Paradoxically the fluidity is represented as a fixed condition' (Connell 2008b, p.244). Indeed gender identities are formed through 'deeply-sedimented historical process[es]' over time through ongoing practice (Connell 2008b, p.245). This lack of attention to historical processes means the approach does not 'give any grip' (Connell 2009, p.90)

on why some people push for change in gender relations while others resist it. Nor can it explain why sometimes change in gender arrangements occurs very quickly while at other times it moves very slowly.

The combination of a focus on individuals and an ahistorical viewpoint combine to 'individualize politics', failing to provide a theoretical framework to support groups coming together and working towards understanding and changing large-scale social structures and processes (Connell 2008b, p.245). Connell (2009) acknowledges the powerful role of discourse in shaping the world, but goes on to argue that 'the differing material interests that different groups have in an unequal world' (p.90) are also central to the politics of gender: 'If discursive constructions are abstracted from the inequalities to which they respond, from the organizational contexts which stabilize identities, or from the bodily consequences of ... practices, then both analysis and action suffer' (Connell 2004, p.25). In summary, Connell (2012) argues that the shift away from 'categorical understandings of gender' in post-structuralist thinking has been 'an advance, but ... relational theories of gender, treating gender as a multidimensional structure operating in a complex network of institutions, provide[s] the most promising approach' (p.1675) in what for Connell is always a political enterprise.

Institutions as gendered

So, theoretical explanations of sex and gender which 'give more attention to social institutions and social structures' (Connell 1987, p.54) are needed. Sex role theory had assumed that 'only individuals are gendered, that gendered individuals occupy gender-neutral positions and inhabit gender-neutral institutions' (Kimmel 2000, p.91). But as this theoretical position was challenged, an emphasis on the 'gendered nature of social structures' emerged (Dillabough 2001, p.13). Feminists like Kate Millett (1972) have long argued that all institutions – families, schools, workplaces and organisations – are patriarchal, while Patricia Miller and Ellin Scholnick (2000) argue that '[s]ocieties are characterized by institutionalized

androcentrism and its accompanying power structure; societies are not simply a collection of gendered individuals' (p.5). Imelda Whelehan (1995) lists schools along with the media, peer groups and other 'ideological agencies outside the household domain' as promoting and rewarding 'adherence to gender identity' (p.17). Given that schools are a key social institution, applying this turn in theorising may be an important tool for looking again at the gendered nature of schools.

Schools develop public positions on issues such as gender equity and sexual harassment; however, how students, female and male, are positioned in all the various areas of school life has equally powerful effects on the development of their gender identities and gender relationships. Collins and her colleagues (1996) in their Australian study *Gender and school education* argue that gender construction happens across the school environment, in both formal and informal interactions, 'in peer group relations, in teacher practices and in school structures and policies' (p.162). In each and all of these arenas, feminist concern is with the range of positions educational discourses make available to students and how they shape individual students (Dillabough 2001).

Gender is no longer understood as a fixed attribute of an individual but as an ongoing social process, all the time being enacted and re-enacted. No longer are 'feminine' and 'masculine' conceptualised as binary opposites, the result of biological inevitability or socialisation. Instead they are the products of shared and disputed discourses. Individuals construct and reconstruct their gender identity through interactions with each other and as they negotiate and respond to a 'vast and complicated institutional and cultural order' (Connell 2002, p.39).

Connell's Relational Theory of Gender

Connell argues that gender is 'above all, a matter of social relations within which individuals and groups act' (Connell 2009, p.10) and draws attention to

the patterns evident in these social relations. She uses the term *gender regime* to describe the pattern in gender relations within an institution and the term *gender order* to describe the pattern in gender relations in a society. She identifies four dimensions of gender that can be used in analysis of these patterns.

Connell (2009) defines gender as 'the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes' (p.11). She acknowledges that many of these practices bring us 'pleasure, creativity and other things we greatly value' (p.143), but argues that they are also a source of harm and injustice and hence the legitimate target of political action. Key to understanding Connell's relational theory of gender is this bringing into view of both bodies and social structures and the relationships between them (Connell 2012). She quotes Carol Hagemann-White approvingly when she writes 'Gender *is* a relation' (cited in Connell 2012, p.8), but hastens to add that it is not a simple relation, linking as it does individuals and groups, their identities and bodies, with discourses, material objects and institutions.

The emphasis Connell places on the role of institutions and the interactions with both discourse and bodies, is what she argues differentiates her approach to gender from post-structuralist thinking:

Gender involves a lot more than one-to-one relationships between bodies; it involves a vast and complicated institutional and cultural order. It is this whole order that comes into relation with bodies, and gives them gender meanings. (Connell 2009, p.56)

More recently she has articulated the link between institutions, discourses and bodies as follows: 'Powerful institutions, such as families, schools, churches and states, follow logics laid down in discourse, and discipline real bodies accordingly' (Connell 2012, p.1676). Thus, in order to understand personal experience, identity and relations, it is necessary to pay attention to a wide range of institutions and institutional discourses (Connell 2009).

Inevitably, gender relations are 'internally complex i.e. as involving multiple structures' (Connell 2009, p.75) but despite this complexity, a relational theory of gender may identify patterns of relations that 'constitute gender as a social structure' (Connell 2012, p.8). These social structures both shape and are shaped by social practices over time; they are 'historically constituted' (Connell 2009, p.74). According to Connell (2006b) 'the positions of women and men are defined, the cultural meanings of being a man and a woman are negotiated, and their trajectories through life are mapped out' (p.839) by this social structure. This is not to say that the structure is deterministic, rather it 'defines possibilities and consequences for action' (Connell 2009, p.74). Gender relations in this framework are multidimensional and Connell emphasises the interactions and complexity, asserting that no one dimension takes precedence over the others (Connell 2006b, p.838).

Using this framework, in which gender is seen as a social structure, we can explore 'the social practices that are shaped by, address, and modify this structure' (Connell 2012, p.8). Change is an inevitable consequence of this interaction between practices and structures (Connell 2009, p.74).

Summarising this approach in *Gender: in world perspective*, Connell (2009) says gender is about:

relationships, boundaries, practices, identities and images that are actively created in social processes. They come into existence in particular historical circumstances, shape the lives of people in profound and often contradictory ways, and are subject to historical struggle and change. (Connell 2009, p.30)

Thus relational theory conceptualises gender as a 'dynamic system', far removed from the 'fixed dichotomy' of everyday usage (Connell 2006b, p.838).

Central to this framework is the multidimensional nature of gender, which Connell regards as 'crucially important' in understanding gender (2005a, p.6). She distinguishes four dimensions of gender, which she describes as 'tools for thinking' (2009, p.85). She makes it clear that they are not separate

entities in the real world, where in practice they interweave and intersect, mutually influence each other and change, and sustain each other. They are also 'interwoven with other social structures', including ethnicity, race, disability and class (Connell 2009, p.86). These four dimensions were first described in *Gender* (Connell 2002), where they were called *power relations*, *production relations*, *emotional relations* and *symbolic relations*.

Power relations refers to the dimension that draws together ideas of 'dependence, autonomy and control over people' (Connell 2010, p.172). In a relational theory of gender the focus is on the 'the way in which control, authority, and force are exercised on gender lines, including organisational hierarchy, legal power, collective and individual violence' (Connell 2005a, p.7).

Production relations refers to the dimension that links production, consumption and the accumulation of resources (Connell 2009). The focus is on 'the way in which production and consumption are arranged on gender lines, including the gendering of occupations, the division of paid work and domestic labour, etc.' (Connell 2005a, p.7). These patterns change over time and between cultures; in contemporary Western societies a gendered divide between public/paid work and private/unpaid work is embedded in different social relations. Work outside the domestic sphere is traded on the market for profit, whereas domestic work is 'done for love or mutual obligation' and consequently they 'have very different cultural meanings' (Connell 2009, p.80).

Emotional relations refers to emotions and relationships, whether they be positive or negative (Connell 2009). It emphasises 'the way attachment and antagonism among people and groups are organized along gender lines, including feelings of solidarity, prejudice and disdain, sexual attraction and repulsion, etc.' (Connell 2005a, p.7). Emotional relationships are central to intimate and familial relationships, but are also present in workplaces, schools and other organisations (Connell 2009).

Symbolic relations refers to the meanings and interpretations arising from and shaping social practices. Connell (2009) argues that:

All social practice involves interpreting the world. As post-structuralists observe, nothing human is 'outside' discourse. Society is unavoidably a world of meanings. At the same time, meanings bear the traces of the social processes by which they were made. (p.83)

Here the focus is on 'the way gender identities are defined in culture, the language and symbols of gender difference, the prevailing beliefs and attitudes about gender' (Connell 2005a, p.7).

The four dimensions are constituted by historical and cultural processes over time and are in constant flux; they always operate in context, but in a multitude of contexts; they interact with each other and with 'other dynamics in social life' (Connell 2009, p.87). Connell (2005a) argues that:

This organisational complexity of gender inclusion and exclusion will become visible only if we can 'see' gender as multidimensional, as involving a variety of different kinds of relationships and processes. (p.14)

She proposes that this multidimensional model 'provides a template for describing any organization's gender regime, as well as a framework for data collection in interviews and observation' (Connell 2006b, p. 839). As suggested in this quote, this model provides a descriptive or analytical tool rather than an explanatory tool. The value of the framework is in identifying the wide-ranging effects of gender in complex organisations that we need to attend to, thereby reducing the likelihood that aspects of organisational life that do have gendered effects will be overlooked. After all, gender 'is multi-dimensional; it is not just about identity, or just about work, or just about power, or just about sexuality, but all of these things at once' (Connell 2009, p.11) and potentially even more. This analytical framework is designed to ensure that a wide range of data is brought into view to enable discussion based on patterns of gendered effects. While individual findings can point to the salience of gender, it is when these are brought together, which I do in

the final chapter, that the patterns of gendered relationships can become apparent.

Although the concept of a gender regime is invoked in many studies, it is less common for the set of four dimensions to be systematically deployed to analyse and map those gender regimes. To date, this set of theoretical tools has been used in the mapping of gender regimes in public service organisations (Ballantine et al. 2014; Connell 2005a, 2006a, 2006b; Schofield & Goodwin 2005), the health sector (Reine, Novo & Hammarstrom 2013 ; Schofield 2004; Schofield et al. 2000), sporting organisations (Tagg 2014) and prostitution (Coy 2011). However, there appear to be no studies that use the four dimensions of gender relations to undertake a systematic analysis of a school's gender regime.

I argue that this theoretical framework, with its focus on the patterns of relations between individuals and within institutions, has the potential to 'identify and map' (Connell 2009, p.75) the structures and processes involved in a gender regime and provides a productive approach to understanding the patterns of gender relations in the three elite coeducational schools considered in this thesis.

Location of this study

The starting problematic of this study was the uneven enrolments of girls and boys at elite independent schools in Melbourne and the interest of those schools and academic researchers in exploring the issues behind this. In light of the literature, I have argued that this unevenness probably results from middle-class parents' investment in choosing the 'best school' for their daughters, combined with the widely held view that coeducational settings are 'risky' for girls. This concern about girls in coeducational settings developed out of early feminist research comparing coeducational and single-sex settings, and persisted despite inconsistent and inconclusive

results in subsequent research. Although there was mounting evidence that coeducational settings were not risky for privileged, high SES girls, the complexity of research findings meant they had had little impact on the long-standing misgivings about coeducation and girls.

Rather than continuing to pursue an answer to the question 'Which educational setting is better for girls, single-sex or coeducational?', a closer grained analysis of school settings that identifies school characteristics that promote gender equity and support students to develop positive gender identities provides an alternative way forward. For educators committed to challenging the traditional gender hierarchies, understanding these factors in complex institutional settings according to a multi-faceted notion of gender regime may equip us to create gender-fair environments for all students.

I argue that both the comparative research located in an objectivist/positivist paradigm and utilising a categorical understanding of gender, and post-structuralist approaches which focus on discursive understandings of gender, have failed to give any real traction in response to the question are coeducational settings 'risky' environments for girls. I am proposing a different approach; drawing on Connell's (2009; 2002) relational theory of gender and using her four dimensions of gender to analyse the gender regimes of the three case-study schools, I propose to seek an answer to the following questions:

*Are these three elite coeducational schools reinscribing or
disrupting the traditional gender hierarchies?*

*Are these three elite coeducational schools still 'risky'
environments for girls?*

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the methodological tradition in which this research is located, namely qualitative research. An outline of the theoretical perspective and methodology, and how they inform the design follows.

Positioning this research within the qualitative tradition implies, according to Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2011a), ‘an emphasis on the *qualities* of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured ...’ (p.8). In other words, according to Steven Taylor and Robert Bogden (1998), this emphasis on qualities means that ‘qualitative methodology refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data – people’s own written or spoken words and observable behaviour ... it is a way of approaching the world’ (p.7). One of the key features of this approach is that qualitative research is most commonly undertaken in naturalistic rather than experimental settings. It is ‘a situated activity that locates the observer in the world [and] consists of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p.3). Taylor and Bogden (1998) advise qualitative researchers to ‘suspend or set aside, their own perspectives and taken-for-granted views of the world ... [and, drawing on Bruyn (cited in Taylor & Bogden 1998),] to view things as though they were happening for the first time. Nothing [should be] taken for granted’ (p.7). Qualitative methods are most often juxtaposed against quantitative methods. Adrian Holliday (2007) argues that the data in qualitative research ‘signifies a *body of experience*’, whereas quantitative research ‘sees data as a number of items’ (p.xiii). David Silverman (2006) reports that amongst qualitative researchers there is ‘a common belief that they can provide a “deeper” understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data’ (p.56). In arguing for qualitative

research in educational settings, Peter Freebody (2003) says ‘the logics of quantification leave out lots of interesting and potentially consequential things about the phenomenon ... [leading to] stripped-down portrayals that seriously limit the potential for application to professional practice’ (p.35).

This approach is consistent with the aims of the research undertaken for this thesis. Concerned with revealing the gender regimes of the schools under consideration, qualitative methodology provides the most appropriate approach for exploring students’ everyday lives, with the purpose of revealing new understandings. This thesis aims to provide a rich description and understanding of the many interweaving processes that contribute to each school’s gender regime.

This research study, which included classroom observations and both formal interviews and focus groups, and informal conversations with students and staff, was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of South Australia on Wednesday 13th February, 2002 – Ethics Protocol P287/01. In accordance with that approval the names of both the schools and individuals were changed to maintain their anonymity. However, I do acknowledge that although the school names have been changed, in an ethnographic study such as this, which provides a detailed account of the institutions studied, a reader who is familiar with any one of the schools described here, may be able to make a guess at the identity. In addition, in accordance with the ethics approval, signed consent forms were obtained from the parents of students participating in the focus groups.

The schools participating in this study were each members of the Consortium of Coeducational Schools of Victoria⁴, the industry partner in the project and were selected by the Consortium. The principals of each of the schools were the first and primary contact point for the project. The process of selecting classes to follow and teachers and students to interview and participate in

⁴ The Consortium consists of independent coeducational schools, most located in Melbourne.

focus groups will be described later in this chapter. The fieldwork was completed during 2002 and 2003.

When I transferred my candidature to Deakin University in 2010, I was completing the analysis and undertaking the writing of the thesis. Given the stage the project had reached, Deakin University did not require submission of a new ethics approval.

Framing the research

The field of qualitative research has become more popular since the 1970s (Freebody 2003; Weis & Fine 2000). Interest in it has increased and there are ongoing debates about the meaning of the many terms used regarding such research. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011a) observe, 'these separate and multiple uses and meanings of the methods of qualitative research make it difficult for scholars to agree on any essential definition of the field, for it is never just one thing' (p.6). A number of writers use varied taxonomies to describe the 'paradigms and perspectives' (Denzin & Lincoln 2011b, p.91) of qualitative research (Crotty 1998; Denzin & Lincoln 2011b; Jacob 1987; Tesch 1990; Wolcott 1992). Thomas Schram (2006) puts it colourfully when he says 'there exists an almost baffling number of classifications or typologies' (p.93). These various taxonomies have many terms in common, but they are not necessarily interchangeable, with Matthew Miles and Michael Huberman (1994) declaring 'they turn out to be basically incommensurate, both in the way the different qualitative strands are defined and in the criteria used to distinguish them' (p.5). It is thus important not to move between various taxonomies indiscriminately, but rather to select and employ one consistently.

Michael Crotty (1998) offers a useful framework for this project. He identifies four basic elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. These create a hierarchy, with epistemology informing theoretical

perspective, and it in turn informing methodology, with methodology determining choice of methods.

In this framework, the epistemological approach underpins all other methodological decisions. Epistemology is defined as the theory of knowledge or our understandings about 'how we know what we know' (Crotty 1998, p.8). Quoting Maynard, Crotty argues that epistemology determines 'what kinds of knowledge are possible' (cited in Crotty 1998, p.8). He identifies three broad categories of epistemology: objectivism, which regards knowledge as the discovery of an 'objective truth' by a subject; constructivism, according to which knowledge is 'constructed' by the subject in relation to objects; and the subjectivist approach, which understands knowledge as being created by the subject (1998, p.8).

Epistemology

Using Crotty's taxonomy, my research is embedded in a constructionist approach to epistemology. If knowledge is an individual construction, then there is 'no objective truth waiting for us to discover it' (Crotty 1998, p.8) and any attempt to understand reality can only be partial, incomplete – one of multiple possible explanations. As Judith Baxter (2002) argues, however accurate and complete a description attempts to be, it will involve, 'at the very least, a selection of focus, the highlighting of certain aspects for attention and the inevitable marginalization of others' (p.833).

If a constructivist epistemology is invoked, then, according to Crotty, 'Truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world' (1998, p.8). In other words, if 'truth or meaning' is dependent on 'our engagement' then the social context of that knowing

becomes vital to our understanding. Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as:

the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p.42)

In this study, both the public statements of the schools and the interactions between members of these school communities are observed and analysed in order to describe the schools' social contexts.

Theoretical perspective

Continuing with the framework described by Crotty (1998), the theoretical perspective that informs this project is feminism. According to Alison Assiter (cited in Crotty 1998), the key features of a feminist perspective are 'a commitment to the undermining of oppressive gender-based power relations' (p.173) and a 'critical reflexivity', which holds 'the dispassionate investigator' to be nothing more than a 'classist, racist and especially masculinist' myth (Crotty 1998, pp.175-6). Sandra Harding (1987a) drew these two themes together when she argued that 'feminist analyses unsettle traditional assumptions about knowledge as they challenge familiar beliefs about women, men and social life' (p.189). This focus on perspectives that challenge a patriarchal social order is also central to Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland's (2002) answer to the question 'What is feminist research?': 'the point of feminist social research is ... to give insights into gendered social existence that would otherwise not exist' (p.147). They go on to say that it is not just a matter of studying gender, but rather that feminist research is framed by 'feminist theory, and aim[s] to produce knowledge that will be useful for effective transformation of gendered injustice and subordination' (p.147). As a result 'feminist researchers typically ground their research questions in the experience of women, with the goal of understanding women's experience and improving women's lives' (Cole & Stewart 2012)

The theoretical perspective of feminism does not imply particular methodologies or methods (Crotty 1998; Harding 1987b; Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002). While a feminist theoretical perspective may share methodologies and methods in common with other perspectives, 'feminist vision, feminist values and feminist spirit [will] transform ...' (Crotty 1998, p.182) a feminist research project. This thesis arrived out of a desire to explore long-standing concerns on the part of feminist educators that coeducation may disadvantage girls; that it may not have equally supported girls' education as it has boys'. This interest in gender equity means that a feminist theoretical perspective is a key lens underpinning the research methodology.

Research methodology

The third element in Crotty's framework is research methodology (Crotty 1998). This study draws on Paul Atkinson and Martyn Hammersley's (1994) understanding of ethnography as it refers to social research. It includes the following:

- a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them
- a tendency to work primarily with 'unstructured' data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories
- investigation of a small number of cases ... in detail
- analysis of data that involves explicit interpretations of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal description and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most. (p.248)

Clifford Geertz (1973) focused on this last point when he described ethnography as 'thick description' (p.6) – a term borrowed from Gilbert Ryle (1971, p.482) – for description which, in addition to reporting the facts (a thin description), includes the contexts and meanings attributed to those facts. It

is this multi-faceted character of ethnography that led Beverley Skeggs (1999) to argue that ethnography 'is the only methodology that can show how complex processes are lived together and in contradiction' (p.48), a significant strength of this approach when it comes to understanding the social relations of gender. This approach seemed appropriate as schools and social relations of gender within them are unquestionably webs of 'complex processes', and ethnography allows a contextualised understanding as opposed to the abstraction of isolated facts (Denscombe 2014). The intention of this project was to develop a 'thick description' of the understandings and implications of the four dimensions of gender relations within the three schools.

Developing this multi-faceted description required extended time and involvement at each school in order to become immersed in the school's culture and develop a 'dynamic "picture" of the way of life' of these school communities (Burns 1997, p.297). Fieldwork was undertaken over a two-year period, spending one term in each school, in each of those years.

These extended periods spent at each school also reduced the observer effect, the 'Heisenberg effect' (Bogden & Biklen 2003, p.34), that is, the effect of the presence of the observer on those being observed (Gillham 2000). It is widely accepted that people who find themselves the object of a researcher's gaze are likely to change their behaviour (Denscombe 2014). As Robert Bogden and Sari Biklen argue (2003), 'Researchers can never eliminate all of their own effects on subjects or obtain a perfect correspondence between what they wish to study – "the natural setting" – and what they actually study "a setting with a researcher present"' (p.35). I was aware that my presence in these schools was a disturbance of 'the natural setting' and that I should not 'suspend my critical faculties', regularly questioning if what I was observing was 'typical or representative' (Gillham 2000, p.46). While it may not be possible to 'eliminate all of [the] effects', it is argued that spending extended periods of time in the research setting and interacting with the research subjects in 'a natural, unobtrusive and nonthreatening manner' (Bogden &

Biklen 2003, p.35) can minimise the observer effect. Ethnographic researchers are advised to 'blend into the woodwork' (Bogden & Biklen 2003, p.35), 'become part of the furniture' (Denscombe 1998, p.47) and 'become part of the local landscape' (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.265). The extended time spent in the schools meant the novelty of my presence could wear off.

Researcher's positioning

The epistemology, theoretical perspective and research methodology identified here as framing this research – constructivist, feminist and ethnographic – all draw attention to the impacts of the researcher and her social location on the research endeavour and call for 'critical reflexivity' (Crotty 1998, p.175). If there is no one truth waiting to be discovered, if knowledge is always, inevitably, a construction of the knower, and the 'dispassionate investigator' just a myth, then the researcher's location, knowledge and characteristics will influence the form that knowledge takes. As Silverman (2006) notes, 'the facts we find in "the field" ... are impregnated by our assumptions' (p.11). Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (2000) remind us that when we deny the 'subjective or personal aspects' of our involvement in research 'we hide behind the alleged cloak of neutrality' (p.34).

Mary Gergen (2001) describes herself as a constructivist and a feminist when arguing that:

all aspects of scientific work require acts of choice and interpretation. Whatever is, in terms of the invisible hand of nature, is unknowable until it is created in systems of symbolic significance ... findings are not simply found; they only seem to be. (p.4)

Therefore a feminist perspective requires a reflexive approach to research, leading us to ask: 'Who is undertaking this research project and how is it framed?' Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002) argue that 'any researcher's critical consciousness is constrained by the limits of their knowledge, culture and experience, and also by their personal skills, powers of empathy and

political openness to silences and exclusion' (p.119). As Patricia Miller (2000) says, 'Feminists doubt there is "a view from nowhere" ... Knowers are not interchangeable; feminist epistemologists ask *who* knows, in what situations, for what purpose' (p.6). Ethnographers also acknowledge that they 'have no way of standing outside [their own social location] to reach some objective and neutral vantage point from which to view things "as they really are"' (Denscombe 2014, p.88). Because ethnographers are immersed in complex naturalistic settings, the data that forms the basis of their work is necessarily 'always selected and fashioned' and consequently 'all field texts are interpretive' (Conrad 2002, pp.77-8).

Each of the basic elements of the research framework – constructivist epistemology, feminist theoretical perspective, ethnographic research methodology – calls upon the researcher to reflect upon her own social location: her gender, 'race', ethnicity, social class, culture, sexuality (Miller & Scholnick 2000, p.6), for such characteristics influence the choices, decisions and interpretations that determine the course of one's research endeavour. Indeed, as researchers we 'have a responsibility' (Fine & Weis 2002, p.284) to interrogate our own subjectivities and location, and to acknowledge these when reporting our work.

As a middle-class, white, Anglo girl growing up in the 1960s, I attended a private girls' school in Melbourne and was a relatively successful science and maths student. I went to university in the early 1970s, abandoned the 'hard sciences' for one of the 'soft' sciences – psychology – and discovered second wave feminism. I was appalled to realise that I, along with everyone else, was surrounded by a forest of assumptions about males and females that limited the possibilities and opportunities for everyone. I set about making changes in my personal and professional life. It seemed so simple 'to even things up', create 'a level playing field' (Crotty 1998, p.182). After working as a psychologist for almost a decade, I moved to teaching because I wanted to make a difference. One of the ways I fondly hoped I would make a difference was by opening the eyes of students to a feminist or at least

non-sexist future. But like so many before and since, I discovered that this was more difficult than anticipated. My students and colleagues were not converts waiting to be shown the light, and changes that were implemented did not always lead to immediate outcomes, let alone hoped-for flow-on effects.

My personal experience of single-sex schooling and subsequent politicisation meant the debate regarding single-sex and coeducational schools would always be of particular interest to me. I became aware that the comparisons made in both the academic literature and the popular media were almost always flawed because of difficulties in finding schools similar in all respects except their gender context. Furthermore, James Coleman's (1961) description of coeducational education as a 'cruel jungle of rating and dating' (p.51) still seemed to have a hold on the public imagination and the academic debate, despite much of the research underpinning academic and popular debate being from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Private coeducational schools in Melbourne were struggling to enrol equal numbers of girls and boys as a result of the widespread belief that while coeducational schools are 'good' for boys they are 'bad' for girls. It was important to test this public perception, since from a feminist perspective there are other potential disadvantages in separating girls and boys educationally, as was discussed in Chapter 2. As Weis and Fine (2000) argue, 'the purpose of social inquiry ... is not only to generate new knowledge but to reform "common sense"' (p.60). If 'common sense' is in fact incorrect and leads to ongoing negative impacts, then it becomes 'common nonsense'.

Therefore it seemed to me that it was important to undertake this work and gather data to inform the ongoing debate. However, I acknowledge that my interest in engaging in research in this area comes out of a particular life history; that is, it is shaped by my own positionality and brings with it a set of

subjective values that may have influenced the interpretation of what I observed.

Research method

Research method is the final element in Crotty's taxonomy (Crotty 1998). This research uses a case-study approach. Robert Stake (1995) describes a case as 'a specific, complex, functioning thing', using the concept of 'a bounded system', as proposed by Louis Smith, who sees a case as 'an object rather than a process' (p.2). This study of three schools is a multi-case study (Bogden & Biklen 2003) in which each school constituted a 'case' and the aim was to 'catch the complexity' of each case (Stake 1995, p.2). This use of multiple cases provides an opportunity to identify commonalities and differences present across the three sites.

Bill Gillham (2000) identifies two key characteristics of case studies. Firstly, they require a range of data sources since 'no one kind or source of evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) on its own' (p.2); and secondly, they do not proceed from '*a priori* theoretical notions' (p.2). He goes on to compare case studies with traditional 'experimental science' approaches, arguing that case studies are better suited to 'the complexity, embedded character, and specificity of real-life phenomena' (p.6) such as a school.

There is great diversity in the locations, approaches and purposes of case studies, and they can potentially be used to draw either theoretical or substantive conclusions (Bogden & Biklen 2003). This project, with its focus on a particular type of setting – elite coeducational secondary schools – and its aim to understand the role of gender in that setting, has sought substantive conclusions rather than a more abstract 'theory about human relationships in general' (p.62).

Guiding questions

The questions prompting this investigation were:

- *Are these three elite coeducational schools disrupting or reinscribing the traditional gender hierarchies?*
- *Are these three elite coeducational schools still ‘risky’ environments for girls?*

Part of the complexity in studying these schools was the many organisational layers through which gender relations were played out. In order to unpack these layers the following questions guided data-gathering and analysis:

- *What are the schools’ stated positions in relation to issues of gender?*
- *What is the school actually doing in relation to gender?*
- *How do students act in the school environment?*
- *What do students say about their experience in these schools?*

These broad questions identified the different organisational layers potentially impacting gender equity and the construction of gender, and provided opportunities to identify contradictions and inconsistencies between layers (Forbes & Weiner 2014). As discussed in Chapter 2, the research literature identifies many aspects of schooling as problematic for both girls and boys. Drawing on this literature finer grained questions identifying potential sites of interest were then posed. Organised using the four framing questions, they provided a provisional template to aid in data collection (see Table 3.1, on next page).

QUESTIONS IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL SITES OF INTEREST	
What are the schools' stated positions in relation to issues of gender?	
Formal structures	Is gender explicitly addressed in any of the schools' formal structures?
Documentation	How is gender represented in school documentation? For example, advertisements, websites, prospectuses and annual magazines.
	Are there policy statements regarding gender or gender-related issues?
What is the school actually doing in relation to gender?	
Structures	Are there explicit or taken-for-granted gender biases in determining positions of authority or leadership? For staff? For students?
	Is gender used as an organiser within the school? For classes? Extra-curricular activities? Order of participation?
Documentation	How are males and females portrayed in public statements, including prospectuses, advertisements, policies, annual magazines?
	Is there equal representation of females and males in school documentation?
	Do these representations of female and male reflect stereotypical views?
	Are there gender-based differences in how the achievements of females and males are acknowledged and celebrated?
Staff/student relationships	Do girls and boys have equal access to teachers' attention and classroom time?
	Do teachers have similar expectations of girls and boys? Both in terms of behaviour and schoolwork?

	Are the consequences for girls and boys exhibiting similar behaviour the same?
	What are teachers saying about girls and boys?
How do students act in the school environment?	
In the classroom	Are both girls and boys engaged with classroom activities? Wanting to be academically successful?
	Is disruptive classroom behaviour equally likely amongst girls and boys?
	Do girls and boys participate equally in PE?
	Do girls and boys have similar computer skills and levels of interest?
Beyond the classroom	When given choices do girls and boys select a wide range of subjects?
	Do girls and boys share physical space equally? In classrooms? In the yard?
Student/student relationships	Is there evidence of an 'us and them' mentality between girls and boys? One group resenting the other because they get different treatment, do better, behave differently?
	Is there evidence of sex-based harassment?
	Do students conform to stereotyped gender roles or do they explore a variety of ways of being male and female?
	Are relationships between girls and boys based on gender – flirting, showing off, competing etc. – or are they working together as colleagues and spending time together as friends?
What do students say about the school environment?	
	About the school's expectations? About their teachers' expectations? About the way they are treated? About their relationships with each other?

Table 3.1 Provisional template to aid in the collection of data

These questions suggested which locations within the school to examine and provided guidance about what to look for. They drew attention to the schools' formal and informal structures, documents published by the schools, staff/student relationships and student/student relationships, and individual students' behaviour and choices.

Data collection and analysis

The study was undertaken at three 'consciously coeducational' (Sadovnik & Semel 2002, p.134), elite, independent schools. As described above the aim of a case study is to provide a detailed and contextualised examination of 'real-life phenomena' (Gillham 2000, p.6) and requires a range of data-gathering techniques.

Harding (1987b) identifies three modes of data collection: 'listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records' (p.2). Each of these was employed in this study. Data was collected through participant observation, where:

The researcher enters the world of the people he or she plans to study, gets to know them and earns their trust, and systematically keeps a detailed written record of what is heard and observed. This material is supplemented by other data such as school memos and records, newspaper articles and photographs. (Bogden & Biklen 2003, p.2)

For participant observers to 'earn [the] trust' of their subjects, Gillham (2000) argues, the 'first requirement' is that the researcher identify herself and what she is 'trying to do or find out' (p.52). He argues that identifying the area of interest will not lead to bias in the data, but bias will occur if researchers 'say what answers or results [they] expect to find' (p.53). In line with this advice, I was open with students and staff about the questions I was hoping to address, explaining I was interested in how girls and boys were faring in their

school, and in what ways girls and boys' experiences were the same and in what ways different.

Although data was collected over an extended period, guided by the themes emerging from the fieldwork, as is common in case studies formal analysis was not carried out until data collection was completed (Bogden & Biklen 2003).

Data sources

The 'overwhelming majority' (Mael et al. 2005, p.xvii) of studies comparing coeducational and single-sex schooling have been carried out at secondary level. This is in part because there are fewer single-sex primary schools. Furthermore, as students move through school there are greater opportunities to choose pathways, and assessment outcomes become increasingly public. It is during the secondary years that the gendered nature of students' educational experience becomes more visible, and contested.

Data was collected from school documents; interviews with key staff; student focus groups; observations in classrooms; observations beyond the classroom, including during recess, lunchtime and after school, at extra-curricular activities and at other school events; and informal conversations with staff and students. The data collected during the fieldwork included both descriptions and counts based on the observations of events and interactions, to illuminate and clarify the processes and structures under consideration. So, for example, field notes included both qualitative descriptions of the interactions observed and more structured records of who participated in classroom activities and the patterns of interaction. Qualitative descriptions were categorised and then counted. Documentation was analysed for focus, language, images and style, and both description and frequency played a role in this analysis. The range of data collected and the process by which it was analysed are described in detail below.

School selection

The Consortium of Coeducational Schools of Victoria was the industry partner in this research project and it agreed to three of its member schools participating. The schools were self-selected from this group, with each school principal seeming to believe that participation would be strategically useful to their school. This attitude appeared to be based on two different but complementary expectations. The first was that each one believed their school provided a very good, if not exceptional, educational experience for their students, both girls and boys, and they were confident that the research would reveal this. On the other hand they said they were interested in any findings that identified areas where there was room for improvement. Each school enrolled students from pre-school to VCE, and provided access to the secondary section of the school for this project.

Late in 2001 I met with the three principals to discuss broad areas of interest and clarify expectations. The timing and order of the field visits, to begin in 2002, were decided here. It was agreed I would visit each school for a period of eleven weeks, which approximated to a term. The three schools were not visited simultaneously; instead an extended period was spent in each school in the first year and then the schools were revisited on the same rotation the following year. Bogden and Biklen (2003) recommend this sequential approach in order to develop a clear picture of each case and avoid blurring and confusion.

During each of the fieldwork phases I was in the school for three days a week on average. In the first year of the project, each block of eleven weeks included one week of orientation to the school and two five-week blocks, one to follow each of two classes. In the second year each school was again visited over a period of ten weeks, the first half of which was devoted to following one year level, the second focused on the other year level. During this time more than 300 classes were observed, varying in length from forty-five minutes to two hours.

Year level selection

Students enter secondary school as they are leaving childhood and leave school six years later as young adults. What is true of the beginners in Year 7 is not necessarily true as they leave school – student relationships, teacher expectations, academic goals and how these interact with gender – have all changed. These changes are part of the complexity inherent in any discussion of schooling and gender. In order to provide a broad picture of each school, classes were followed at both junior secondary and senior secondary levels. Years 8 and 10 were chosen, since following them in two successive years provided a window across the school from Year 8 to Year 11. It was decided to avoid Year 7 to allow new students to settle in and Year 12 so that final year students would not be disturbed.

Entering the schools

Before commencing fieldwork I contacted each principal and requested a meeting with him (the three principals were male) and key staff, including staff with coordination responsibilities for the two year levels, and student welfare coordinators or counsellors. Principals were invited to add any staff they believed might be useful contacts or informants in this initial round of discussions.

These initial meetings took place during the first week at each school. It was also important to meet administrative staff who would be able to provide practical information and support and who often acted as ‘gatekeepers’ (Denscombe 2014, p.85) to both individuals and information. Administrative tasks such as getting ID cards, keys and parking were worked out in this early period. Obtaining a map of the school and exploring the local geography was similarly an important part of this orientation.

During this first week I was introduced to the staff either formally at a staff meeting or less formally in the staffroom at recess or lunchtime. I gave a very brief (five-minute) overview of the project and invited questions. One of the

priorities at this first meeting was to reassure teachers that the primary focus of classroom observation would be students' behaviour and interactions; I would not be focusing on the teachers and their teaching. Initial introductions often led to follow-up conversations.

At each school there were several classes at each level. The relevant coordinators were consulted to arrange access to one class from the year level. They were asked to select a class with no particular distinguishing characteristics; rather, a class they believed representative of the classes at that year level – neither the jewel in the crown nor the most difficult. Despite this many of the classes selected reported that they were the best/most interesting/most fun group at their year level, and being selected for this project quickly confirmed in their minds their superior status.

Data-collection techniques

As described above data was drawn from a range of sources including observations, formal and informal discussions with staff and students and school documents. As Gillham (2000) argues, the use of a range of evidence from different sources 'each with its strengths and weaknesses' (p.2) is a key feature of case studies.

Interviews with key staff

A number of key staff, including members of the school leadership team or school executive and senior administrators and teachers, was interviewed. Gillham (2000) suggests that interviews, such as these with senior members of an organisation, should be relatively unstructured, especially early on as they will be far more knowledgeable about the organisation than the researcher. Consequently, I began by raising topics I was interested in, but allowed participants to take the lead in exploring topics and sharing insights. More than sixty interviews were conducted, with approximately half conducted during the first week at each school, before classroom

observations began. The remainder of the interviews were conducted as opportunities arose during fieldwork. Some were the result of following up principals' or other staff members' suggestions; others were prompted by events or questions that arose during my time at the school.

Staff interviews served a two-fold purpose: they provided a window on the informal understandings of coeducation in operation amongst senior staff and they provided guidance regarding where to look and what to look for during the fieldwork.

Collection of school documentation

During my orientation to the school, I also began collecting school materials – prospectuses, information for parents, annual magazines, newsletters and internal material such as lists of staff and positions of responsibility for both staff and students. Arrangements were also made to obtain information relating to student subject choices based on enrolments in a range of VCE subjects, and student involvement in the range of available co-curricular activities. A conscious decision was made to collect copies of any and all materials relating to the school, its programs and activities.

Classroom observations

In the first year of the project in each school I followed Year 8 classes and Year 10 classes for a month each. Where students were assigned to home groups for at least some of their classes, this home group was the starting point for classroom observations. All three schools ran home groups for Year 8 students and Year 10 students. Most home groups had the majority of their classes together. The only exception was the Year 10 group at Treetops College who only met together as a home group occasionally. In those settings where home groups met regularly, one of these groups was selected by the school staff to participate in the project as described above. At Treetops College I worked with the Year 10 coordinator to identify the classes I could observe.

In the five settings where I followed a home group I was introduced to the class and briefly explained why I was visiting their school. I emphasised that my research was not about good or bad behaviour, but rather patterns of behaviour and whether there were differences between girls and boys. I also reassured them that I would not be reporting on individuals' behaviour or identifying anyone to the school or their teachers. I also answered any questions that arose.

After this initial introduction I joined the home group whenever it was in a class together. At any time when students from 'my' home group had electives and split up to attend a range of classes, I would join one of these classes. I attempted to visit a wide range of classes during these times. As a result, I had the opportunity to observe a large number of the other students in the year level, and to observe the students from the home group in combination with these students.

Following the Year 10s at Treetops College was less straightforward as I was not linked to a particular home group. There was no group of students or core teachers who expected me to join them and consequently I found myself repeatedly explaining what I was doing. Furthermore there was no one group that I observed regularly enough for my presence to cease being a novelty. A further complication was that this was the first school I visited and I was rather tentative about approaching individual classes or teachers without prior negotiation and the direct support of the coordinator. These circumstances meant fewer classes were observed during this month than in the other settings.

Each time I was to attend a class I had not observed before I would aim to arrive early to speak to the teacher before class began. In the vast majority of cases the teachers were aware of the project. I always asked if it would be 'OK' for me to sit at the back and take notes. Only on one occasion did a teacher say they would rather I did not observe and I missed out on

observing a class. However, although all the other teachers agreed to my presence, they were not equally comfortable. On a number of occasions it was obvious a teacher had modified their behaviour in response to my presence as researcher and audience (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Even when such modifications were not obvious I was aware that my presence might be interacting with teachers' and students' behaviour (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). At all times I endeavoured to minimise the impact of my presence by interacting with teachers and students 'in a natural, unobtrusive and nonthreatening manner' (Bogden & Biklen 2003, p.35).

In the second year of the project I returned to the schools and endeavoured to follow up the students who had been in the home groups I had observed previously. At All Saints College this was straightforward as home groups stayed together throughout their secondary years. At the two other schools students were moved into new groups, so I used individual student timetables to identify classes attended by those students I had followed the previous year. At Treetops College, as a result of the structure in Year 10 the previous year, there were no particular students I could follow in Year 11, so I selected classes to observe on the basis of seeing a range of subjects and teachers. In total 345 classes (of varying duration) were observed:

- Treetops College – 97
- Melville College – 130
- All Saints College – 118

Each classroom observation began with noting the subject, the teacher, the layout of the room and the students' seating arrangement (Gillham 2000). Once this general overview was recorded, the focus moved to classroom interactions – between students, and between students and teachers, with a particular emphasis on gender: who asked questions, who was asked questions, who volunteered contributions to class discussions, who was called on, who sat where, who worked with whom, who chatted with whom, whose behaviour drew negative attention and who received positive

comments from the teacher. These observations included a mixture of descriptions, quotes and systematic counting of particular behaviours. Freebody (2003) emphasises the importance of capturing the 'specific details of naturally occurring social behaviour' (p.42) and notes that the 'phenomenon of interest can escape' (p.41) if researchers are over reliant on scoring pre-coded schedules or using other quantitative methods that strip away the context of behaviour. However, given the focus of this project on issues of gender equity and comparing how girls and boys were faring in these coeducational settings, it was also imperative that the qualitative descriptions could be read alongside information regarding the frequencies of events or items of interest.

The inevitable problem for anyone trying to capture the life of a classroom is the sheer volume of activity and interactions. Classic research by Myra and David Sadker (1994) describes 'the hectic pace of classroom life' (p.267), reporting that each day there are thousands of interactions occurring in an average classroom. Not surprisingly, I found it impossible to document everything that happened and consequently was continually making choices. In what is a 'necessarily selective process' (p.30), Freebody (2003) recommends being aware of and acknowledging the constant choices being made. My choices were guided initially by the issues in the literature identified as potentially problematic, but I was also aware it was important not only to be 'drawn to ... the exotic' (Weis & Fine 2000, p.50) or unusual, but also to 'document the mundane' (Freebody 2003, p.30).

Observations beyond the classroom

Formal classes are only one aspect of students' school life. For most students co-curricular activities and the social life fitted around and between classes are equally important, and they are also central sites of gender construction and gender interaction. Therefore, I commenced observing as I drove up to the school each morning and continued until I drove away at the

end of the day, and occasionally at evening events when an opportunity arose.

I recorded the behaviour and snippets of conversation overheard as students headed for class and moved between classes, and at recess and lunchtime. I also spent time observing wherever senior students gathered during spare periods – the library, common areas, cafes. I attended sports training sessions after school, sports days, rehearsals for school productions and public performances, end-of-year speech nights and evening events for parents.

Student focus groups

On average each year group was followed for four weeks. In the following week I would run focus groups, which involved about one-third of the students. Students were selected after consultation with the home group teacher and equal numbers of girls and boys were included. Written parental consent was obtained prior to participation for all students. At each year level girls-only, boys-only and mixed focus groups were conducted. These were recorded and transcribed.

Informal conversations with students and staff

As well as formal staff interviews, I had hundreds of informal conversations with staff. These 'naturally occurring conversations' (Gillham 2000, p.63) were important sources of information about life in these schools. Bogden and Biklen (2003) describe the potential for researchers to develop relationships that are 'more like having a friendship than a contract' (p.43). As I moved around the school, I often found myself in collegial and friendly conversation with teachers as relationships developed. Sometimes, these conversations were initiated by teachers who were curious about what I was doing or keen to share their observations and opinions. On other occasions, I initiated conversations when I was seeking information, although more often I talked with staff as I came into contact with them, ensuring they had the

opportunity to ask any questions and felt comfortable with my presence in their classrooms and the school more generally.

Similarly, there were many informal conversations with students. Students in the core classes I followed often talked to me about what I was doing or what was happening in their class. Usually after the first week or two, I became an honorary member of the class, and on occasions they would take on the task of explaining to other students what I was doing. Conversations with other students were less frequent, and usually began by them asking me what I was doing, but would sometimes lead to them answering my questions about what they were doing.

Data analysis

As described above, data was collected from documents, interviews, conversations and observations. Across the two years of the project a huge amount of data was collected and the initial task was to organise it (Seale & Kelly 1999). The data was interrogated for themes, repetitions and patterns, for elements of consistency or 'correspondence' (Stake 1995, p.78). In seeking and identifying patterns, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that 'the important thing ... is to be able to (a) see added evidence of the same pattern ... and (b) remain open to disconfirming evidence when it appears' (p.246). They describe this as an 'iterative' (p.249) process of sorting and categorising the data. Initially issues identified in the literature guided this search. However, new and unexpected themes were uncovered during data collection and analysis.

Once patterns or themes began to emerge they needed to be explored and tested. In positivist research this process is what establishes the *validity* of concepts and measurements. However, research carried out within the constructivist paradigm assumes multiple realities constructed by participants in interaction with the environment and each other (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a). Consequently, researchers in this paradigm have avoided the term validity,

preferring instead such notions as ‘trustworthiness’ (Olesen 2005, p.251), ‘credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p.13) and ‘plausibility ... sturdiness ... ’ (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.11), when testing the patterns and themes they identify.

As constructivist and qualitative approaches to social research developed during the 1970s and 1980s (Freebody 2003; Weis & Fine 2000), early attempts to ensure that ‘findings were valid and procedures robust’ (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.262) revolved around *triangulation*, a process commonly used in qualitative research as an ‘alternative to validation’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p.5). However, this process continued to assume there was ‘a “fixed point” or an “object” that [could] be triangulated’ (Richardson & St Pierre 2005, p.963). This was in stark contradiction with the defining principle of constructivism that ‘[o]bjective reality can never be captured’ (Denzin & Lincoln 2011a, p.5). Triangulation as a means of verification was increasingly regarded as problematic.

Nevertheless, as Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, researchers do need methods that are ‘credible, dependable and replicable’ (1994, p.2). They identify a range of ‘tactics’ aimed at increasing the researcher’s confidence, and that of their readers, in ‘what [they] have found’. They group these tactics into ‘[those] ensuring the basic quality of the data, ... those that check findings by examining exceptions to early patterns, and ... [those] that take a sceptical, demanding approach to emerging explanations’ (p.263).

Bogden and Biklen (2003) argue that while the inclusion of different sources of information will not ‘validate’ findings, it will ‘lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena [under study]’ (p.107). In addition they argue for a detailed description of how the data was collected and the processes by which it was analysed. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that the different data sources and data measurement on which triangulation relies may not validate findings but that they do serve useful purposes. For example, if they are inconsistent or conflicting they may lead to ‘a more complex, context-

respecting set of explanations' (p.267) and reduce 'inappropriate certainty' (Mark & Shotland cited in Miles & Huberman 1994, p.267). They advise researchers that to 'collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence' (p.267) should become a way of life. Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St Pierre (2005) also argue for this multi-lateral approach in what they describe as 'a postmodernist deconstruction of triangulation ... there are far more than "three sides" by which to approach the world. We do not triangulate; we crystallize' (p.963).

Life in these three coeducational schools was approached from many sides: documents – internal records, rules and policies, publications that represented school life to members of the school community and beyond; observations of classroom life and life outside the classroom, in co-curricular activities and during free time; and interviews, focus groups and informal conversations. As recommended by Bogden and Biklen (2003), the procedures undertaken in the analysis of such materials are described in detail below. Analysis of this material sought to tease out how the micro-processes around gender were played out in these schools. A fine-grained analysis of the practices and the meanings attributed to them attempted to move beyond the binaries male/female, good/bad. A number of practices that operated simultaneously, interacting and competing to create a set of tendencies, were described.

A good deal of overlap in the data collected from the three schools became evident, and where there were differences the effect was of a patchwork rather than clearly delineated patterns according to school. Therefore the data was analysed according to the four dimensions of gender, rather than as portraits of each school.

Analysing the documents

School advertisements, school websites, prospectuses, enrolment forms and associated materials, school magazines and newsletters, information

booklets such as curriculum handbooks, school policies and student diaries were collected. The question of interest here was '*How would the students see themselves reflected in these publications?*' Three criteria were used: How much space is devoted to girls and their activities compared to boys and their activities?; To what extent are representations of each gender stereotypical?; Is gender-inclusive language used?

Content analysis was used to evaluate the contents of the publications (Denscombe 2014): topics, photographs, contributors and language were analysed. The primary categories of analysis were females, males and mixed or shared; a secondary category of interest was whether students or members of staff were represented or were contributors.

Content analysis assists in identifying what is relevant in a text, and what are its priorities and values (Denscombe 2014). Such information aids in understanding a school's position on a range of school-related activities. School records were analysed to build a picture of the place of girls and boys, and female and male staff, in the school: in positions of responsibility, the academic hierarchy, the various subject areas and co-curricular activities. Again the primary category of analysis was gender.

Documents, such as staff lists, including information about positions of responsibility, student leadership lists, subject enrolment records and VCE results were also collected and the gender patterns in them analysed.

Analysing the fieldwork notes

There were two sets of notes: from observations of classes and out-of-class activities; and from interviews and conversations with teachers and students. The first step in analysis was a close reading of two of the notebooks to identify broad categories for organising the data (Burns 1997; Seale & Kelly 1999). Much of the debate and concern about coeducational secondary schooling revolves around girls and boys' participation, in both the academic

curriculum and co-curricular activities. This was an early 'orienting idea' (Miles & Huberman 1994, p.27) that provided a starting point for observations. Two broad categories were developed: *engagement in the schools' agendas* and *disengagement from those agendas*.

Ever since Coleman (1961) identified 'the cruel jungle of rating and dating' (p.51) in coeducational settings concerns about participation in academic and co-curricular programs has been linked to the types of social interactions between girls and boys in these settings. Field notes relating to observations of such interactions were grouped in the category *social mixing*. Linked to this emphasis on 'rating and dating' was a heightened concern about appearance, especially for girls, leading to a fourth category, *appearance and uniform*.

Although the primary focus of observations was students' behaviour and interactions, a fifth category emerged, *teacher behaviour and comments*. This left a range of potentially interesting observations assigned to a final category, *other*.

These six categories were used to organise all the substantive observations recorded in field notes for each of the schools (Gillham 2000). Due to the richness and complexity of the material, it was important to keep all of the observational data in play and avoid picking and choosing from it prematurely. It has been reported that '[d]ata that are "vivid", rather than "pallid", tend to be noticed, retrieved and used more frequently' (Kahnemann & Tversky cited in Miles & Huberman 1994, p.263), leading to distortions in analysis. I endeavoured to ensure that 'pallid' observations, of the mundane events researchers are advised to document (Freebody 2003; Weis & Fine 2000), were not lost. Clive Seale and Moira Kelly (1999) argue for this careful approach, saying researchers must not have 'simply trawled through a mass of data and selected anecdotes to report those that support [our] particular bias' (p.156). I certainly felt I could have found examples in my field notes to support almost any story I wished to tell about life in these coeducational

schools and was determined to honour all the material that had been so painstakingly collected. I was well aware that I had not been able to document everything that had happened during my fieldwork and that those incidents that had found their way into my notes may have reflected my personal viewpoint. Nevertheless, I aimed to minimise the extent to which this was further compounded by selective use of material.

All the field notes were then transcribed, consolidating observations around each of the categories. Each observation was assigned an identifying number, a notebook/page reference and date to ensure it was possible to trace the extracted description back to its context (Denscombe 2014). Weis and Fine (2000) describe moving back and forth between 'decontextualised ... data snippets' and the 'full narrative' (p.29) of their research. In some instances, observations were assigned to more than one of these initial categories (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Once this first sorting was completed each set of observations was reviewed and further subcategories identified (Seale & Kelly 1999). So, for example, in reviewing all the observations gathered under *engagement*, examples of activities such as asking questions, helping teachers and working with peers were gathered together. In many instances these were further subdivided. For example, working with peers included cooperating on a task or problem, seeking help and offering help.

Each of these finer grained categories was then interrogated for patterns relating to gender. At this stage the data was still grouped by school. Whenever an emerging pattern was identified from one class or school, it was compared with the corresponding data from other year levels and the other schools. This constant movement between the various year levels in the three schools was an important step. On occasion it led to confirming trends, but often counter examples or 'negative cases' (Silverman, 2006, p.94; see also Miles & Huberman 1994; and Seale & Kelly 1999) were identified. Gillham (2000) argues that seeking this 'contradictory evidence ... is basic to research integrity' (p.29).

Another useful analytic strategy was establishing the number of instances of various types of behaviour. This was helpful in making comparisons between girls and boys and between schools; for example, counting the occurrences of various types of behaviour assisted in answering key questions (Seale & Kelly 1999) such as 'Are the behaviour patterns of girls and boys distinctly different?'

However, there was a serious complication. In most classrooms there were more boys than girls. This gender imbalance created two problems for the analysis and reporting of data from classroom observations. In those classes with an imbalance of more than a few students, even if each individual contributed equally to the class, boys would make more contributions due to their greater number. It was important to take this into account in analysis of the data. Consequently I have consistently taken into consideration the actual numbers of students present in class. In the reporting and discussions in the following chapters, 'equal or 'even' means that the contributions/behaviour/incidents attributed to girls and boys are in proportion to the numbers of girls and boys present at the time. Similarly, 'overrepresentation' or 'more' does not mean more in absolute terms, but more than would be expected if their contribution simply reflected the gender makeup of the group. In the tables in Chapter 4, colour coding is used to report these relative contributions.

There is also a risk that if the number of girls and boys is uneven, what looks like a 'gender effect' might be a 'majority group' or 'minority group' effect (Sunderland 1998, p.57). For example, being louder or appearing more confident may be a result of being in the majority rather than linked to gender.

Reflecting on my fieldwork

My experience prior to embarking on this project was limited to work framed by objectivist epistemology within a positivist perspective working with quantitative data. This project was established and funded on the basis of it using a constructivist epistemology drawing on qualitative data. I applied to undertake the project knowing this, but not understanding what a profound shift that would entail. Consequently, I was learning as I went. It was only as I read in the area that I began to get a sense of the magnitude of the differences between constructivist and objectivist/positivist paradigms. It was at this point that I started my fieldwork although I did not have a clearly articulated question or series of questions, or a clear plan for data collection.

The guiding questions listed above were developed prior to commencing fieldwork and provided the starting point for observations. They suggested a very large agenda, and an early error was my not attempting to narrow the project's focus and refine the questions I was posing to the data, as is recommended by writers on qualitative research (for example, Bogden & Biklen 2003; Silverman 2006). Also, I did not use the early data collection as an opportunity to fine-tune the project focus and develop a set of questions I could more readily address (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). I failed to comprehend that I needed to work actively with the data as I collected it and make strategic decisions regarding the fieldwork. I was still unwittingly operating in a positivist paradigm, collecting data I would analyse later.

This problem was soon compounded. As already acknowledged, schools are webs of 'complex processes' (Skeggs 1999) and it became clear that gender was implicated in almost every aspect of school life. As Amy Wharton (2005) says, '[g]ender is "omnirelevant"' (p.77). In addition to the locations and issues identified using the guiding questions, I had conversations about interior decoration, building layout, parental expectations, media representations, staff politics – the list seemed endless. Rather than my focus narrowing, more issues joined the list of topics of interest. It was only after completing data collection and reading further about analysis of

extensive data collections that I developed a more coherent understanding of how I should have approached a project such as this.

Conclusion

The question that lay at the centre of this investigation when it was commenced was *How are girls and boys faring in these elite independent coeducational environments at this time?* The scope of the project was both a strength and a weakness. The methodology used attempted to acknowledge the complexities inherent in understanding gender: the representations and role of gender were explored at several levels – the school, classroom, co-curriculum and interactions between individuals, both students and teachers. This acknowledged that gender relations are not separate from the life of the school nor can they be described by isolated measures. However, having explored gender across different locations and interactions and finding considerable variety, a number of tantalising questions remained unanswered. Despite this, the data provided a rich description of the ways in which gender played out in the life of these three schools at the beginning of the millennium.

The next four chapters present an analysis of fieldwork data. They are organised around Raewyn Connell's four dimensions of gender relations – power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations.

CHAPTER 4

POWER RELATIONS

As outlined in Chapter 2, Power Relations is one of the four dimensions of gender identified by Raewyn Connell. It draws together ideas of 'dependence, autonomy and control over people' (2010, p.172). In a relational theory of gender, the focus is on how 'control, authority, and force are exercised on gender lines, including organisational hierarchy, legal power, collective and individual violence' (Connell 2005a, p.7), revealing that 'the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity' (Connell 1987, p.109). Across a wide range of contexts and relationships, men exert power over women, and some men exert power over some other men, since there is also a hierarchy of masculinities. Connell (2009) distinguishes between 'hegemonic masculinity', the most powerful version of masculinity based in 'physical toughness, sports skills [and] heterosexuality' (p.100) in the modern English-speaking world, and other less powerful 'subordinated masculinities' (p.77) .

This power can be exercised by individual men, but also 'impersonally' (p.77) by the state, and by bureaucracies and organisations; it can be exerted not only through violence and physical strength and access to resources, but also through discourses which position individuals or groups in particular relationships (Connell 2009). Some of these discourses are evident in the analysis of the other dimensions of gender, which as noted earlier, interact in the real world in ways that are not captured by the four stage analysis being undertaken here. For example, the subject choices and co-curricular involvement in production relations in Chapter 5, and the representations analysed in the symbolic relations in Chapter 6, each draw on gendered discourses that engage with the relative power and positions of individuals and groups.

In Australia and the Western world more generally, despite the changes that have occurred, the link between men and power is at the centre of the gender order, with 'the very top levels of power and wealth mostly a world of men' (Connell 2009, p.7). The power relations in schools and classrooms do not stand outside these power relationships in society, but interact with them and are 'at least partly a result of ... [the] contexts in which schools are situated' (Hirst & Cooper 2008, p.433). Furthermore, how power is distributed (resources, position, time) and enacted in schools and classrooms will shape students' understandings and identities in relation to power and gender (Hirst & Cooper 2008; Keddie 2009). Consequently, to understand power relations in schools it is necessary to interrogate a wide range of structures, discourses, processes and behaviours.

Drawing on the literature on hegemonic masculinity, coeducational and single-sex schools, and feminist thinking regarding the construction of gender, a number of sites were identified as potentially relevant to building a picture of the power relations in the case-study schools. These were both the formal structures of responsibility – the staff and student leadership – and a range of informal relationships and structures in the school, including classroom relations, activities linked to physical strength such as sport, outdoor education and physical education, and sex-based harassment. These were analysed to determine whether traditional gender hierarchies were being reproduced or troubled, and whether these schools still represented a 'risky' environment for girls, a popular discourse in the community and amongst parents that stimulated this investigation, and which is still evident today (Jackson & Bisset 2005; Jackson 2010; Pahlke, Bigler & Patterson 2014; Tsolidis & Dobson 2006).

Power: in the formal school structures

Formal power in schools is invested in the leadership, primarily at the staff level, but also at the student level. Across the modern world and in a wide range of settings, men take up leadership positions, and the power

associated with them, far more often than women (Archard 2013; Connell 2009; Thornton 2012/2013). Feminist researchers have argued that due to a history of men leading, the qualities of good leadership continue to be conflated with the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Reay & Ball 2000) and its emphasis on 'toughness and competitiveness' (Connell 2000, p.84). Some research suggests that even though women are moving into positions of responsibility, the dominant leadership practices continue to be those most associated with hegemonic masculinity – competitive, entrepreneurial and individualistic (Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Mills & Niesche 2014; Reay & Ball 2000; Rusch & Marshall 2006). While such leadership practices are 'antithetical' to many women (Archard 2013, p.722), others embrace it (Connell 2008b). The international literature points to how 'the close association of masculinity with authority and power (masculinism) endures' and that 'leadership is suffused with masculine images as the norm' (Blackmore & Sachs 2007, pp.16-17). This persistent pattern is described by Virginia Schein et al. (cited in Archard 2013, p.761) as 'think manager, think male', while Clare Burton (cited in Connell 2009, p.77) calls it the 'mobilization of male bias'. Having increased numbers of women in leadership does not necessarily change leadership practice or the dominant images of leadership as those practices continue to be informed by external factors such as policy and community expectations. However, in schools it does signal to students, both girls and boys, that women can and do take up these positions.

Leadership practices at school level have important implications. The students are expected to be the leaders of the future and the experiences they have and understandings they develop will have real effects in relation to their 'capacity as leaders of the future' (Archard 2013, p.759) as well as 'understanding of who is and what is an effective leader' (Archard 2013, p.760). Because of the associations between men, masculinity and power, some boys are resistant to women or girls in positions of authority (Connell 2006b; Keddie & Mills 2009) and it is therefore important that 'diverse student groups ... see diverse leaders' (Collard & Reynolds 2005, p.39). There were

formal leadership structures in place at each of the schools for both staff and students. However, at all three there was a clear, consistent difference between the appointment of staff and students to these leadership positions. So while gender equity was foregrounded in the appointment of student leaders, it was not a primary consideration in staff appointments. That is, while greater diversity in leadership is considered to be a good thing, the substantive power is held by the staff, where men and masculine models of leadership continued to hold sway.

Staff leadership

In each school, despite being outnumbered by women on the staff, men were much more likely to be in positions of leadership than women (see Table 4.1). This reflects a commonly observed pattern in educational settings; where, despite more women being employed, men hold more of the leadership positions (Clifford et al. 2012; Collard & Reynolds 2005; Mestry & Schmidt 2012; Pounder & Coleman 2002; Reay & Ball 2000; Rusch & Marshall 2006). The principals of all three schools were men, and male members of staff were almost twice as likely to be appointed to leadership positions, with 31% of female staff members compared to 56% of male staff members holding leadership positions. This was likely to both reflect and reinscribe the well-established link between leadership and masculinity described above (Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Reay & Ball 2000; Rusch & Marshall 2006; Thornton 2012/2013).

School	Treetops College		Melville College		All Saints College	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Staff female: male	47:29	62:38	61:46	57:43	44:42	51:49
Senior leadership (principals and members of school executive) female: male	4:5	44:56	5:8	38:62	3:4	43:57
All leadership female: male	15:26	37:63	19:21	47:53	13:17	43:57

Table 4.1: Gender ratios of staff and leadership positions in the three schools (2002).

This imbalance was most marked in the senior leadership group at Melville College, with eight men and only five women (62:38). However, according to an internal school report (*Equal opportunity for women in the workplace – 2002 to 2003 report*) three years earlier the imbalance had been even greater, with only 21% of the senior staff being women. By contrast, at the lower level of responsibility, this school had the highest proportion of women. Melville College was also the only one of the three schools where the gendering of leadership was discussed. There were members of staff, both female and male (including the principal), who identified both the preponderance of males in senior positions and the masculine style of leadership as problematic. Many members of staff described the school as having a ‘blokey’ culture, which appeared to be shorthand for hegemonic masculinity. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 – Emotional Relations. As reported in the internal school report, at Melville College the

relationship between gender and power was in flux as women moved into senior leadership roles and leadership style was debated.

Student leadership

Leadership opportunities for students have long been part of school life. In the past males tended to monopolise such positions in coeducational settings (American Association of University Women 1992; Kezar & Moriarty 2000; Sadker & Sadker 1994), yet another aspect contributing to girls' negative experiences in coeducation. In 2009 a Melbourne girls' school had large advertising billboards with the catchline "Where Girls Lead and Achieve". This appeared to tap into a continuing community belief that girls are less likely to have access to positions of responsibility and leadership in coeducational settings. However, a 2004 study had reported 'unprecedented change' (p.292), with significant increases in female student take-up of leadership positions and teachers reporting that they had 'undeniably become recognized as leaders' (Mullen & Tuten 2004, p.301). It has been argued that leadership opportunities provide students, in school and post-secondary settings, with valuable experiences and opportunities (Kuh & Lund 1994; Mullen & Tuten 2004; Renn & Lytle 2010; Whitt 1993). However, only limited research has been undertaken in schools. A small amount of American research during the 1990s suggested leadership experiences can develop skills linked to 'practical competence' (Kuh & Lund 1994), confidence and self-esteem and that the link was particularly important for young women (Kuh & Lund 1994; Whitt 1993). Despite the limited research, most schools, and particularly schools in the independent sector, argue this is an important part of a school's role in developing competent, confident young people. In providing these opportunities, schools can either reproduce the expectation that leaders will be male and that good leadership is of the hegemonic masculine variety, or they can provide a site where such expectations are unsettled.

At the time of this study, all three schools had an explicit policy of appointing students to leadership positions in female/male pairs. These pairs tended to work together closely, for example, coming to the microphone together and taking it in turns to speak. There was one exception to this pattern: at All Saints College in a previous year, two boys had been appointed as dance captains. This ran against the traditional stereotype of dancing being a girls' activity and was repeatedly identified by staff as an example of defying gender stereotypes. It is plausible that it was the fact that it was counter to the stereotypes that enabled the school to bend the rules and not appoint a girl/boy pair.

The presumption that girls and boys have equal rights to positions of responsibility and leadership, evident in the policies of these schools, reflects what Connell describes as 'a vast change in presuppositions' (2002, p.74). In the past girls' rights had to be argued for; in contemporary schooling it is assumptions of inequality that are difficult to defend.

This equality of opportunity has a range of positive impacts. It ensures that both girls and boys are given the opportunity to gain useful experience and skills and an opportunity to demonstrate leadership qualities to their peers. Importantly, it works against masculine models of leadership and the presumption that 'boys are natural leaders and girls are natural followers' (Mullen & Tuten 2004, p.295). Furthermore, such pairing works against gender being linked to particular areas of responsibility or school life. Girls taking up leadership positions in these schools gain valuable experience exercising 'power over males, [including] those who are affronted by the prospect of females "on top"' (Kenway & Willis 1986, p.23), while boys and young men have the opportunity to work with and be led by female peers in leadership positions (Gill 2004). For example, in one of the case-study schools, when students were discussing what the school valued, it was a girl, rather than a boy, who was linked to leadership and identified as having 'a pretty good reputation' within the school as a result. The coeducational

context provides unique opportunities to disrupt stereotypes and expectations in this area.

There was a clear difference between the appointment of staff to leadership positions and the appointment of student leaders. In appointing student leaders equity was foregrounded, but in the case of teachers the tension between equity and 'merit' was keenly felt. A number of senior staff explained that gender was but one variable and that it would only be taken into consideration to choose between applicants of equal 'merit'. The practice in staff appointments of appointing men to leadership positions more often than women could be read as the qualities of good leadership still being conflated with hegemonic masculinity (Blackmore 1999; Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Connell 2000, p.84; Reay & Ball 2000; Thornton 2012/2013). This suggests that although gender balance was seen as worthy, as the stakes were raised, it was a secondary and ultimately optional goal.

Power: in the schools' informal structures and relationships

Power is also exercised in informal structures and relationships, including classroom relationships, activities linked to physical strength such as sport, outdoor education and physical education, and sex-based harassment. Each of these aspects of school life was observed and analysed.

Many coeducational schools hold that the coeducational gender context is more 'natural', reflecting the real world beyond school (the schools' marketing materials will be discussed in Chapter 7). In broader society, women and men are present in almost equal numbers. Each of the case-study schools, according to the principals and senior staff members, was aiming to replicate this situation and enrol equal numbers of girls and boys. However, none of the schools had met this target at the time of the study (see Table 4.2). Valerie Lee and her colleagues (1994) (key participants in

early research comparing coeducational and single-sex schools), argue that ‘the very definition of *coeducation*’ (p.105) is thrown into doubt in schools and classrooms where girls are outnumbered by boys. They found that equal treatment ‘seems difficult’ and that equalising numbers had powerful effects (p.105).

School	Girls		Boys		All secondary students
	no.	%	no.	%	
Treetops College	398	44.5	497	55.5	895
Melville College	485	42.4	658	57.6	1143
All Saints College	309	38.8	488	61.2	797

Table 4.2: Student enrolment at secondary level by gender in the three schools (2002)

Senior staff responsible for applications and admissions at each of the schools reported that parents who were considering enrolling their daughters, regularly expressed fears about the risks faced by girls in coeducational settings. They found themselves ‘constantly justifying’ coeducation and ‘reassuring’ these parents. There was also concern amongst some staff at the three schools that a significant gender imbalance increased the risk of domination by the larger group (usually boys). One teacher, reflecting the concerns of Lee et al. (1994) above, described the imbalance as ‘interrupting coeducation’.

Of the three case-study schools, Treetops College came closest to having an even enrolment profile, with approximately two extra boys in an average class. All Saints College had the greatest imbalance, with more than three boys enrolled for every two girls in the secondary section of the school. For a

school that was originally a girls' school, the push to enrol boys over the preceding decades had been overwhelmingly successful. The analysis of the gender regime will reveal whether or not this imbalance was a key factor in the gender regime of the school.

Both All Saints College and Melville College granted 'family priority' to boys whose sisters were enrolled, a policy explicitly aimed at enticing parents to enrol their daughters, as well as their sons. Nevertheless, the problem persisted. Staff at both schools suggested it had the potential to be self-perpetuating, as parents often enquired about the relative numbers of girls and boys, and those parents ambivalent about the coeducational setting for their daughters appeared to be further discouraged by the unequal numbers of girls and boys, concerned that their daughters would be at risk of being marginalised in the classroom and school by the male majority.

Power in classroom relationships

Schools and classrooms are significant spaces in the life of the children and adolescents who spend so much time in them (Connell 2008a). Carol Taylor (2013) argues that the 'material cultures of everyday classroom life' (p.688) reinscribe gender inequality, while Amanda Keddie (2009) states that 'power and control over verbal and physical space' (p.33) is linked to masculinity. Consequently, gender effects and the gendered learning that occurs within classrooms is powerful, as individuals 'position themselves and others', and 'certain versions of masculinity and femininity are produced and reproduced' (Dalley-Trim 2007, p.207). The classroom relationships in these schools will be central to whether gender inequality is reinscribed through boys controlling 'verbal and physical space'.

Concerns about boys dominating coeducational classrooms revolve around monopolisation of the productive work of the classroom and behaviour that disrupts the work of others. These two aspects of classroom participation

were the focus of observations undertaken in more than three hundred classes. The data from this fieldwork revealed two contrasting patterns.

Did boys monopolise the productive work in these classrooms?

Participation in the work of classrooms, particularly voluntary participation, can indicate whether students feel they belong to the class and are confident enough to draw the teacher's and other students' attention to them (Skelton 2006). Confidence opens up pivotal issues of autonomy, sense of self, capacity and agency in the classroom, and these are all deeply gendered (Bem 1974; Blackmore & Sachs 2007; Connell 1987; Donaldson 1993; Gipps & Murphy 1994; Kamas & Preston 2012; Niederle & Vesterlund 2007; Spender 1988; Younger, Warrington & Williams 1999). If boys control the productive discussions and work in coeducational classrooms and monopolise the time and attention of teachers, girls may be marginalised (Francis & Skelton 2005; Keddie & Mills 2009; Younger & Warrington 2007). It is possible that effects such as these might be compounded in classes with more boys than girls.

Classroom observations of productive contributions were organised into the following categories: asking and answering questions, contributing to discussions, presenting to class, volunteering to contribute, being first to volunteer to contribute and seeking help from the teacher. In addition, questions asked by teachers and students who were acknowledged as experts by either students or teachers were also included as part of this analysis (See Table 4.3).

School	Treetops College	Melville College		All Saints College
Asking questions				
Answering questions				
Discussions				
Small group dominating				
Presenting				
Volunteer contributions		Year 8	Year 10	
Being first to volunteer				
Seeking help				
Teacher directed questions				
Acknowledged as experts				

Key:

Girls overrepresented	Girls and boys equally represented	Boys overrepresented
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Table 4.3: Participation in the productive work of the classroom by gender in the three schools

This analysis did not identify clear trends. Instead, across a wide range of observations, girls at these schools were contributing to the life of the classroom in ways that were proportionate to their presence, and on occasions to a greater extent than their numbers would have suggested. For most of the activities analysed, the pattern varied between schools, and occasionally between year levels.

For each of the schools there were mixed results, with girls overrepresented in more of these activities than boys. Girls were overrepresented at all three schools in presenting to the class and being first to volunteer a contribution, and often actually outnumbered boys in these activities, despite their smaller numbers in the class. They also appeared to be more prepared to take risks by volunteering to present first.

In two activities – class discussions and when a small group of students (<5 students) dominated an extended discussion – girls and boys were equally represented across the three schools. In these sustained discussions that are not based on teacher questions and student answers, students have to take initiative and compete with classmates to participate. If boys are more confident, more prepared to take risks and more comfortable in the public sphere than girls, we would expect to see boys significantly outnumbering girls in this data. However, girls' and boys' presence in this data set reflected their numbers in these classrooms.

In contrast to much of the research literature, which finds that boys dominate these productive spaces (Francis & Skelton 2005; Keddie 2009; Skelton, Francis & Read 2010), a range of classroom dynamics were observed. The differences in contribution were not stark, with some girls and boys being regular and enthusiastic contributors and some girls and boys preferring to keep a low profile. The patterns of contribution also varied between individual classes and across the schools, suggesting that more local factors, including teachers, curriculum and specific group cultures, were influencing behaviour rather than simply the gender of the students and the coeducational setting.

The widely held picture of boys dominating public discourse in the classroom was not supported by this analysis; girls had not withdrawn from classroom interactions. There is a range of possible gendered readings of the behaviours described above, as is the case with observations of student behaviour more generally. Those girls who were participating may have been conforming to a discourse of engaged and high-achieving middle-class girls (see, for example, Archer et al. 2012; Maxwell & Aggleton 2013; Walkerdine, Lucy & Melody 2001). The boys who were not participating may have been making choices in line with a masculinity that does not value participation in academic classroom activities (Arnot 2010; Keddie & Mills 2009; Lingard, Martino & Mills 2009). However, these readings can also be found in single-sex settings and are not contingent on the coeducational setting. Furthermore, these are not the gendered relationships that colour parental choices of single-sex schools for girls. The stereotypical behaviours these parents fear are typically when ‘males lead while females follow, males speak while females listen’, which Dale Spender (1988) drew attention to. Male domination was not the typical interaction pattern in the classrooms in these schools. Contrary to early research, which still appears to have currency in the community, there were no categories of participation dominated by boys across all three schools. In fact, although the pattern of participation varied between schools, at all three, girls were more likely to be contributing more frequently to the public life of the classroom.

Did boys disrupt these classrooms?

Since the 1980s, educational research has found disruptive behaviours are more generally associated with boys than girls (Beaman, Wheldall & Kemp 2007; Little 2005; Salomone 2003; Spender 1982; Streitmatter 1999). There are also reports of boys insulting girls and making fun of their contributions, effectively silencing girls in coeducational settings (Dalley-Trim 2009; Jackson 2002; Keddie 2011; Spender 1982; Spielhagen 2006).

The community's shared picture of adolescent boys is that they are loud, and enjoy messing around and rough physical contact (Dalley-Trim 2007, 2009; Hirst & Cooper 2008; Keddie 2011; Lingard, Martino & Mills 2009). This stereotype leads to expectations that boys will inevitably be noisy; find it difficult to sit still; come into conflict with the teacher; exhibit silly behaviour that distracts other students; and enjoy good-humoured rough and tumble behaviour that sometimes spills over into antagonistic physical altercations, all of which means boys are likely to be labelled 'trouble-makers and thus reinforce hegemonic discourses of masculinity' (Dalley-Trim 2007, p.203). This stereotype appeared to have some traction at Melville College. The loud and sometimes rough behaviour of the boys was raised during a preliminary meeting with the college principal, the campus principal and head of middle school, who were all men. However, the latter two did not regard this as a serious problem and chuckled knowingly, with one saying to the other, 'boys will be boys'. Keddie (2011) regards this excuse as 'all-to-familiar' (p.25) and shares Leanne Dalley-Trim's (2009) assessment that this attitude is dangerous. The amusement shared by these senior men 'invites us to consider their collusion in the gendered construction of boys' (Hirst & Cooper 2008, p.439) and the maintenance of the traditional gender regime.

In relation to disruptive behaviours, there was again a patchwork of results, with both girls and boys participating in all of these negative behaviours. Girls and boys were equally likely to contribute to noise at all three schools, while boys were consistently much more likely to indulge in silly, distracting behaviour and in pushing and shoving. On the other measures there was variation between the schools (See Table 4.4).

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Noisiness			
Teachers reprimanding for talking			
Negative comments about work, class	1 boy		
Not doing as asked			
Sustained dispute	1 boy	1 girl 3 boys	1 girl
Silly, distracting behaviour	Almost double	Double	Almost double
Pushing and shoving	Double	Double	Double

Key:

Girls overrepresented	Girls and boys equally represented	Boys overrepresented
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Table 4.4: Participation in disruptive behaviour by gender in the three schools

Although the stereotype described earlier labels boys as loud and noisy, with the implication that girls are not loud and noisy, the data revealed that despite girls being outnumbered 2:3 (on average enrolments at the three schools), they contributed their fair share of noise in class. This was reflected in student discussions, with both girls and boys commenting that ‘the girls

talk a lot' and repeatedly nominating talking as one of the things students got into trouble for. This is consistent with research findings that teachers report talking out of turn one of the most frequent and troublesome behaviours in classrooms (Beaman, Wheldall & Kemp 2007; Little 2005).

Silly, distracting behaviour was the most common form of disruptive behaviour (>300 observations). On average there was one instance of silly disruptive behaviour observed before, during or after each class. Boys were approximately twice as likely as girls to participate in this behaviour (girls overrepresented 25%; girls and boys equally represented 15%; boys overrepresented 60%). This fits with the common perception that boys are more prone to indulging in disruptive behaviour, performing the role of 'class clown' (Dalley-Trim 2007, p.209). Nevertheless, girls were involved in more than 40% of these observations. This reflects the results of an Australian study that found boys were 'more problematic' than girls, 'with a mean of 3.5 troublesome boys compared to 2 troublesome girls per class' (Little 2005).

Boys also consistently outnumbered girls at all three schools in pushing and shoving, although it was not nearly as prevalent as the silly, distracting behaviour described above (approximately 100 observations). The pattern of participation in pushing and shoving was similar across the three schools, with boys again approximately twice as likely as girls to participate in it. Most of this behaviour occurred between friends; it would be accompanied by laughing and verbal jousting, with none escalating into angry altercations. There were no serious fights observed and staff at each of the schools reported they were rare. A single incident at Melville College was the only instance of a serious fight during the fieldwork. As with silly, distracting behaviour, pushing and shoving was more strongly linked to boys, but it was not a male-only preserve.

The data on other behaviours identified as potentially disrupting classrooms did not reveal any clear patterns. On a small number of occasions students gave voice to negative attitudes towards school generally or towards their current class, teacher, work or classmates. Overall girls were more likely to

publicly express their frustration in this way. There was a significant difference between the schools, with only one observation of negative comments at Treetops College, 12 at Melville College and 22 at All Saints College.

Finally, students can exercise power and disrupt classes by not following requests and instructions from their teachers. It was a relatively rare event for a student to not at least appear to comply with a request from a teacher. Across the more than 300 classes observed, there were only 24 occasions when students appeared to make no attempt to follow teacher instructions, and the gender patterns were not consistent across the three schools. At Melville College and All Saints College, boys were clearly more likely to fail to comply with a teacher's instruction or request, while at Treetops College the numbers were smaller and girls marginally more often involved. Most of these tensions were resolved quickly and it was a rare occurrence for a failure to respond to a teacher's instruction to escalate into a sustained confrontation. There were only six occasions on which this was observed: once each at Treetops College and All Saints College and four times at Melville College, with both girls and boys represented.

Perceptions that boys engage in disruptive behaviours (Beaman, Wheldall & Kemp 2007; Dalley-Trim 2007; Hirst & Cooper 2008; Keddie 2011; Lingard, Martino & Mills 2009; Little 2005; Salomone 2003; Spender 1982; Streitmatter 1999) were reflected in this study. However, overall, the levels of disruption were relatively low and while boys were more likely to be involved in distracting behaviour and pushing and shoving, girls also participated in these behaviours, and girls and boys were equally noisy. Although there were a smaller number of observations of students complaining, the greater number of girls complaining worked against the stereotypes. As was the case in the analysis of the productive work in classrooms, there was variability between individuals, with girls and boys participating in all the behaviours identified and also variation between classes and schools. This suggests disturbance of the traditional gender hierarchies and the prevailing story that

boys set the agenda in coeducational schools and classrooms with loud and assertive behaviour.

Power and physical strength

Since John Stuart Mill asserted that gender inequality was based 'not in men's moral superiority but in physical force' (Connell 2009, p.34), masculine power has been linked to physical strength (Connell 2008a; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Wright & O'Flynn 2007) and the perceived role it plays in maintaining men's superior position in the gender hierarchy (Connell 1987). A range of school activities draw on physical strength, including sport – formal programs and sport played informally by students in their free time – outdoor education and physical education. These three schools engaged in these activities in strikingly different ways.

Sport and physical education share a history in schools, where gendered notions of 'how the body can be used have become instantiated in particular forms of physical education, sport and fitness practices' (Paechter 2006b, p.197). In Australia they have been 'a prominent vehicle through which messages of gender and sexuality are transported. While their goals and practice have shifted across time, their respective and collective roles in privileging hegemonic forms of masculinity have been strong and sustained' (Hickey & Mooney 2007, p.11). During the 1950s, girls in coeducational schools did not participate in competitive sport for fear it may be too strenuous for their 'fragile internal organs' (Sadker & Sadker 1994, p.252). These now seem quaint ideas, with girls and women having been encouraged to participate in sport and exercise for their health benefits for several decades (Westerstahl et al. 2003). However, more recent research suggests that the perception that girls and sport are a problematic combination persists (Chen & Darst 2002, p.266; Elling & Knoppers 2005, p.266; O'Flynn & Lee 2010; Slater & Tiggemann 2010; Wright & O'Flynn 2007). Sport and physical education continue to rest on 'constructions of femininity as weak, less able and passive', in contrast to masculinity as

‘strong, skilled and competitive’ (O’Flynn & Lee 2010, p.61). As a result of these widely held perceptions, sport and physical education classes are two of very few aspects of life in the project schools where students were formally divided along gender lines, reflecting a common pattern in coeducational schools (Connell 2008a; Hills & Croston 2012; Wright & O’Flynn 2007).

In addition to gender, it is important to consider the class location of schools. Jan Wright and Lisette Burrows (2006) identified class-based differences in school sport and physical education in the Australian context. They found that elite private schools, such as the three in this study, continue to hold sports programs and physical education in high regard and fund them generously. They argue this relates to the British public school tradition of valorising competitive sport for its role in the development of character and leadership qualities, which they identify as having ‘important exchange value in social life beyond school’ (p.276).

All three schools had compulsory inter-school sport, outdoor education and physical education programs in the junior and middle years. Once students reached their final years of schooling participation in these programs became more optional.

Formal sport

Competitive sport for men is central to hegemonic masculinity and provides a platform for boys and men to demonstrate their toughness and superiority (Connell 2008a; O’Flynn & Lee 2010). As Connell (2005b) argues:

The institutional organization of sport embeds definite social relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination of women. These social relations of gender are both realized and symbolized in the bodily performances ... It serves as symbolic proof of men’s superiority and right to rule. (p.54)

Despite concerted efforts here and internationally to increase participation of girls and women in sport and the profile of their sporting competitions and

achievements, boys and men's sport continues to be perceived as more relevant, interesting and important (Elling & Knoppers 2005), with higher rates of pay, public profile and professionalism. The valorisation of boys' sport in schools is long-standing, with boys' competitive sport given greater precedence and more support than girls' sport (American Association of University Women 1999; Australian Education Council 1992; Cuttance 1995; Dentith 2008; Kenway et al. 1997; O'Flynn & Lee 2010; Sadker & Sadker 1994; Tyack & Hansot 1990). Girls are aware of these differences and feel frustrated, as Audrey Dentith (2008) found when the girls in her study compared reactions to girls' and boys' sport, complaining that 'the football team and boys' sport are the centre of attention. It says that "we'll let you [the girls] have your sports team, but we aren't going to really care about it"' (p.160). Connell (2008a) notes that '[s]ports are one of the most gender-segregated areas of school life' (p.137) and that they act as a 'masculinity vortex', or area 'of school life where processes of masculinity formation are intensely active' (p.138). Students in an Australian study recognised that high status sports such as football and rowing develop 'macho men' (O'Flynn & Lee 2010, p.67). This inequality of regard and resources has the potential to deliver powerful lessons to young people in schools and it is hardly surprising that girls value boys' sports more highly than boys value girls' sports (Elling & Knoppers 2005).

The sports programs of elite Australian schools developed within this context, drawing to varying degrees on the traditions of the elite British boys' schools (Collins et al. 1996; O'Flynn & Lee 2010), where 'to wear the school jersey and play for the school' was the pinnacle of masculine achievement, a badge of honour worn with pride (McDonald 2000, p.39). In these schools:

Sport and physical education was about developing those embodied capacities which will translate into the kinds of capital that enable students to achieve their school's vision of them as young [people] who have professional and academic careers, in a competitive social environment. (Wright & Burrows 2006, p.284)

In contemporary schools, which invest heavily in their sports programs to prepare students for success (Wright & O'Flynn 2007, p.9), this competitive social environment calls out strikingly gendered responses: 'capable, committed and competitive young men, and busy and balanced young women' (O'Flynn & Lee 2010, p.71).

Each of the project schools participated in interschool competitions in a range of individual and team sports. In order to ascertain whether the schools were reinscribing these long-held hierarchies through their sports programs, a number of markers were identified and analysed: the scheduling of the sports program and amount of time devoted to it, the profile sport had in the school prospectus and annual magazine, and the resources devoted to the program, as represented by the sports office. Significant differences between schools were found (See Table 4.5).

Treetops College, the newest of these three schools and with no history as a single-sex school, appeared to place the lowest priority on school sport. The sports office was small and ill equipped, sport was not scheduled at weekends, senior students were able to withdraw from the sports program apparently without consequence, and sport and physical education, while prominent in the prospectus, emphasised 'developing team spirit'. Finally, sport had a low profile in the school's annual magazine and gender was not used as an organiser in the brief sports reports. From this analysis, it seems at Treetops College status and power were not linked to sport, which was positioned as one amongst a range of co-curricular activities available to students where winning was not as highly valued as at some other schools. Furthermore, boys' sport was not valued more highly than girls'. Each of these factors suggests that the power relations played out in competitive sport were not central to the identity of the school and its students.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Compulsory sports program			
Training	1 afternoon/week	2 afternoon/week	1 afternoon/week
Competition	Weekday afternoon	Saturday morning	Weekday afternoon
School prospectus			
Space	Double page	Double page	Single sentence
Photos	2 x as many photos of girls as boys	Large background photo - girl running 5 small photos mix of girls and boys	6 photos throughout the prospectus 2 boys 3 girls 1 mixed
Program aims	'encourages participation and aims to develop team spirit, sporting etiquette and the motivation to strive for personal bests'	'Sport at [Melville College] is about achieving your personal best. It is also about being a team player ... Our Sporting Philosophy – To compete, to work in a team ...'	'a wide range of sporting activities for students to explore'
School annual magazine			
Space – sport versus other school activities	5/96 pages or 5%, weekly sports competition not reported	62/160 pages or 39%	35/176 pages or 20%
Organisation of reports	Not grouped together and gender is not	Alphabetically by sport. Within each sport, reports of boys'	Reports of girls' sports then boys' sports (alphabetically by sport within

	used as an organiser	teams then girls' teams	these two sections)
Space – girls versus boys (pages)	N/A	Girls 15: Boys 26	Girls 7: Boys 12
Photos	Girls 39: Boys 25	Girls 56: Boys 66	Girls 25: Boys 23
Sports office			
	Small cramped one person office attached to the canteen	'Sports Directorate' large open plan office 10-12 desks with computers, lobby with trophy display	Mid-sized office attached to the gym, 5-6 staff

Table 4.5: Sport in the life of the three schools

By contrast, Melville College, with traditions firmly rooted in the elite boys schools of the late nineteenth century, was the school where sport had the highest profile. It was the only school that maintained obligatory participation in Saturday sport and offered the resource-intensive and prestigious sport of rowing. It also had the largest, best-resourced sports office, called the 'Sports Directorate'. The prospectus devoted a double-page spread to sport, with Physical Education not included, and competition and striving for personal bests foregrounded. Furthermore, it had the most extensive coverage of sport across the three schools in its annual magazine, placing boys before girls and devoting more space to sports regarded as high status.

Unsurprisingly, boys' sports received more, extended coverage. Despite the masculine focus of the sports program at Melville College, it was here that a Year 8 girl played on the boys' football team for the school. She was an elite athlete, captaining a Victorian state junior girls' team [in a different sport], and was a valued member of the team. She reported that while the [Melville] boys treated her no differently to everyone else on the team, members of the opposition teams sometimes 'bag you and like call you stuff'. The fact that the Melville boys were happy to play football alongside a girl suggests a

greater flexibility in gender stereotypes around sport than was evident in the formal arrangements described here.

Not surprisingly, both staff and students at Melville College shared a clear understanding that sport held an exalted position in the life of the school. The curriculum coordinator confirmed the 'dominance of sport over arts and music', and in conversations with the students, when asked about what 'people get praised for', they identified sport as number one, ahead of everything else, including academic work. In a discussion with a group of Year 10 boys about the resources devoted to girls' and boys' sport, they commented that 90% of the budget went to boys' sports and they 'chuck the girls the scraps'. In defence of this pattern, they drew on the notion that what they were reporting about the school reflected the real world. However, they were also quick to say that the world was changing, that Melville College had already moved away from its traditional roots and that attitudes to sport might also change. In conversations with the girls, they did not complain about differential treatment, but senior staff reported it was a source of tension and that girls complained that girls' sport was not recognised and valued to the same extent as boys'.

In short, sport at Melville College continued to reflect strong gender hierarchies. The sports program bore strong traces of its elite boys school heritage; boys' sport continued to be valorised over girls'; competition was emphasised; and the high status of the program was evident in the resources available, the commitment expected from students and its high profile in the annual magazine.

All Saints College, a school with a long history and strong traditions to draw on, was originally a girls' school. During the twentieth century, elite girls' schools developed sports programs modelled on those in the elite boys' schools, but they were rarely as well resourced or as prestigious. So the approach and attitude to the sports programs at All Saints College appeared to lie between the two extremes of Treetops College and Melville College. At

All Saints sport did not encroach on families' weekend time and there was no rowing program. The office arrangements and the prominence of sport in the annual magazine reflected this middle position. There was also some disruption of the narrative of the pre-eminence of boys' sport in the annual magazine, since the reports of girls' sport preceded those of boys' sport. However, these good intentions were somewhat undone because boys' sport covered almost twice as many pages as girls' did.

Analysis of sport in these schools focused on resources, representations and relationships, and a pattern emerged. The closer the link to traditional elite boys' schooling, the more traditional the school approach to sport, the more resources invested in sport, the higher the profile of representations of sport, particularly boys' sport, and the more traditional gender hierarchies were reconstituted through sport. However, there did seem to be a trend at both Treetops College and All Saints College away from the elite boys school model of competitive sport described by Wright (2006) to a culture where sport was one of a wider range of co-curricular activities.

Informal sport

As well as the formal sports program, students have the option of playing sport informally in their free time, at recess and lunchtime. Early feminist researchers documenting the use of outside space reported that boys in schoolyards took up more of the playing space, dominating it to the point of denying access to girls and restricting their participation in physical activity (Kenway et al. 1997, 1998; Spender 1982). Boys in schools continue to be observed being more active than girls during free time, participating in more informal sport and dominating the available spaces (Fairclough, Butcher & Stratton 2008; Hobin et al. 2012; Norrish et al. 2012; Woods, Graber & Daum 2012) and in some instances dominating school grounds to the extent that girls' experiences are 'impoverished' (Pearce & Bailey 2011, p.1372). However, one recent report found that the favourite activity of adolescent boys from a mix of New Zealand schools was not playing sport but 'hanging

out with mates' (p.153), 'enjoying being together, sharing ideas, discussing stuff' (Irwin 2013, p.149). This mirrors the shifts identified in this study.

Treetops College, located on the fringe of the suburbs, is surrounded by extensive sports fields. However, there were usually only small numbers of students playing sport during their free time. Each time the spread of activity was documented, the total numbers were small – approximately 30 students (more boys than girls) playing sport on the various sports fields, in a school with almost 900 secondary students. I was not the only one noticing that not many boys played sport at lunchtime. A teacher on yard duty said she had recently moved to Treetops College from an independent boys school and was continually surprised by the small number of boys playing sport at Treetops. At her previous school the moment the bell rang for recess or lunchtime the boys rushed out to claim a space on the ovals and courts. There were not enough boys playing sport in their free time at Treetops College to need to 'rush to claim a space' or for them to dominate the space and exclude girls. When students were asked to identify activities that were particularly 'boy things', the Year 8 boys named playing footy at lunchtime, but then qualified it strongly, saying that most Year 7 and 8 boys just sat around in the common room talking or went to the canteen and talked. The Year 10 students also nominated playing footy at lunchtime, but reported that 'a fair amount of the girls in our year are starting footy ... and that's good'. The image of footy being the 'boys' thing' and the reality appeared to be moving apart.

Given the high profile of sport in the life of Melville College, it might be expected that many students would play sport in their free time. Because of its inner suburban location, there was limited space available, potentially putting that space under greater pressure. There were two sports fields, each adjoined by a couple of basketball hoops and cricket nets. Students from the junior school, the middle school and senior college – more than 1200 students in total – shared these spaces. During most breaks, less than fifty students would be playing either soccer or football and a small number could

be found playing basketball or practising in the nets. These numbers were only a small proportion of the students overall. There was always empty space available and anyone, girls or boys, who wanted to play a game, kick a ball or simply run around during lunchtime or recess could have found plenty of space. As had happened at Treetops College, girls had infiltrated/joined the boys' lunchtime footy and most students, both girls and boys, preferred to spend their time chatting, hanging out and playing informal small-scale ball games such as haki-sac or four-square, where turn taking is the norm, dexterity is more important than physical strength, and girls and boys are on a more equal footing. This low level of interest in playing sport during free time and the number of boys choosing to participate in alternative activities, which did not resonate with hegemonic masculinity, worked against the school's official sports discourse.

All Saints College had the smallest campus: one small 'oval' and some paved areas between buildings, including a basketball court. Nevertheless, these spaces were rarely crowded with students playing sport and on sunny days footy and soccer games had to work around the groups of students sitting on the oval. As at both the other schools, it was relatively easy to count the students actually playing sport in these spaces – typically between 15 and 30 boys on the oval and a handful of students on the basketball courts.

Although it was expected that large numbers of boys would be engaged in informal sport, dominating the available spaces, this was not the case. Despite the differences in the formal sports programs, at each of the schools, only a small proportion of the boys made use of the ovals and sports fields during free time. It seemed that the majority of boys chose not to demonstrate an allegiance to hegemonic masculinity through playing sport in their free time, preferring to socialise at lunchtime and recess in ways that have typically been characterised as female (Swain 2005). Like the girls, they sat and chatted (Morrow 2006), wandered around in small groups or played small-scale turn-taking ball games. Furthermore, they often participated in

these activities in mixed groups. This suggests a different social environment to that painted in earlier research (Kenway et al. 1997, 1998; Spender 1982).

Outdoor education

Sport and physical education classes draw on physical strength and coordination, often in a competitive environment, all qualities linked to masculinity. Outdoor education also draws on, and seeks to develop, physical strength and coordination, but this is combined with cooperation and collaboration, and caring for nature (Quay 2002; Waddington, Malcolm & Cobb 1998), which 'are more associated with traditional female values' (Waddington, Malcolm & Cobb 1998, p.44). In the past, outdoor education was regarded as male territory (Cook 2001; Weaver-Hightower 2010) due to its 'associations with the military and with physical competence' (Allin & Humberstone 2006, p.136). However, more recently 'caring has been promoted as a value central to the outdoor education context' (Quay 2002, p.11). This combination of physical strength with these more feminine attributes in outdoor education has been identified as a site for challenging the link between males and physical activity (Humberstone 2000; Waddington, Malcolm & Cobb 1998; Weaver-Hightower 2010). Carrie Paechter (2006b) holds out the hope that outdoor education activities will provide an opportunity to 'break the stranglehold that gender stereotypes have on the more traditional forms of PE and sport' (p.203). Marcus Weaver-Hightower (2010, p.683), however, cautions that alongside the 'progressive possibilities' there are 'particular gendered dangers' if outdoor education is seen as a pathway to boys 'recaptur[ing] their endangered "deep masculinity"'. All three schools ran substantial outdoor education programs, but the place of these programs in the life of the schools was very different.

At Treetops College the outdoor education program had a different structure to the sports program and was described in the prospectus as an 'intensive experience'. In the secondary years the compulsory outdoor education program consisted of week-long camps run in Years 7, 8 and 9. There was

also an elective for Year 10 and a range of optional activities out of school hours. The prospectus devoted a double-page spread to outdoor education, the same format as the sports and physical education section. The emphasis in the overview of the program was on its non-competitive nature. Focusing on 'adaptability, resourcefulness and self-confidence ... students practice teamwork, community living and leadership and become caretakers of their environment'. These references to teamwork, community living and caretaking signalled the positioning of outdoor education as an activity with links to the female sphere, despite its reliance on physical strength and coordination.

Reports on outdoor education activities in the annual magazine contributed more pages than any other co-curricular activity (9 pages, 9%), suggesting the outdoor program had strong support within the school. The reporting of the compulsory outdoor education camps was completely ungendered, with no references to girls or boys, or to any individuals, the focus instead being on activities and skills. In the reports of the optional outdoor education activities, where it was possible to determine the gender ratio of participants, equal numbers of girls and boys participated in bushwalking and camping and more boys than girls participated in the Great Victorian bike ride. One report identified two girls and a boy as the high achievers of a bushwalking group, since they chose to walk an extra 20 kilometres on their rest day.

The students recognised that along with academic achievement the school valued success in these activities. When asked to identify the things the school valued, a Year 10 group began with 'good marks' then added achievements, both in school and out of school; when asked for an example, canoeing was offered: 'Yeah, canoeing is a big one'. It seemed that at Treetops College girls were taking up the opportunities provided by an extensive and valued outdoor education program to both demonstrate and develop their physical competence.

At Melville College the outdoor program was also run as a series of intensives, with students in Years 7, 8 and 10 attending compulsory week-long camps with their home group. The prospectus devoted a page to Outdoor Education. The opening statement noted:

At [Melville] we have 3 residential camps where young people can explore the natural wonders of the world around them and *learn to get along with each other* ... And students can become *personally and significantly involved in the ideas and practices of 'land care'*. (emphasis added)

This statement drew attention to the feminine attributes associated with outdoor education and also flagged the very high level of resources at the school's disposal, with not one, but three rural properties available for outdoor education.

Despite this large investment, the outdoor education program had a very low profile in the annual magazine. There were only three pages of reports (<2%), one for each of the residential camps, compared to the 62 pages (or 39%) of sports reports. The reports were written by staff and were brief, presenting a very general, staff-centric view of what had happened during the year. The goals of the program in relation to 'land care' and learning to cooperate were reduced to one brief comment. The photographs accompanying these reports provided the strongest statement about what students might gain from these experiences: photos of girls and boys learning new skills – sailing, canoeing, surfing – and enjoying nature together. Most photographs were of mixed groups, in contrast to the photographs accompanying sports reports, where most were single-sex and boys outnumbered girls.

Compared to the sports program, the outdoor education program was not showcased by the school. Students spent one week a year during junior secondary years 'on camp' compared to the three times a week commitment to sport. Both students and staff reported that the week on camp worked powerfully to bring the group together and provided unique learning opportunities; it was remembered fondly by many. Despite this, the program

was at risk of sinking without trace. The very brief reports in the annual magazine did little to acknowledge the students who had participated during the year or articulate the goals of the program. Consequently, they appeared to offer little recognition or record to the students who had participated during the year or inspiration to those who would participate in the future.

All Saints College had the most extensive outdoor education program, the Exodus program, which had a clearly articulated developmental structure. This set it apart from the other two schools and most school outdoor education programs (Weaver-Hightower 2010). The Year 7 Exodus was a five-day base camp. The challenges increased each year and by Year 11 there was a range of options, the most celebrated being the Kosi to Coast Expedition, 'when students spend an enthralling 21 days hiking and rafting from the highest peak in Australia to the mouth of the Snowy River' (school prospectus). In Year 12, students developed their own Exodus programs, with a range of challenge levels. In these final two years students had to submit their preferences, in a first-in best-dressed system. At both year levels girls submitted their preferences slightly ahead of the boys, and were selecting the more challenging options.

The All Saints College prospectus gave one page to co-curricular activities, with most attention given to the outdoor education program. Under the heading 'The Great Outdoors', the focus was on the beauty and vastness of Australia and the developmental skill-building aspects of the program. The coverage in the annual magazine fell between that of the other two schools, with 12 pages (6%) devoted to the Senior School outdoor education program. Students wrote many of the reports, with girls and boys equally represented, and the outdoor education co-captains reported on 'the vitality of the Outdoor Education Program'. The Exodus program had a high profile at the Senior School Speech Night, two girls and a boy reporting on the program. As images were projected onto a screen behind them, a girl abseiled from the roof, and students with bikes, skis, surfboards and a loaded raft joined them on stage. Girls were taking leadership in these

programs and the adventure and challenge were central to the reporting and celebration of them.

Each of these schools ran expensive outdoor education programs, which provided a wide range of opportunities for the stereotypical relationship between boys and men and physical strength and power to be complicated (Humberstone 2000; Paechter 2006b; Waddington, Malcolm & Cobb 1998; Weaver-Hightower 2010). However, the profile of the programs varied dramatically. At Melville College, despite significant resources being invested in the program, it was almost invisible in the life of the school. At Treetops College, outdoor education had a higher profile, but it was at All Saints College that it was central to the school's identity and celebrated loudly and dramatically. Consequently, it was at All Saints College that the outdoor education program was most likely to be most disruptive of the link between masculinity and the power associated with physical strength.

Physical education

Physical education (PE) is usually a compulsory subject in the first three or four years of secondary school. However, feminists have a range of concerns stemming from the fact that it continues to be 'an important site in which students learn about the gendered nature of their embodiment ... [and] one of the most strongly and overtly gendered school subjects' (Paechter 2006b, p.194, 200). Connell (2008a) argues that within this discipline 'particular physical performances and particular games were culturally defined as masculine or feminine ... as emblematic of gender itself' (p.140). She draws particular attention to those activities in which 'physical confrontation and (legal) violence' are linked to hegemonic masculinity (p.140).

There is concern that girls are particularly disadvantaged in coeducational PE classes, related to three factors: the perceived mismatch between girls and sport – and by extension PE – discussed above; boys' potential domination of PE classes (Gibbons & Humbert 2008; Hills & Croston 2012;

Skelton 1998; Slater & Tiggemann 2010); and girls' self-consciousness about their bodies and potential harassment (Cruddas & Haddock 2003; Gibbons & Humbert 2008; Hills & Croston 2012; Kenway et al. 1997; Paechter 2006b; Slater & Tiggemann 2010, 2011).

Jane Kenway and her colleagues (1997) eloquently capture the response of some girls to coeducational PE classes:

The daunting prospect of making their bodies available for the hypercritical male gaze in Physical Education and sport is more than many girls can bear. Further, many girls feel 'overpowered' or obliterated ... So girls often practise avoidance and deny themselves the pleasures of being physical. (pp.145-6)

However, recent Australian research found a range of responses from girls: 'less active (and competent) girls' preferred 'single-sex classes because boys dominate, make fun, and are rough' but the more active and competent girls reported they enjoyed the competition with the boys (Casey et al. 2013, p.724).

It has been argued that in coeducational PE classes girls 'lose out' because the space, the choice of activities and the attention of teachers will be dominated by the boys (Skelton, 1998, p.103, see also Gibbons & Humbert 2008). However, others have argued that simply separating girls and boys for PE is problematic because of 'the potential to reinforce gender stereotypes, legitimise discrimination, undermine principles of inclusion and fail to prepare students to engage in an integrated society' (Hills & Croston 2012, p.592). There is thus ongoing debate over whether PE classes should be coeducational or single-sex. Two of the schools participating in this study had coeducational PE classes – Treetops College and All Saints College while Melville College had single-sex classes.

At Treetops College the Years 7 to 9 PE classes were based on mentor groups and run as mixed classes. It was certainly not the case that girls (or boys) at Treetops College were inevitably inhibited in mixed PE classes.

There were many examples of PE classes where the girls were keen and enjoyed the competition, occasionally beating everyone. In a Year 8 class playing soccer, the majority (though not all) of the students, both girls and boys, participated energetically. It seemed some of the girls were using the height and weight advantage they had at this year level to serious effect: in pursuit of the ball, girls repeatedly ran through boys, leaving them flat on the ground. In another class, Year 8 students were participating in high jumping and it was a girl who could jump higher than anyone else. In a focus group with the boys from that class, they were very clear that boys did not inevitably outperform girls in such physical competitions. I asked if they gave other guys a hard time if a girl could outrun or jump higher than them. They were very quick to say 'no, most of them can', and as another pointed out '[Sarah] can jump higher than us all'.

Most of the girls at Treetops College strongly supported coeducational PE classes, with comments such as '[single-sex classes] would just be wrong', 'It's just like ... it's really kind of sexist. Like all the boys are too good to go with the girls or something like that. It's just heaps better having the mix'. The PE teachers at Treetops College also supported mixed PE classes, with one female PE teacher expressing the opinion that dividing the class along gender lines would be 'unhelpful' as it would deprive the better girls of challenging experiences. This reflects recent research identifying the opportunities for more able girls to benefit from the experience and challenges of playing with boys (Hills & Croston 2012; Shimon 2005), as well as the research outlined above that points to some girls enjoying 'competition with boys' (Casey et al. 2013, p.724).

However, there was one problematic activity for the Year 10 girls. They reported that some girls would not swim 'because of the bather image' and one girl reported that when she had worn her bikini for swimming, she had had to 'tie up my bathers four times cause ... I don't know, they're perverts'. This incident will be discussed in more detail in the next section. In contrast to this, the Year 8 girls reported that even swimming was 'fine' and that 'We

don't really care, that's the good thing. Like you don't care about what they think of you, sort of, and that kind of teaches you something'. Not caring about how they look is a potentially powerful lesson.

At Melville College PE classes were single-sex throughout the secondary years. In the same way that students and staff at the other schools saw mixed PE classes as normal and 'natural', at Melville College segregated classes were seen as the norm. Amongst staff, segregation was seen as the only possible option. One senior male staff member commented, 'You wouldn't want the boys and girls together!', while the female sports manager explained the segregated policy by saying, 'Boys and girls are different, and need to be treated differently'. When asked to explain, she said, 'Well it's really to do with skill', but agreed that there was an implicit assumption that girls and boys would have different skill levels in the various activities. While skill, or the relative lack of it, is often raised as an impediment to girls' participation in PE and sport (Gibbons & Humbert 2008; Hills & Croston 2012), this is not the case for all girls and in single-sex classes there is no opportunity to challenge this assumption.

The segregated classes at Melville College did not seem to reduce the number of students avoiding PE compared to the other schools. In fact, across all three schools, the only students identified by their PE teacher as repeatedly avoiding participation were two boys in a Year 8 boys-only class. This was also the class where some of the group, especially the larger boys, were reprimanded for getting rough. Paechter (2006b) identified an issue with boys in all-boys classes who were less successful in the physical and sporting realm, being low in the 'social pecking order' (p.195) and effectively bullied by stronger boys flexing their muscles. It is possible that these two boys had chosen to withdraw from an arena that privileged the strength and competitiveness linked to hegemonic masculinity.

Participation and enthusiasm were observed to vary across different activities. A Year 10 girls class exhibited very different attitudes, from

desultory boredom when playing table tennis to energetic participation in a game of base/football. After the second lesson their teacher explained that the girls much preferred base/football to table tennis. She went on to say that girls used to like table tennis 'because it was gentle' but that there had been 'a significant shift' in girls' attitudes, with them now preferring more challenging activities. Paechter (2006b) reports that in the past, activities with little physical challenge were provided to try and keep girls interested. This strategy was used because 'the body as a strong and powerful instrument runs counter to dominant notions of femininity' (p.196), and therefore negative attitudes to PE were construed as an expression of femininity. This teacher reported that the girls in her classes were no longer interested in gentle activities and preferred more physical challenge.

At the time that many feminists were arguing for separating girls from boys, Michelle Stanworth (1983) cautioned that 'sex segregation in schools may ... reduce the opportunities pupils have to test gender stereotypes against the actual behaviour of classmates of the other sex' (p.19) and this certainly seemed to be the case in the PE classes at Melville College. In focus group discussions even the non-sporting, unenthusiastic members of the boys-only Year 8 PE class were sure that the girls would 'not cope' in a mixed class. This was particularly ironic as they were in the same class as the girl who played on the boys' football team for the school who clearly would have more than coped in mixed PE. Similar opinions were evident amongst Year 10 boys, who said, 'I don't think there's any class where the girls would out sprint guys or ... definitely not strength just because the way guys are built'. The boys in the mixed classes at the other schools knew otherwise.

An even more surprising finding was that some Year 10 boys assumed they were separated from the girls so that the boys 'couldn't "perv" at the girls in their sports uniforms'. Students often make sense of their experiences at school in unintended ways. I doubt the school meant to send the message that 'perv'ing is inevitable and 'normal' when boys find themselves in the presence of girls in shorts and t-shirts. At All Saints College, students were

taking home a very different message. There not only were PE classes mixed (except for one semester in Year 9), but students changed into and out of their sports uniforms standing by their lockers, which were located throughout the school in public areas. The girls managed this by doing 'the Wiggle', changing under their uniforms, or wearing singlet tops or camis under their uniforms so that they could change the top layer without fuss. The boys wore boxer shorts in a rainbow of colours and patterns. Consequently, at this school, it was nothing to see bare-chested young men chatting with young women as they 'wiggled' into or out of their dresses as they prepared for sport. These students did not characterise this situation as a possible site for 'perving'. Reduction in the salience of gender (Fabes et al. 2013; Hilliard & Liben 2010) may be contributing to these different responses.

All Saints College PE classes were coeducational at all levels, except for one semester in Year 9. This semester of separation was to provide a space for the girls, in response to concerns about their confidence and attitudes. It was interesting that while the male head of PE supported the separation strongly, one of the senior female PE teachers commented that while some girls appreciated the separate class, those with strong skills were not as appreciative, mirroring the stance of the female PE teacher from Treetops College and the research discussed above.

In most of the classes observed, most girls and boys enthusiastically participated in PE and did not appear to be either intimidated or inhibited by the presence of girls and boys. There were many examples of girls and boys working together in non-stereotypical ways. For example, a Year 8 class rotating through a set of activities in the gym worked together to build a human pyramid – with lots of laughing and crashing. It seemed contributions were based on strength and skill rather than gender stereotypes, with some girls providing strength and stability low in the pyramid, while lighter boys, as well as girls, climbed onto their shoulders. This close physical contact could have been easily sexualised, but they worked together cooperatively and in good spirits. They then moved on to table tennis, where most groups were

mixed and the games energetic and good-humoured. However, there were exceptions. Another Year 8 class completing the same rotations appeared bored and uninterested in table tennis, there were no mixed games and many of the girls and some boys were sitting out, leaving mostly boys playing, in a rather lethargic way.

All Saints College students, like those at Treetops College, reported that they preferred mixed PE classes. As one Year 8 girl said, 'having separate [PE classes] I think would just be so dodgy'. A Year 10 boy thought separating girls and boys for PE would focus attention on difference, which he argued was 'just wrong. I mean having segregation is just wrong'. Another girl, who obviously enjoyed sport, argued that the boys were more competitive and tended 'to bring the whole team up' and that 'if you had all girls a lot of them would just stand round chatting and doing nothing. I think that's such a waste of time'.

Despite these strong preferences for mixed PE classes there were some criticisms. One Year 8 girl, who said she loved soccer, described how a small group of boys would pass the ball between themselves, excluding other boys and most of the girls. Both girls and boys identified swimming as problematic, or at least the dash from the changing room to the water, when everyone felt exposed and self-conscious in school bathers, with the boys' speedos attracting particularly unfavourable comments. Once they were in the water it was 'fine', however; as one Year 10 girl said, 'Everyone sort of dreads swimming. But once you get in, you have so much fun'.

The three schools had chosen different approaches to organising their PE programs. It was striking that students and staff at each school sought to normalise their own organisational arrangements. They described the prevailing system, whether mixed or single-sex, as ordinary and natural. There are potential problems with both single-sex and mixed PE classes. From a feminist perspective, single-sex classes have some inherent difficulties. They support the notion that girls and boys are fundamentally

different, allowing 'masculine and feminine cultures to flourish and be reflected in the activities carried out' (Paechter 2006b, p.195). Some girls report that all-girls PE classes are less challenging and 'it just takes all the fun out of it' (Kenway, 1997, p.150, see also Hills & Croston 2012). Furthermore, single-sex classes provide no opportunity for girls 'to "show the boys" that they ...[can] do as well as them' (Gibbons & Humbert 2008, p.180) and challenge the stereotypes that both students and staff are prone to hold, as seen at Melville College. On the other hand, there is concern that girls may feel inhibited in mixed PE classes due to concerns about body image and harassment (Cruddas & Haddock 2003; Gibbons & Humbert 2008; Hills & Croston 2012; Paechter 2006b). At these schools this was linked to swimming.

The observations at these schools did not support the concern in the literature that girls will inevitably be discouraged from pushing themselves in mixed classes. Under both organisational regimes there were classes that were energetic and classes that were desultory and within most classes there was a wide range of enthusiasm, including one or two students who did not join in the activities. Across single-sex and coeducational groupings the reluctant students were a small minority and included both girls and boys. Neither gender context ensured successful PE experiences for all students.

The girls participating in coeducational PE classes reported positive feelings about their experience. There were very few complaints about their PE classes, and swimming was the one activity where they identified being embarrassed. Most said they had no interest in girls-only classes.

Furthermore, single-sex boys' classes provided no opportunity to challenge the stereotypes they hold about girls' ability and skill. It was the staff at Melville College who could not imagine PE classes where girls and boys competed together, like the participants in Patrick Brady's study (2004) who found it 'inconceivable' (p.353) that things might be done differently. Staff at the other schools had a more nuanced view of the relative merits of the two

forms of organisation for PE classes. It was female teachers, who worked with mixed groups, who were most likely to cast doubts on the advantages of single-sex PE classes.

Similarly, amongst students, it was the boys at Melville College, who participated in all-boys PE classes and were convinced that girls were not as physically capable as boys. Boys in the coeducational PE classes at the other schools were well aware that girls and boys do not inhabit separate universes when it comes to athletic and sporting ability and skills. While some boys might be faster and stronger than most girls, there were some girls who were faster and stronger than many boys.

Although coeducational PE classes can potentially address these concerns, they are far from risk free. As in the more academic classes, teachers need to take responsibility for ensuring that dominant and disruptive students do not interfere with other students' learning or enjoyment (Gibbons & Humbert 2008). Sex-based harassment needs to be clearly and consistently rejected and stereotypes have to be challenged whenever they are invoked. In the coeducational PE classes observed, it seemed that teachers had largely managed to create safe and supportive spaces for all students where they could enjoy physical activity and participate in friendly competition.

Sex-based harassment

Sex-based harassment, which includes both sexist and sexual harassment (Robinson 2005), has been identified as a potentially powerful force (Connell 2009, p.69) in controlling girls and boys identified with subordinated masculinities, the 'wrong sort of boys' (Lahelma, 2002, p.302, see also Dalley-Trim 2009; Gill & Tranter 2014; Hayes 2000; Robinson 2012). A wide body of research has shown 'how such policing negatively impacts' (Keddie 2009, p.1) on these students in a range of ways (Hanlon 2009; Keddie 2009; Mills & Keddie 2010; Trotter 2009). Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold (2010) conclude on the basis of research from the USA, UK and Europe that

‘gender-based and sexualised forms of aggression, harassment and violence are central in the production of dominant heterosexual masculinities across primary and secondary schooling’ (p.579). This is achieved by privileging hegemonic masculinity and marginalising subordinated masculinities (Connell 2009; Connell 1995; Dalley-Trim 2009) and femininities (Keddie 2009; Ringrose & Renold 2010), and enforcing compulsory heterosexuality (Gill & Tranter 2014; Keddie & Mills 2009). Sex-based harassment includes verbal harassment such as comments on appearance and behaviour, ridicule, sexualised taunts, and physical harassment such as hair pulling, inappropriate touching, grabbing at clothes and groping (Dalley-Trim 2007, 2009; Gill & Tranter 2014; Keddie 2009; Ringrose & Renold 2010).

Both in Australia and overseas, researchers are concerned that teachers and school administrations underestimate both the prevalence and the seriousness of sex-based harassment in schools (Dalley-Trim 2007; Lichty et al. 2008; Meyer 2008), despite reports that sex-based harassment is endemic in coeducational schools (Collins et al. 1996; Dalley-Trim 2007; Gill & Tranter 2014; Hanlon 2009; Hayes 2000; Keddie 2009; Kenway et al. 1997). Surveys of LGBT students also report high levels of harassment (Hanlon 2009). Furthermore, sex-based harassment has been shown to seriously affect school experience and performance for both girls and boys (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Department of Employment Education and Training 1992; Keddie 2009; Mills & Keddie 2010). The perpetrators of harassment often argue that it was just a joke, or a bit of fun, and girls (and other boys) are expected to go along with it (Dalley-Trim 2007; Kenway et al. 1997; Lahelma 2002; Robinson 2005). However, the effects are real and damaging for the victims (Dalley-Trim 2007; Mills & Keddie 2010), and Keddie (2009) condemns ‘the enduring trivialization of such behaviours’ (p.1).

Boys are the primary perpetrators of sex-based harassment, but not all boys are actively involved. However, Connell (1987) argues that ‘most men benefit from the subordination of women and hegemonic masculinity is the cultural

expression of this ascendancy' (p.185). She argues that men who receive the benefits of patriarchy 'without enacting a strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity' (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p.832). These patterns have been found to be already established in school settings (Dalley-Trim 2009).

Policies against sex-based harassment that are brought to the attention of students and staff are seen as important markers of the attitude to sex-based harassment in schools (Lichty et al. 2008; Sadker & Sadker 1994). Treetops College and Melville College both had clearly articulated policies regarding discrimination and harassment, which were delivered to each student at the start of the year in the school diary. At All Saints College the school rules were also laid out in student diaries, but sex-based harassment was not explicitly identified. How these issues were addressed in these documents is analysed below (see Table 4.6).

	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Policy/Rules regarding discrimination and harassment in diary	Yes Anti-discrimination policy	Yes Policy on discrimination and harassment	Yes The School Rules One of three fundamental rules
Opening statement	[Treetops College] values the diverse backgrounds and experiences of members of its community.	[Melville College] is committed to freedom from harassment	No opening statement simple list of rules
Types of discrimination and harassment identified	'race, religion, family, their appearance, physique or sex... Harassment also includes any unwelcome sexual behaviour of any kind and applies equally between males and females'	'Harassment may affect males or females and may be based on sex, disability or illness, race or other personal characteristics'	'to take any action or make any comment which is discriminatory on the basis of race, nationality, background or religion'
Sex-based harassment included	Yes	Yes	No
Harassment can affect both males and females	Yes	Yes	N/A
Graduated set of actions to follow	Yes	Yes	N/A

Students informed that in cases of serious harassment the school has legal responsibilities and may go to outside authorities such as the police	Yes	Yes	N/A
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Table 4.6: School policies regarding sex-based harassment at the three schools

The policies at Treetops College and Melville College were very similar. Both included sex-based harassment in a more general policy regarding discrimination and harassment, noting that harassment can affect both females and males and describing the graduated set of actions that individuals could follow if they were concerned about harassment towards themselves or others. All Saints College was alone in its silence on the issue.

During fieldwork there were no observations of individuals being physically harassed in a sexually explicit manner. However, there were instances of verbal harassment that could have led to either an individual student or group feeling uncomfortable or potentially unsafe. These comments tended to be disparaging to women or to the ‘wrong sort of boys’, either generally or particularly. The incidence of this type of behaviour varied between the three schools (see Table 4.7).

	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Verbal sex-based harassment directed at individuals	5 instances – instigated by boys	None	None
Sexist, or sexual or lewd comments or gestures	4 instances – instigated by boys	7 instances – instigated by boys	None
Report from school counsellor/chaplain	1 counsellor – 2 instances Year 8 boys intimidating girls in their class Year 10 boy harassing girl	2 counsellors – report very low levels of harassment Middle school counsellor ‘Occasional complaint about sexual harassment, not at all the done thing’ Senior College counsellor – 3 instances, 1 against a gay boy and 2 against girls	Chaplain – no reports of harassment
Other reports	Principal – group of boys were harassing girls in their year level by email – meeting at school, harassment stopped, girls did not want to take it to police	Year 10 coordinator – harassment tends to be between boys or between girls	

Table 4.7: Occurrence of sex-based harassment at the three schools

There were only five instances where verbal harassment appeared to be directed at a particular student. All occurred at Treetops College and were instigated by boys – three were directed at boys, either in reference to homosexuality or sexual inexperience, one at a couple and one at a girl. In four of these the perpetrators would have argued they were just having a joke. However, one example was more difficult to construe as a ‘bit of fun’. It involved a Year 10 boy discussing in disparaging and highly sexualised terms a boy who was ‘still a virgin’. This was a clear example of the policing of dominant hegemonic masculinities described in the literature (Hanlon 2009; Keddie 2009; Mills & Keddie 2010; Ringrose & Renold 2010; Trotter 2009).

Across the three schools there were eleven instances of students making sexist or sexual or lewd comments or gestures not addressed to particular individuals. Again boys were the instigators. For example, in a Year 9 health class, where boys outnumbered girls two to one, during a discussion about contraception one of the boys said, ‘All women should be on the pill’. From the context there was a clear suggestion that women should be constantly available for sex with men. The girls at the front of the class disagreed loudly. In a Year 8 Art class, a popular CD was playing. One of the boys who often fulfilled the role of class clown took to the floor and began to perform rhythmic pelvis thrusting in time to the music. The teacher’s initial requests to stop were ignored. The music was turned off until the student had returned to his seat.

Again, there were differences between schools in the prevalence of sex-based harassment, with small numbers of incidents at both Treetops College (9) and Melville College (7) and none at All Saints College. There were also marked differences in the pattern of sex-based harassment between schools. Sex-based harassment directed at individuals was only observed at Treetops College, which suggests a riskier environment for some students, particularly the ‘wrong sort of boys’. At Melville College the examples involved lewd and coarse behaviour or language that drew attention to assertive and aggressive

sexuality and generally referred to females. While there were numerous examples of girls and boys treating this kind of behaviour as a bit of fun, there were also occasions when students fought back against the implications of the comments, and others when the teacher intervened to stop the conversation or behaviour.

Although the frequency of observations of sexual harassment was low, girls in Year 10 at Treetops College reported what appeared to be a culture amongst the boys of 'nick-names' that were aimed at girls' appearance. They raised this by saying that the boys could be very judgemental, citing examples like, 'Did you notice [Emma] was fat?', 'They used to call me Kankles ... it means your legs are really big so you don't have an ankle'. They explained comments such as these would 'turn into a joke and all the guys say it to you', even guys they regarded as 'better' friends. Joking such as this is particularly insidious. As Nicole Taylor (2011) argues, it provides 'protection' for the perpetrator since the 'targets for such "joking" feel pressure to hide their hurt feelings for fear of being thought of as hypersensitive' (p.193). Students at Treetops College distinguished between 'jokes' and 'malicious teasing' (Taylor 2011, p.190). Nevertheless, it was clear that these girls wished that boys would not 'joke' about their appearance, but were left powerless to communicate this to the boys.

A similar pattern was reported in Year 8. The girls said that the boys did not hassle them 'seriously', adding 'as a joke they do, it's just for fun', while the boys defended and incriminated themselves in turn, saying, 'That's true but they take it as a joke ... It's mostly not massive insults ... Just joke around'. One boy explained that he had taken to calling one of the girls "hippo", because she was going on about how fat she was and she's not ... Heaps of people call her hippo'. So while the girls argued that 'no one has nicknames that are insulting really', the boys were arguing that while they did use insulting nicknames, they were 'mostly not massive insults' and it was all a joke. They argued that everyone knew they didn't really mean it. They also confirmed the link between being better friends and more teasing, 'Yeah

because you know they won't take it seriously cause they know you're still friends and you wouldn't just go around calling them fat and all that'. This notion that it 'is just a joke' is a familiar excuse and is explicitly addressed in Treetops College's anti-discrimination policy, which states: 'It is not an excuse to say that it is "a joke"'.

In contrast, at Melville College, in each of the groups, students could think of very few nicknames based on anything other than shortening a person's name. There seemed to be no expectation on the part of the boys that they could 'joke around' and make comments about girls or their appearance and expect to get away with it. The Year 10 boys only used nicknames in relation to other boys. With girls it was a different thing altogether: 'yeah I can't even think of one. I'm sure there is one ... Not that you'd say it to their face anyway ... You'd get your balls kicked in if you did!' This was a very different environment to Treetops College.

At All Saints College, when the practice of inventing rude or insulting nicknames was raised no one could think of any examples. As one of the Year 10 girls said: 'Not really. It's sort of like the bullying thing. It doesn't really exist here. I don't think I've come across anyone who teases other people or anything. There's the occasional whisper behind someone's back but no actual name-calling or anything'.

Finally, at each of the schools the school counsellors, or in the case of All Saints College, the school chaplain, were asked whether they had dealt with cases of sex-based harassment. At both Treetops College and Melville College they reported a small number of cases, but at All Saints College, the chaplain reported that no one had approached him about sexual harassment.

Taken together these observations and reports suggest different cultures existed at the three schools. Despite a clearly articulated policy, it was at Treetops College that verbal sex-based harassment was observed most often. Furthermore, it was the only school where verbal harassment was

directed at particular individuals and girls were 'putting up' with boys using nicknames that referred to girls' appearance or physical characteristics. Melville College had a very similar policy to Treetops College's, but instances of verbal harassment were less common, with none directed at individuals. Moreover, according to the boys there was no way they would risk using sexist or insulting nicknames for the girls. The reported differences between the girls' responses at Treetops College and Melville College appear to reflect the variability identified in previous research. Eleanor Linn (cited in Robinson 2012) concludes that:

for some women cultural beliefs have taught them that the act of speaking up is more shameful than the act of harassment. For other women, cultural beliefs have included a strong tradition of speaking up and affirming the powerfulness of women. (p.88)

In contrast, at All Saints College, even though there was no mention of sex-based harassment in the school rules or policies, there were no observations of sex-based harassment, apparently no culture of nick names and no reports from students or staff of harassment.

Across the three schools boys were responsible for all of the recorded occurrences of sex-based harassment, and in the handful of cases where sex-based harassment was directed at an individual, boys were more likely to be the target than girls. However, the sixteen observations of sex-based harassment across more than 300 classes and many hours observing students outside of class did not point to the endemic levels of sex-based harassment that have been reported in previous literature. There was variation across the schools, but the concern of parents that girls in coeducational settings inevitably experience constant harassment in coeducational settings was not supported by these observations.

Conclusion

The relational theory of gender as described by Connell is 'internally complex' (2009, p.75) and can be analysed using the four dimensions of gender. This chapter has identified a range of school activities linked to the first of these dimensions – power. In both the formal and informal relationships of power, contradictory processes were identified.

At each of the schools a common pattern emerged in relation to formal relationships of power. The appointment of staff to leadership positions reinscribed the link between masculinity and leadership, while the policy of appointing female-male pairs to student leadership positions had the potential to undermine that link. Moreover, this pairing of student leaders disrupted the discourse of gender-differentiated areas of expertise and responsibility, further unsettling traditional gender hierarchies.

There were also some commonalities in the patterns of classroom relationships. Across the three schools girls were more likely than boys to be overrepresented in productive interactions. On the other hand, boys were more likely to participate in distracting behaviour and pushing and shoving, but girls also participated in these activities and were observed to be just as noisy and more likely to voice negative attitudes. These patterns hardly fitted the prevailing description of girls as 'needy, quiet and passive' (Davies 2003, p.116). These findings challenge the stereotypes of boys being greater risk-takers who dominate classroom airspace and agendas while the girls are marginalised.

There were, however, differences across the schools in relation to power and physical strength and sex-based harassment. All Saints College presented the most consistent challenge to the valorisation of competitive sport as the pre-eminent co-curricular activity, with its links to hegemonic masculinity and gendered power hierarchies. The extensive outdoor education program and mixed PE classes combined with the lower profile of the sports program to

unsettle the links between physical strength, power and masculinity. An absence of sex-based harassment conformed to this pattern. On the other hand, the findings for Treetops College and Melville College were more contradictory. At Treetops College the link between power and physical strength was disrupted at several levels. Sport's low profile in the life of the school combined with outdoor education and mixed PE classes to create that disruption. However, there were more instances of sex-based harassment there than at the other schools. In contrast, at Melville College the high-profile sports program and segregated physical education classes reinforced the link between power, physical strength and hegemonic masculinity, but the levels of sex-based harassment were lower than at Treetops College.

Despite these schools all being elite independent coeducational schools in metropolitan Melbourne, there were interesting differences in the mosaic of power relationships at each school. Some aspects of school life reproduced the traditional gendered power relationships and some disrupted the gender hierarchy. Nevertheless, the fears that boys in coeducational schools 'monopolise' leadership opportunities, physical space, linguistic space and teacher attention, and that girls endure constant sex-based harassment, fears that still inform the community conversation regarding girls and coeducational settings were not confirmed by the data from this study.

CHAPTER 5

PRODUCTION RELATIONS

In this chapter the focus shifts to the second dimension of gender relations – *production relations*. Raewyn Connell (2009) notes that the “sexual division of labour” was the first structure of gender to be recognized in social science’ (p.79). Central to this division of the productive sphere into female and male domains are the divisions of the public versus the private and paid versus unpaid work (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999), which lead to a ‘gendered accumulation process’ (Connell 2009, p.80). This is central to the gender order of modern Western cultures, in which men’s economic advantage contributes to the power they have over women. Other writers have argued that this basic division is reflected in a range of other characteristics – producers versus consumers, competitive versus cooperative and instrumental versus expressive (Archer 2004; Blackmore 1993; Connell 2009; Kenway 1996) – each linked to the female and male domains of production. Even as women have moved into the public and paid sectors of society they have been concentrated in ‘female’ occupations based on ‘a perpetuation of the female archetype’ (Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir 2010, p. 366), where there is an emphasis on caring and relationships; teaching has been one of these occupations.

Schools are embedded in societies and the gender order of the society provides the starting point for the gender relations in the school, including its production relations. Students arrive at school with gender understandings drawn from the society’s gender order and widely held beliefs about gendered characteristics and relationships. Schooling can lead to these understandings being ‘confirmed or challenged’ (Riddell & Tett 2010, p.475) and gender stereotypes ‘intensified or mitigated’ (Legewie & DiPrete 2014). The ways in which production relations were enacted in the three schools

under study were therefore likely to be having powerful impacts on students' developing understandings of gender in the world.

In this chapter, analysis of these relations focuses on how work, responsibilities and activities linked to either the female or male sphere were taken up by girls and women as compared to boys and men within these schools. The data on staff roles and responsibilities, students' subject choices, student participation in co-curricular activities and how students were called on or volunteered to help are analysed here. The focus in this analysis is on understanding whether the traditional gendered hierarchies were being confirmed or disrupted and the implications for girls' participation, was equity at risk because they were taking up stereotypical roles in the life of the school.

Staff roles and responsibilities

Across the English-speaking world female teachers outnumber male teachers (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall 2007; Pennsylvania State Education Association 2001), and this imbalance is increasing (Riddell & Tett 2010). In Australia there are twice as many female teachers as male (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003; Brennan 2009). This imbalance has become more pronounced in primary schools, in line with the gendered patterns identified. In Australia at the time of this study, 79% of primary school teachers and 55% of secondary school teachers were women (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003). Sheila Riddell (2010) argues that this imbalance 'propagates outdated messages about outdated gender roles to the next generation of young people' (p.475). She argues that the imbalance confirms for students that 'embodied sex' is a key determinant of future possibilities, 'limiting rather than extending' the possibilities available to individuals (p.475).

This imbalance was evident at both Treetops College and Melville College. However at All Saints College the staff profile was gender-balanced (see

Table 5.1). Despite this, as discussed in Chapter 4, women were underrepresented in the leadership of all three schools. Furthermore, they were more likely to have responsibility for areas of school life linked to stereotypically 'women's work' – positions related to nurturing and caring for students, including responsibility for younger students – while men were expected to take responsibility for older students and the serious work of the senior school (McLay 2008; Schatz-Oppenheimer & Halpert-Zamir 2010). At each of the schools a male teacher led the upper secondary section. Melville College was the only school where a man also led the lower secondary section, reflecting the predominance of men overall in leadership at that school. At the other two schools women led the lower secondary sub-school. The latter pattern draws on the sexual division of labour in contemporary Western culture, in which men are primarily linked to public, productive, paid work and women are primarily responsible for private, emotional, unpaid work (Connell 2002). Jill Blackmore and Judyth Sachs (2007) argue the popular discourses regarding women and leadership position women as 'caring and sharing' leaders (p.13), drawing on images of motherhood. While taking up leadership roles in relation to younger students and nurturing activities may place female school leaders in less conflicted subject positions, Margaret McLay (2008) argues that taking up these "softer", pastoral roles and low status tasks ... [potentially acts] as a considerable barrier' (p.359) to advancement and promotion.

The organisation of pastoral care responsibilities differed across the three schools (see Table 5.1). At Treetops College and All Saints College, staff were appointed to pastoral care positions in female-male pairs. Melville College did not follow this policy of paired appointments, nevertheless these positions were shared between women and men (4 women: 3 men, 57%: 43%), which reflected the gender ratio of the staff. Despite the variation in organisational structures and appointment policies, responsibility for pastoral care did not fall disproportionately on women at any of the schools. This was a disruption of the link between women and nurturing in the schools' production relations, in contrast to the leadership patterns described above.

School	Treetops College		Melville College		All Saints College	
Staff	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
female: male	47 women 29 men	62:38	61 women 46 men	57:43	44 women 42 men	51:49
Head of Senior Secondary	Male		Male		Male	
Head of Junior Secondary	Female		Male		Female	
Pastoral care	Level coordinators – female and male pair at each level		Middle School – level coordinators 2 females and 1 male Senior College – house coordinators 2 females and 2 males		House coordinators - female and male pair for each house	

Table 5.1: Positions of responsibility for students and pastoral care in each of the schools

This identification of appropriate spheres for women and men typically extends to curriculum, with a number of curriculum areas continuing to be gender coded (Broadley 2015; Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Horne 2000; Marsh, Martin & Cheng 2008). As Connell (2008a) argues:

the bundles of knowledge that constitute ‘subjects’ are often gendered. They have gendered histories, they are often tied to gender symbols, they are linked to gender divisions in the economy, they are taught predominantly by men or by women, etc. (p.138)

This gender coding bears strong traces of the gender differentiation related to relations of production. Subjects that have links to female work domains or

draw on the 'feminine strengths' have continued to be female-coded subjects – English, Home Economics, Art and LOTE, where girls are seen as having an 'innate' advantage (Mathers 2008, p.31), while subjects that lead to male-dominated work roles or draw on 'male strengths' are gender-coded male – Maths, Science and Technology (Abbiss 2009; Cheryan 2012; Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000; Fullarton et al. 2003; Legewie & DiPrete 2014; Miller & Kimmel 2012; Preckel et al. 2008; Rieggle-Crumb et al. 2012; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007; Thomson 2005; Villalobos 2009). This has been consistently observed and reported in respect of the teaching areas taken up by men and women (Charles et al. 2008; Keddie 2007; Miller & Kimmel 2012)

Across the three schools women tended to be underrepresented in academic leadership roles, as indicated by leadership of discipline areas. Women held only 39% of these positions. Furthermore, they were concentrated in the female-coded disciplines, where they held 58% of leadership positions (see Table 5.2). The patterns of academic leadership varied across the three schools. At Treetops College gender coding was strongest, with the lowest proportion of discipline areas led by women and the majority being in female-coded disciplines. Melville College was the only school where more Heads of Learning were women than men, with 9 out of 17 (52%) taken by women. However, women were still most likely to be responsible for female-coded discipline areas, although science – one of the male-coded disciplines – was an exception, being led by a woman in both the middle school and senior college. The higher representation of women in these positions at Melville College was in contrast to the preponderance of men in senior leadership positions at the school, as documented in Chapter 4. Finally, at All Saints College, although men continued to hold more than their fair share of academic leadership positions, there was no correlation between the gender coding of the discipline area and the gender of the person leading it.

School	Treetops College	Melville College		All Saints College
Male-coded discipline areas				
		Middle school	Senior College	
Maths, Science and Technology	Man	Man	Man	Man
	Man	Woman	Woman	Man
			Man	Woman
	(100% male)	(50% female: 50% male)	(33% female: 66% male)	(33% female: 66% male)
Female-coded discipline areas				
English, Home Economics, Art LOTE	Woman	Woman	Man	Man
	Woman	Woman	Woman	Man
	Man		Woman	Woman
	Man	(100% female)	(66% female: 33% male)	(33% female: 66% male)
Other discipline areas with more neutral gender coding				
Humanities, Health and PE, Sport, Performing Arts/ Music, Business Studies	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
	Man	Man	Man	Man
	Man			
	Man	Man	Woman	Man
	Woman		Woman	

	(20% female: 80% male)	(33% female: 66% male)	(50% female: 50% male)	(33% female: 66% male)
Total	3 women: 9 men (25% female: 75% male)	4 women: 3 men (57% female: 43%)	5 women: 5 men (50% female: 50% male)	3 women: 6 men (33% female: 66% male)

Table 5.2: Academic leadership at each school

As discussed in relation to power, across the three schools men were more likely than women to take up positions of responsibility, including positions as academic leaders. The gender patterning of those positions of responsibility varied between schools. The gender hierarchy and coding of discipline areas was strongest at Treetops College. At Melville College this was one area of leadership where women outnumbered men, although the links between discipline areas and gender continued to be strong. Finally, at All Saints College male teachers continued to dominate leadership positions but the links between women leaders and female-coded curriculum areas were disrupted.

Students' subject choices

Teaching and learning of the formal curriculum is central to the life of schools. The ways in which gender intersects with subject choice is therefore a key indication of the gender regime of any school. As discussed above, women and men have been assigned 'separate spheres':

the public world of work and achievement was to be occupied by the independent and autonomous male, and the private enclosed domain of the 'home, care, harmony and relationships' by the intuitive and dependent female. (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.34)

This split between the private domestic sphere of women and the public social world of men was then translated into the education system, where girls and boys were given different educational experiences 'which related specifically to their designated roles in society' (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.35). As noted, this meant subjects were typically gender-coded, which led to uneven female-male enrolments in these subjects, both internationally (OECD 2014; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007) and in Australia (Ainley & Daly 2002; Fullarton & Ainley 2000; Fullarton et al. 2003; Mack & Walsh 2013). Becky Francis (2001) argues that gendered curriculum choices reflect 'strongly polarized' gender constructions (p.3), which appear to start developing in very young children (Potvin et al. 2009) and can be loaded with emotion and policed by peer groups. For example, boys who showed an interest in fine arts reported being the targets of 'homophobic comments' (Savoie 2009, p.28).

Gender coding has been linked to stated preferences (Colley & Comber 1994, 2003; Lawrie & Brown 1992); boys' higher achievement in mathematics and science (Marsh et al. 1988; Schools Commission 1975; VCAA 2006; Villalobos 2009); girls' greater success in English (Marsh et al. 1988; VCAA 2006); and uneven enrolments at post-compulsory level (Ainley & Daly 2002; Broadley 2015; Fullarton & Ainley 2000; Fullarton et al. 2003; Gibb & Fergusson 2009; Karpiak et al. 2007; Schools Commission 1975; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007; Villalobos 2009). Uneven enrolment patterns have also been linked to uneven post-school outcomes (Broadley 2015; Karpiak et al. 2007; Preckel et al. 2008; Riegle-Crumb et al. 2012; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007; Villalobos 2009), which contribute to the gender imbalances of the current gender order of Australia and Western societies generally.

A key focus of feminist work in the latter part of the twentieth century was encouraging girls to move into male-coded subjects such as maths and science (Centre for Mathematics Education - the Open University 1986; Gillibrand et al. 1999; Jackson & Smith 2000; Marsh & Rowe 1996; Mason & Kahle 1988; Ministry of Education and Training Victoria 1991; Parker & Rennie 1997; Roger & Duffield 2000; Rowe 1988; Scantlebury & Kahle 1993; Streitmatter 1997). It was argued that these '[c]urriculum choices ... are the "critical filter" to post-school opportunities' (Collins, Kenway & McLeod 2000, p.85) and consequently girls were limiting their post-school options by avoiding these subjects. The literature suggests that there has been some success in this work and some of the broad outlines of gender differences in subject preference have shifted. There are Australian studies that indicate most students now report that differences in mathematical ability between girls and boys are small and that Maths is moving to a 'gender neutral' area of the curriculum (Forgasz, Leder & Kaur 1999; Forgasz, Leder & Kloosterman 2004). Furthermore, research from a range of English-speaking countries reports that girls' enrolments in biology and chemistry, traditionally male-coded subjects, have increased over several decades (Dekkers & Laeter 2001; Harker 2000; Laird, Alt & Wu 2009; Skelton, Francis & Valkanova 2007).

Some earlier research into subject enrolments in gender-coded subjects at coeducational schools as compared with single-sex schools suggested that gender intensification had occurred at coeducational schools, that is, the imbalance between girls and boys had been further exaggerated (Colley & Comber 1994; James & Richards 2003; Lee & Bryk 1986; Ormerod 1975; Power et al. 2003; Spielhofer, Benton & Schagen 2004; Stables 1990; Young & Fraser 1990). However, results have not been unanimous. In a British study it was reported that while girls schools reduced sex stereotyping of subjects, boys schools tended to increase it (Spielhofer, Benton & Schagen 2004). Other researchers have argued that once other factors were controlled for there were no significant differences between subject choices of students from single-sex and coeducational schools (Ainley & Daly 2002;

Marsh 1991; McEwen & Knipe 1997). Gender intensification can occur via several pathways. For example, in a female-coded subject, gender intensification will occur if a larger proportion of girls enrol, or a smaller proportion of boys enrol or a combination of these, and vice versa in male-coded subjects. Given the gender imbalances already present in gender-coded disciplines, any further gender intensification would be of concern, given the potential of further consolidating the imbalance in post-school options and earning capacity for girls and boys.

In Victoria students follow a broad curriculum for the first four years of secondary school then, during the final two years, they take the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). They choose from a wide range of subjects, the only mandated requirement being that students complete at least one English subject. At this level the patterns of subject choice become clearer. In statewide data from 2002 (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4), although boys still outnumbered girls in Maths subjects, the gap was narrowing and more girls than boys were enrolled in Chemistry and Biology. However, girls' participation remained stubbornly low in Physics (7.6% of girls compared to 24.8% of boys) and Specialist Maths (9.4% of girls compared to 16.6% of boys). Furthermore, there was little evidence of boys moving into female-coded subjects; in this data girls were more likely than boys to enrol in all of the subjects identified as female-coded (see Table 5.3).

The project schools offered a wide range of VCE subjects, with 37 subjects available at one or more of the schools; of these, seven were identified as female-coded subjects and ten as male-coded subjects (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4). Students' choices in these gender-coded subjects were analysed and compared to Victorian statewide data. In order to take account of the different ratios of girls to boys across the three schools, this analysis was based on the percentages of girls and boys who enrolled in each of the subjects, at each school and in the statewide data. Again the question of interest here is whether the schools were challenging or reinscribing the gender biases evident in these subjects historically and in contemporaneous Victorian data.

Subject	Statewide data		Treetops College		Melville College		All Saints College	
	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys
Art	11.2	5.3	7	3	21	4	27	7
Food and Technology	12.7	4.9	Not offered		7	4	20	20
Health and Human Development	32.0	5.9	39	0	27	1	Not offered	
Literature	16.8	6.7	31	6	17	4	20	1
LOTE	24.6	16.5	50	21	21	14	71	23
Psychology	41.4	13.8	44	8	51	24	38	20
Studio Arts	17.1	9.4	28	15	9	4	22	11

Table 5.3: Enrolment in 'female-coded' VCE subjects by gender in 2002 in Victoria and at each of the schools
Victorian Data sourced from Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2002)

Subject	Statewide data		Treetops College		Melville College		All Saints College	
	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys	% of all girls	% of all boys
Biology	30.3	14.1	19	8	30	16	28	27
Chemistry	17.7	16.4	50	23	19	21	29	14
Design and Technology	4.3	13.1	Not offered		Not offered		4	25
Information Technology (VET)	1.1	4.0	Not offered		Not offered		11	21
Info Tech: Manage. and Processing	18.8	31.9	6	27	18	18	28	59
Info Tech: Information Systems	1.5	12.4	0	24	1	17	Not offered	
Maths Further	41.4	41.5	44	32	27	30	40	38

Maths Methods	32.6	42.8	57	72	31	41	71	65
Maths Specialist	9.4	16.6	11	14	4	9	13	18
Physics	7.6	24.8	9	28	8	23	16	31

Table 5.4: Enrolment in 'male-coded' VCE subjects by gender in 2002 in Victoria and at each of the schools

Victorian Data sourced from Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (2002)

Analysis showed that gender intensification occurred in four female-coded subjects at each of the schools. However, the patterns of movement were different. At Treetops College gender intensification occurred through a combination of girls moving into these subjects and boys moving out. At All Saints College it was primarily a result of a higher proportion of girls enrolling in these subjects. At Melville College gender intensification occurred primarily as a result of boys withdrawing from female-coded subjects. The greatest gender intensification was at Treetops College, in Health and Human Relations. A higher proportion of girls enrolled in this subject compared to either the state data or the two other project schools. The subject had in fact become a single-sex subject, with no boys at all. The only female-coded subjects that moved towards more even enrolments were Food and Technology and Psychology. Boys had moved into Psychology at both Melville College and All Saints College, and girls had moved out of Food and Technology at Melville College. At All Saints College Food and Technology was unusually popular, with much higher proportions of both girls and boys enrolled in the subject than for the state overall. Furthermore, instead of girls being more than twice as likely as boys to choose the subject, as was the case in the statewide data, girls and boys were equally likely to do so. At Treetops College and Melville College, boys were tending to withdraw from female-coded subjects, while at All Saints College boys were less likely to withdraw from female subjects and more likely to engage with them.

Shifting the focus to male-coded subjects revealed a very different pattern of movement. At both Treetops College and All Saints College efforts to engage girls in maths and science appeared to have had some success. At both schools a higher proportion of girls had selected maths and science subjects – Physics, Chemistry, Maths Methods and Maths Specialist – moving the balance towards more even enrolments than in the statewide data. At Melville College, lower numbers of students, girls and boys, were enrolled in these subjects and there was no clear pattern of shifts in gender balance.

Technology subjects, including information technology subjects, were the male-coded subjects most likely to see gender intensification, and that was the case across the three schools. In the statewide data Information Technology: Information Systems was the most male-biased subject, with boys more than eight times as likely to choose it as girls. This imbalance was further exaggerated at Treetops College, where the subject had become boys-only, with boys there almost twice as likely to

choose it as boys across the state. Connell (2006b) has identified new technology as the location of new gender divisions in the dimension of production relations, which she calls 'emergent gender divisions of labor' (p.841) and this was clearly reflected in this data. There is also evidence in the research literature that gender polarisation of ICT courses is actually increasing, with the proportion of girls enrolling in decline (Anderson et al. 2008; Denner et al. 2014; Meelissen & Drent 2008).

The students also appeared to have taken this gender division on board, with strong stereotypes evident. The girls talked about 'a lot of boys in our year level that love computers' and how they (the girls) were 'not really good with computers' and would 'probably stuff the computer up'. On the other hand, the boys described themselves as much more comfortable with computers, even though on closer examination it seemed that they largely used computers for the same things girls did – the internet, word processing, music downloads, emails, chatting. The only difference was around computer games. One Year 10 boy, drawing on long-standing divisions in the production relations of gender, compared computer games for boys to shopping for girls:

Actually ... some guys like playing computers more for games, where the girls like shopping more. You know what I mean. And guys are attracted to games because you know they just like them. It's like a preference type thing. It's like what genders do. Like cause most guys we've seen rarely go shopping because they think it's a bit daggy or something. But girls do it all the time. Girls go shopping all the time and they're like if you ask a girl to play computer game with you, they probably think no ...

The girls consistently underplayed the amount they used and enjoyed using the computer and characterised themselves as incompetent, while the boys saw themselves as different from the girls and comfortable with the technology, even if they did not do any programming or have any in-depth technical knowledge.

At Treetops College girls were moving into maths and science subjects, but boys were not engaging with female-coded subjects. It was also at Treetops College that two subjects had reached the extreme of gender imbalance with single-sex enrolments. Students at Melville College were the least likely to enrol in subjects that were coded to the opposite gender and gender intensification occurred primarily as a result of girls withdrawing from male-coded subjects and boys withdrawing from female-coded ones. Furthermore, there was no significant movement of girls into the male-coded maths and science subjects, as had occurred at the other two schools.

Finally, at All Saint College girls had moved into maths and science subjects and boys had not withdrawn from female-coded subjects as they had at the other two schools. Both girls and boys at All Saints College seemed less likely to avoid subjects that were not linked to their gender, leading to the higher number of subjects with more even enrolments.

The choice of subjects at VCE has a profound impact on students' post-school opportunities for both study and work options in the future. The pattern of choice varied between project schools. Subject choice at Melville College tended to follow traditional patterns, suggesting students here would be less likely to have the option to take up non-gender-aligned employment in the future. At Treetops College, the boys were staying in male-coded areas, but there was a trend for more girls to select the traditionally male-coded maths-science subjects. By contrast, All Saints College students showed the strongest trend away from stereotypical subject choices, with boys moving into female-coded subjects and girls into male-coded subjects. Here there was some potential to disrupt traditional gender alignments in production relations as these students moved into the workforce.

Student participation in co-curricular activities

Co-curricular, or extra-curricular, activities play a key role in the experiences offered by schools, particularly in educational markets such as Australia's. A recent review argues that they are 'an important component of students' school life' and that many schools 'invested significant resources' in them (Seow & Pan 2014, p.361). Most schools would agree with Elizabeth Stearns and Elizabeth Glennie (2010), who conclude that co-curricular activities:

are a resource for students, an opportunity for them to learn both academic and non-academic skills and to establish relationships with other students and teachers. They provide a chance for students to develop intellectually and socially in a relatively informal setting. (p.307)

Involvement in co-curricular activities has been linked to a range of positive outcomes (Chow 2008; Farb & Matjasko 2012; Fredricks 2012; Kronholz 2012; Makel et al. 2011; Shulruf, Tumen & Tolley 2008), including both task-related skills (Covay & Carbonaro 2010; Stearns & Glennie 2010) and social skills (Chow 2008; Stearns & Glennie 2010), although research results have been mixed (Farb & Matjasko 2012;

Shulruf, Tumen & Tolley 2008). Lack of conclusive evidence, however, has not dampened enthusiasm for co-curricular programs. Elite schools are particularly enthusiastic adopters of these programs, which are represented as significant contributors to the 'value-addedness' they argue is a key reason to move out of the government school system (Forbes & Weiner 2008; Hooper 2011; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004, p.376; O'Flynn & Petersen 2007; Wardman et al. 2010).

These activities are also sites of gender construction. Myra and David Sadker (1994) reported that as coeducation became the norm during the 20th century, both the formal curriculum and co-curricular activities became 'marked by gender segregation' (p.32). This has continued to be the case, with more boys participating in competitive sports and more girls participating in fitness, arts performances and displays, and social service (Collins et al. 1996; Makel et al. 2011). As with the formal curriculum, these programs can be linked back to the gendered patterning of production relations, with sport firmly in the masculine realm through its emphasis on strength and competition, the performing arts firmly linked to the feminine through their emphasis on emotions, and outdoor education sitting between the male and female realms. This reflects the alignments discussed above in relation to the formal curriculum and also in Chapter 4 in relation to power relations.

Each of the project schools ran wide-ranging, well-resourced co-curricular programs. Student leaders were appointed and successful participation was acknowledged through awards such as certificates, pockets and school colours. Sports programs included a wide range of team and individual sports and weekly training and competition. Camp programs usually included outdoor education experiences. Music programs included individual tuition linked to ensemble, band and orchestra performances. There were also plays, musicals and performance competitions.

Many co-curricular activities have close links to classes in PE, music, drama and dance. Each school offered some experience of these activities in mandatory classes in the early years of secondary schooling, but they became optional electives in senior years. This suggests a basic level of knowledge is deemed important for all students, but ultimately the activities reviewed here took second place to more academic subjects for senior students.

Despite the breadth of co-curricular programs, locating data and information about students' participation in these activities was less straightforward than for the subject enrolment data that was the basis of the previous analysis. The annual school magazines provided the most accessible information about involvement in co-curricular activities and therefore form the basis of this analysis, with additional detail about the programs drawn from fieldwork notes (see Table 5.5). The following analysis identifies the relative importance assigned to different co-curricular activities and who participated in them. A brief overview of the reporting of the co-curricular programs in the magazines provides a starting point.

	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Sport			
Program	Mid-week competition 1 training session Compulsory Years 7-12 – but apparently not policed in Years 11 and 12	Saturday morning competition 2 training sessions Compulsory Years 7-12 Reduced commitment at Years 11 and 12	Mid-week competition 1 training session
Magazine	5% of magazine 5 pages House reports	56% of magazine 62 pages House reports	20% of magazine 36 pages House reports
Outdoor Education			
Program	Years 7-9 – compulsory 1 week camps Year 10 – elective Optional activities in senior years	Years 7-10 – compulsory 1 week camps	Exodus program Year 7-12 – compulsory 1+ week camps Year 11 range of options with different challenge levels Year 12 students design and plan their own 'Exodus'

Magazine	9% of magazine 9 pages	2% of magazine 3 pages	6% of magazine 11 pages
Performing Arts			
Music			
Program	Years 7-8 – music classes Years 10-12 – electives Private tuition program – 400 students School ensembles – orchestras, concert band, choir, jazz and rock groups House music competition – participation compulsory Speech nights – music ensembles	Years 8-9 – choose two subjects from the performing and creative arts Years 10-12 – electives Private tuition program – 20 instruments School ensembles – 21 ensembles involving 200+ students, including orchestras, concert bands, choir, jazz and rock groups Campus musical Music festival Instrumental night	Year 7-8 – 1 term music/year Year 9-12 – electives Private tuition – available School ensembles – including orchestras, chamber music groups, choirs and jazz groups School musical Music week – choral concert, lunchtime concerts School Concert – includes house singing – compulsory participation

		Middle School house competition – battle of the bands Speech nights – music ensembles Senior College assemblies Middle School assemblies Lunchtime Bel Canto concerts	Speech night – 6 ensembles performed
Magazine	6% of magazine 6 pages House reports	4% of magazine 4 pages	5% of magazine 9 pages House reports
Drama			
Program	Years 7-8 – drama classes Years 10 and 12 – electives 2 productions – Senior (Years 11-12) drama performance Junior (Years 7-10) drama performance	Years 8-9 – choose two, semester-long subjects from the performing and creative arts each year Years 10-12 – electives 3 productions – Senior College Play	Years 7-8 – 1 term drama/dance per year Years 9-12 – electives 5 productions – 257 students performed and 129 students backstage School musical

		Campus musical Middle School Play (a review style program one year)	3 upper school productions 1 lower school production Senior Drama Festival – house based event, but not competitive
Magazine	2% of magazine 2 pages	1% of magazine 1 page	5% of magazine 8 pages House reports
Dance			
Program	House music competition – participation compulsory	Years 8-9 – choose two, semester-long subjects from the performing and creative arts each year Middle School house competition Battle of the Bands – dance elements included Speech nights – dance items	Year 7-8 – 1 term drama/dance per year Years 9-12 – electives Dance Fusion – annual dance program that runs for 3 nights – 70 students participated

Magazine	No dedicated dance reports Dance included in 2-page spread for House music House reports – all included reports on House music competition	No dedicated dance reports Dance mentioned in reports of the musical productions House reports – no mention	0.5% of magazine 1 page
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Table 5.5: Co-curricular activities – programs and presence in the annual magazines of the three schools

The many activities included in Treetops College's wide-ranging co-curricular program were accorded similar prominence in the annual magazine, with no one activity valorised above others. The four activities that commanded most space were outdoor education (9%), house reports (8%), music (6%) and sport (5%) (see Table 5.5). None of these activities dominated the annual magazine, providing space and recognition to students' wide range of interests.

Melville College also provided a comprehensive co-curricular program, but the coverage in the annual magazine had a very different profile. As discussed in Chapter 4, coverage of sporting activities was given far greater prominence than any other activity. More than half of the magazine was devoted to reports and photographs of sporting activities (56%), while the arts (6%), outdoor education (2%) and house reports (2%) contributed only around 10% of the content (see Table 5.5). In fact, there was less written about all the school's performing arts activities (5% – 5 pages) than its basketball teams (6% – 6 pages).

As with the other schools, the All Saints College magazine reported on various co-curricular activities. The levels of coverage sat between those of the other two schools. Like Melville College, sport had the highest profile (20%), but it did not have the same dominance as at Melville College. All Saints College sport was followed by house reports (14%), performing arts (11%) and outdoor education (6%) (see Table 5.5).

From this brief overview, it is already clear that there were striking differences in the recognition given to the various programs in the magazines of the three schools. The remainder of this section will explore co-curricular activities and their place in the schools in more detail.

Sport and outdoor education

All three schools provided an extensive suite of sports programs and outdoor education opportunities. These programs were analysed in Chapter 4 in relation to power relations, and similar gendered findings emerge when they are viewed through the lens of production relations. As Connell (2009) explains, 'the four dimensions ... are tools for thinking; they are not separate institutions ... in a real life context, the different dimensions of gender constantly interweave, and condition each other' (p.85). This 'interweaving' and 'conditioning' can be seen at play here. The advantage that men, on average, have over women, on average, in physical strength plays out in power relations, but also informs the types of work and roles available to men, and not to women, which are analysed here in terms of production relations.

When viewed through the lens of production relations, sport is again aligned with the male sphere. In the 21st century, elite schools like those in this study typically argue that both girls and boys need to prepare for 'professional and academic careers, in a competitive social environment' (Wright & Burrows 2006, p.284), making clear the links to the stereotypical male aspects of the productive sphere. On the other hand, as discussed in relation to power relations, outdoor education, which also calls on physical strength and coordination, emphasises cooperation and problem solving, as well as understanding the natural environment, positioning it between the female and male spheres.

It was notable at Treetops College that sport did not occupy the dominant position in the magazine, which was taken instead by the outdoor education program. This was in contrast to the magazines from the other two schools. At Treetops College the outdoor education and sport programs were both positioned as important – a medium level of involvement was required of all students in the junior secondary years (see Table 5.5). As discussed in relation to the school's power relations, the location of these activities in the

life of the school did not require students to take up traditional gendered positions in relation to the productive relations. It seemed to be providing opportunities to 'degender' those relations (Connell 2006b, p.846).

At Melville College sport is positioned as far more important than any other co-curricular activity. The sports program is generously resourced, students and their families are expected to commit significant time to sports participation, including weekends to inter-school sport, and sport dominates the annual magazine (see Table 5.5). As discussed previously these characteristics suggest the valorisation of sport as the pre-eminent co-curricular program, which, through the emphasis on physical power and competition, works to maintain hegemonic masculinity. In contrast, outdoor education, which has female and male characteristics, has a very low profile in the annual magazine, despite the school investing significant financial resources in the ownership and maintenance of three rural properties dedicated to it.

All Saints College, like Treetops College, participated in an interschool sports competition that took place on a weekday afternoon and sport is represented as one of many co-curricular activities offered. The Director of Admissions described the school as not 'dominated' by sport. She believed that this led to a different type of family being attracted to the school. Families with less investment in the elite school sporting traditions, who felt Saturday sport was an imposition, would presumably be more comfortable with the low-key program of weekday sport. She believed that this, in turn, affected the type of boys enrolled at the school; they were not 'elite sportsmen'. It is interesting to note that she did not include elite sportswomen in this comment. However, she hastened to add that there were increasing numbers of good sportspeople at the school. As discussed in Chapter 4, outdoor education at All Saints College, through its Exodus program, was more extensive and had a higher profile than outdoor education at the other two schools. According to the school prospectus, during junior secondary years all students participate:

in a wide range of activities, from bushwalking, rafting and skiing, to rock-climbing and surfing. As students advance through the program they progressively develop an array of skills until by Year 12 they are able to design and plan their own 'Exodus'.

The program was compulsory for all students, from Year 7 to Year 12. Many students identified strongly with the program, participating in optional weekend workshops and, as discussed in Chapter 4, both girls and boys were keen to take on the challenges of the serious expeditions available through the senior Exodus program. As was the case in relation to power relations, this high-profile outdoor education program had the potential to disrupt traditionally gendered production relations.

As in the case of power relations, when sport and outdoor education programs were viewed through the lens of production relations, there were wide differences between schools. Again, at Melville College hegemonic masculinity was strongly reinscribed through the valorisation of competitive sports and the very low profile of the outdoor education program, while at All Saints College hegemonic masculinity was most strongly challenged and disrupted by the prominence of the outdoor education program and the high profile of girls in that program. Treetops College was located between these two.

Performing arts

Each of the schools provided strong performing arts programs offering a suite of co-curricular activities, supported by some mainstream classes. In contrast to sport, which has been identified as inextricably linked to male culture (Cashman 1995; Connell 2008a; Connell 2005b; Elling & Knoppers 2005; O'Flynn & Lee 2010) in schools and the wider society, the performing arts have a more complex gender reading and as Connell (2008a) notes, are 'curiously gendered' (p.141). In the wider society men have dominated the ranks of professional musicians (Maidlow & Bruce 1999) and the professional

theatre (Cockin 1998). Despite this, in schools the performing arts are coded as feminine (O'Neill & Boulton 1996; Sallis 2003) because of their focus on expression and emotions. Other researchers have described this disjunction as a 'paradox', for example, in relation to music, where there is 'the well-documented success of girls in formal music education, alongside women's continued low-profile in most high status musical careers' (Maidlow & Bruce 1999, p.147). A similar 'paradox' clearly exists in relation to drama and even to some extent in dance. As a consequence of their female coding in schools, the performing arts are 'practically reduced to options, and they are options mainly taken by girls' (Connell 2008a, p.141). In the Australian context it has been reported that at both junior and senior secondary levels more girls than boys 'put regular time into music [and] other arts ...' (Collins et al. 1996, p.168).

There has been less research on gender issues around participation in the performing arts than in sport and physical education (see, for example, Sallis 2004). Over several decades girls and women have been strongly encouraged to engage with sport and physical education for their health benefits (Westerstahl et al. 2003). However, the skewed valorisation of these two domains within the research itself might be linked to the gender coding of these activities and the prioritisation of those activities linked to hegemonic masculinity – sport and physical activity. Whatever the reason, there has been far less interest in engaging boys in the performing arts than engaging girls in sport. Interestingly, the Australian report *Gender and school education* (Collins et al. 1996) found that the narrowness of boys' choices in co-curricular and leisure activities was seen as 'unproblematic' by teachers and schools (p.176).

All of the schools in this study promoted their performing arts co-curriculum programs in their school prospectuses and other marketing materials. In Treetops College's prospectus, opportunities for 'expressing, creating, understanding' through the performing and visual arts program were highlighted. This emphasis on emotion and expressiveness aligned with the

previously made link between the arts, and the female sphere within production relations. At Melville College the prospectus stated: 'Arts – you can do anything. The things [Melville] students can do are endless ... [the] musical and dramatic programs and events can keep even the most active students busy. And are wonderful ways to build confidence'. The reference to confidence flagged a different, more masculine rationale for the program. Finally, at All Saints College the performing arts were described as central to both the school's identity and families choosing to join the school. Both the principal and the Director of Admissions noted that the school had a strong reputation for the visual and performing arts and, consequently, children from families connected to media and entertainment were often enrolled. The Director of Admissions also noted a trend for boys with an interest in the performing arts to transfer into the school from boys schools. She suggested that All Saints College was a school where performance and masculinity were not seen as antithetical. As proof positive she described how the captain of the football first eighteen – regarded as the pinnacle of male achievement – had also taken the all singing all dancing lead in the school production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, an activity not associated with stereotypical masculinity. This story was repeated to me by a number of staff. Describing this unusual combination of talents, they all highlighted what a good role model they believed him to be.

The performing arts were part of the mainstream curriculum at all schools in the junior secondary years, becoming electives in the later years (see Table 5.5). As part of the co-curriculum there were music programs, drama performances and some more limited opportunities to engage in dance. In the following analysis the focus is firstly on the music programs, then drama and dance.

Music

Music was the most prominent of the performing arts in all three schools. Many students learnt a musical instrument and participated in school

orchestras, ensembles, bands and choirs. In the past, school music was strongly associated with girls and regarded as a feminine pursuit (Bennetts 2013; McGregor & Mills 2006). In fact this association was so strong that teachers were reported to be concerned that music was seen by students, particularly boys, as 'unmanly' and that consequently, for boys, participation in musical activities risked 'loss of manliness' (Maidlow & Bruce 1999, p.154). Gradually, the numbers of both girls and boys participating in music programs has increased, although up to the 1990s more girls than boys participated in music programs (Collins et al. 1996; O'Neill & Boulton 1996), and musical activities and instruments have continued to be strongly coded by gender (Bennetts 2013; Kruse et al. 2015). Lucy Green (cited in O'Neill & Boulton 1996) reported that teachers believed that '*both* boys and girls tend to restrict themselves or find themselves restricted to certain musical activities and instruments for fear of intruding into the other sex's territory, where they might stand accused of musical transvestism' (p.174). The language used in these reports – 'unmanly', 'loss of manliness' and 'transvestism' – signals the powerful anxieties associated with getting gender wrong in relation to music, especially for boys.

In this gendered world, girls have populated orchestras and choirs while boys have filled the ranks of brass bands and rock bands (Abeles & Porter 1978; Kruse et al. 2015; Maidlow & Bruce 1999). Musical instruments have also been coded for gender, with girls and boys expressing similar ideas about which instruments are appropriate for members of either sex (O'Neill & Boulton 1996, p.178). Girls have tended to prefer piano, flute and violin and boys guitar, drums and trumpet, reflecting adults' and the wider community's musical stereotypes (Abeles & Porter 1978; Bennetts 2013; Kruse et al. 2015; O'Neill & Boulton 1996, p.171). However, there is a growing consensus that girls are increasingly choosing from a wider range of options, while boys continue to make safe choices from amongst those instruments regarded as gender appropriate (Abeles & Porter 1978; Bennetts 2013; Dalzell & Leppla 1992; O'Neill & Boulton 1996). This pattern reflects those previously observed in relation to subject choices, where girls have been more willing to

move into maths and science than boys have been to move into female-coded subjects. This prompts the question *Why?* Is it a result of valorising the masculine? Is it because earlier feminist work encouraged girls to believe ‘they can do anything’? Are girls more adventurous? Are boys more fearful of taking on feminine activities than girls are of taking on masculine activities?

At Treetops College music was the most prominent among performing arts co-curricular activities. In addition to classroom music for all junior secondary students, there was a very large private music tuition program, with 400 students, and a range of school ensembles, from orchestras to rock groups. A unique aspect of the performing arts at Treetops College was the annual House Music competition, a student-led activity that all secondary students had to participate in. It included instrumental, choral and dance items. In addition to a double page in the annual magazine dedicated to the event, each of the house reports foregrounded this event, with statements from teachers and students such as: ‘the most anticipated, highly demanding and exciting event of the year’, ‘the biggest event for all houses’, ‘undoubtedly the most eagerly sought trophy’, ‘the event we were all waiting for’, ‘as always, a real highlight’. According to another report, ‘due to the popularity’ of the dance competition a new rule had been introduced – there were to be no more than 100 performers on stage at any one time. Judging from the photos, the choral competition was also a mass participation event.

The school requirement that all students participate in musical instruction and competitions, and the careful attention to gender-neutral language in school publications, framed this aspect of school life as valuable and appropriate for all students, regardless of gender. Nevertheless, gender differences continued to be evident, with girls predominating in singing, flute and strings and boys in guitar, brass and percussion.

At Melville College, in addition to classroom music, individual tuition was available (for a price) in more than 20 instruments. There were 15 school ensembles, from Middle School Choir to Senior Percussion Ensemble, with

more than 200 students involved in these activities. However, they were not compulsory, unlike participation in the sports program or indeed the House Music competition at Treetops College. Consequently, there were no mass participation events with music at their centre.

The most high-profile of the music ensembles at Melville College was the Senior Big Band, which had been successful in state and national competitions. In an interview the Head of Music was proud of the fact that there were equal numbers of girls and boys in the band. This was the result of a significant shift that had occurred over the preceding few years. He pointed out that the school bands they competed against only had very small numbers of girls. He admitted that they were not sure why the shift had occurred and that 'We don't try to achieve anything, because we think it is happening'.

The musicians also contributed to the Campus Musical, the largest production on the school calendar, which drew in many more students as actors and dancers and to work backstage. Again clear gender divisions emerged. Behind the scenes the tech crew and backstage team appeared to be all boys. In the weeks leading up to this production and during the week of performance, there was a real buzz amongst students and a great deal of enthusiasm. Despite this the annual magazine report of the musical only ran to half a page.

Participation in the music program at All Saints College reflected the same patterns as found at the other two schools. Girls filled the ranks of the choirs and played the more feminine musical instruments, while boys played brass and percussion. A Baroque ensemble was mostly girls and a jazz ensemble mostly boys, as were participants in the Battle of the Bands competition. The major production of the year was the senior school musical, which ran for eight performances.

All three schools provided opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of musical activities, including classical and contemporary. However, it was at Treetops College that everyone – girls and boys, Year 7 to Year 12 – was required to participate in a highly anticipated musical event. This event especially appeared to work against traditional gender readings of musical participation in a way that the programs at the other two schools did not.

Drama

Each school provided opportunities for participation in drama through school productions such as plays and musicals. Historically, professional theatre has been a male domain, even to the extent of women being played by cross-dressing male actors (Cockin 1998). It has been argued that this was in part based on gendered production relations, a result of ‘sanctions against women’s involvement in public (as opposed to domestic) life’ (de Gay 1998, p.25). Despite this, in schools drama is today constructed as ‘a “soft” or “feminine” subject’ (McDonald 2000, p.38) and boys who show an interest in drama and enrol in senior classes risk being accused of being gay, labelled as ‘drama fags’ and being ostracised by friends (McDonald 2000; Sallis 2003). Again the language used suggests there may be real risks for boys choosing to make public an interest in drama. It is probable that this exerts downward pressure on boys’ preparedness to pursue it. Richard Sallis (2003) reports that some boys feel as though they have to choose between their friends and drama. In another example of a continuing pattern, the low levels of participation by boys in drama have been regarded as normal and unproblematic. Framed as a soft, feminine, low-status subject that boys are not interested in, there is no push to encourage interest. Not surprisingly there is a ‘dearth of academic studies on boys and drama’ (Sallis 2004) and the ‘minute’ number of studies there are focus on boys in mixed classes who are identified as ‘behavioural problems and disruptive of girls’ learning’ (McDonald 2000, p.37).

At Treetops College there were two major drama productions, each of which was represented in the annual magazine by a one-page report that included photos and a cast list. There were also two productions by class groups. The Year 9 classes tackling Shakespeare revealed what was to become a common pattern. There were girls and boys on stage but backstage there were clear gender divisions. The costume group consisted of nine girls. The group constructing sets was nine boys and two girls, with neither girl participating in actual building tasks, instead helping out with painting. Boys were in the light box, with a girl running messages between light box and director.

Drama had a very low profile at Melville College. The Senior College drama production was linked to the VCE curriculum and didn't rate a mention in the 2001 annual magazine, while the Middle School play was reviewed in a single paragraph. The following year, according to the annual magazine, the Middle School play 'took a different turn ... taking the form of a chat show [which] included comedic sketches, a song ... a band ... and excerpts from previous Middle School plays'. Both these annual events had a lower profile in the school than the Campus Musical or the music ensembles and concerts.

All Saints College was the school with the largest drama program. In the annual magazine the director of drama proudly proclaimed that the school had seen six productions, with 257 student performances and 129 students working backstage. In addition, on speech night some 50 students were involved in drama performances as part of the program. The senior drama festival included three productions and a lower school play. There were more boys than girls on stage in the senior productions, which appeared to support senior staff statements that families, and particularly boys with an interest in the performing arts, were attracted to the school. More typically, boys were generally responsible for backstage and technical work in these productions, but one of the backstage teams was led by a girl.

Again there was significant variation in drama programs across the schools. All Saints College's drama program was serious and substantive, while Melville College's was marginalised, squeezed out by sport and, to a lesser extent, music. In respect of drama, Treetops College sat between the other schools, with a modest drama program that received even-handed treatment in the annual magazine.

Dance

Of all the performing arts, dance has the strongest female coding. Since the nineteenth century it has been regarded as an inappropriate activity for men, in part because there has been an association between male dancers and homosexuality, resulting in a strong prejudice against male dancers (Burt 1995). Consequently, women far outnumber men in dance, perpetuating the appearance of a feminine world. However, the pattern observed in other performing arts is repeated in dance, with men maintaining significant control despite their smaller numbers. As Christy Adair (1992) notes, despite their numerical advantage, 'the power relations within dance are quite clearly not in the hands of women' (p.17), who continue to be located in 'the low-status, low-paid jobs' (p.11). Moreover, feminists argue that dance, and ballet particularly, reinforce gender stereotypes, with women presented as light and delicate and men as strong and in control of both the female dancers and the situation (Sanderson 2001).

The belief that dance education is appropriate for girls but not for boys has been widespread (Sanderson 2001; Waddington, Malcolm & Cobb 1998), with ballet lessons being identified as the preserve of white middle-class girls, for whom it is seen as 'beneficial' (Adair 1992, p.14). On the other hand boys' involvement with dance is viewed with 'suspicion' (Adair 1992, p.14) and feeds into anxieties about sexuality. Patricia Sanderson (2001) in her discussion of student attitudes to dance argues that, particularly during adolescence, boys are 'insecure and unwilling to be associated with any activity which may be interpreted as feminine' (p.128). Each of the schools

provided opportunities for students to participate in dance, although it was often combined with drama or music, in the curriculum and in performances.

At Treetops College, as noted above in relation to the House Music competition, the dance event was a mass participation event. The success of the event may have been because of the themes chosen – ‘cowboys and Indians’, ‘gangsters and the mafia’ – which seemed carefully designed to include boys. Nevertheless, in the photos the majority of dancers were girls. Despite the apparent popularity of dance, this was the only public performance featuring dance on the school calendar.

At Melville College dance was an aspect of a range of performances and events, including the middle school play, musicals and speech nights. In each of these girls outnumbered boys. The girls were often very skilled dancers, who had obviously spent many years honing their skill; the boys rarely were. Rather, the impression was that they were doing this because they were good sports and it was a bit of fun.

All Saints College was the only school that identified dance as a co-curricular activity in its own right. There were co-captains of dance appointed – usually a girl and a boy. However, as previously noted, one year the two captains of dance were boys, one of those iconic facts repeatedly raised by staff in conversation about gender and gender stereotypes. In addition to dance in musicals and other productions, as was the case at the other schools there was an annual dance production. Called Dance Fusion, it involved students from Years 9 to 12 and showcased student-choreographed dance performances. The production usually involved a large number of students (70+), though girls outnumbered boys by more than two to one. There were usually three or four performances that sold out quickly. In the school magazine it was reported: ‘Dance Fusion was again a most popular event and students and parents flocked to see the performances. People were again turned away at the door’. This came up in classroom conversations when everyone was trying to get tickets to the event, girls and boys, sports

fanatics and performing arts buffs. The profile of dance was noticeably higher here and it seemed there were at least some boys who took dance seriously, although their numbers were still small.

As with the relative status of drama in the three schools, it was at All Saints College that dance was taken most seriously, with a higher profile than at the other schools and taking a more central role in the life of the school. At Treetops College and Melville College there were opportunities to dance, but they were more limited and, particularly for boys, it seemed dancing was 'a bit of fun'.

From this review of the performing arts programs at the three schools, it is clear that each provided extensive music programs and a range of opportunities for participation in drama and dance. However, it is also clear that as was the case with sport and outdoor education, performing arts programs were positioned very differently at these schools. At Melville College although there were, as the prospectus proclaimed, 'endless' opportunities for students to engage in the performing arts, reporting of these activities in the annual magazine was surprisingly limited. The performing arts programs did not appear to hold a central place in the life of the school in the way sport did. On the other hand, All Saints College identified as a school that placed the performing arts at the centre of school life and provided more extensive opportunities for students to engage with drama and dance than either of the other schools. Finally, Treetops College sits between these two, with a less sophisticated drama and dance program, but participation in the House Music competition was compulsory for all students, leading to what was described as mass participation in the performing arts.



Each of these schools has a comprehensive program of co-curricular activities including sport, outdoor education and performing arts. I have

argued that these programs have different coding when analysed in relation to production relations.

At Treetops College the annual magazine was very even handed in its reporting of these programs with none being given prominence over the others. Students were required to participate in all these activities, through the weekly sports program, the annual outdoor education camps and the annual House Music competition, which not only included instrumental and choral competitions, but also a dance competition.

In contrast to this, at Melville College sport was the co-curriculum program with the highest profile in the life of the school. There were many opportunities to engage with outdoor education and the performing arts, but they were not celebrated in the way that sport was. Consequently, they did not challenge or disrupt the valorisation of the hegemonic masculinity evident in the sports program. Rather the emphasis on competitive sport as the pre-eminent activity worked towards reinscribing the traditional gender hierarchies.

At All Saints College, although sport continued to be a regular part of school life, there was not the same excitement amongst the students or staff in relation to the sports program as there was for the other co-curricular programs. The annual magazine was the only place that sport had a higher profile than other co-curricular activities, and even here an effort had been made to foreground girls' sport. On the other hand, outdoor education and performing arts were central to the life of the school and dominated the senior school speech night. These activities did not appear to have strong gender profiles, with both girls and boys participating enthusiastically, taking pride in their achievements. Of the three schools participating in this project the co-curriculum program at All Saints College was the program with the greatest potential to disrupt gender arrangements in production relations.

Students helping out

One key aspect of productive work in the feminine private sphere is the focus on caring for, nurturing and supporting others. As discussed above, women staff at the schools were more likely to take up positions of responsibility linked to such activities. In a similar vein there have been reports over an extended period that teachers call upon girls to carry out 'domestic' tasks around the school (Cruddas & Haddock 2003, p.66), whereas boys will only be called upon when strength is needed (Australian Education Council 1992; Kenway et al. 1998; Stanworth 1983, p.18; Weaver-Hightower 2010). Francis (2005) suggests that girls adopt a 'quasi teacher role, servicing and facilitating boys' (p.4), while some girls report that teachers expect them to help out in ways that 'they would not bother the boys with' (Cruddas & Haddock 2003, p.66). The rise of technology has led to an area where boys are presumed to know more (Anderson et al. 2008; Connell 2006b; Denner et al. 2014; Meelissen & Drent 2008), and therefore are more likely to be called on, or to offer to assist. Consequently, teacher requests for assistance and student offers to help were also observed to further develop the description of the schools' gender regimes in relation to production relations. Given the central divisions in production relations, teachers might have been expected to ask girls for assistance more often than boys, and girls to offer assistance more often, except when technology was involved or physical work, such as moving furniture or boxes.

Across the three schools the most striking observation was the small number of students helping out. Teachers only occasionally asked students for assistance. For example, at Melville College, in the more than 100 classes observed only six requests for assistance were recorded. Across the schools there was only one instance of a student being asked to assist with heavy work, when a female teacher at Treetops College asked two senior boys to carry heavy boxes. Although this does fit the expected pattern, a single instance can tell us very little.

Most teacher requests for assistance involved asking a student or students to take a message or collect teaching materials from, for example, the library. These are tasks that do not need specific skills or strength. The analysis of requests for this general type of assistance found that at Treetops College and Melville College the ratio of requests to girls and to boys reflected the ratio of girls to boys in the school. However, at All Saints College teachers were more likely to turn to boys than girls for this assistance. It was also at All Saints College that there were two instances of teachers seeking assistance with technology and in both cases they looked to boys. However, in one class when a teacher was setting up a slide projector and said, 'It'll take me a few minutes to set up the projector, unless a boy wants to help' it was a girl who came to her assistance.

Similarly, the number of observations of offers to assist were small. At Treetops College offers of assistance from girls and boys reflected their numbers in the school, although the one instance of offering to help with technology was from two boys. At Melville College almost all of the observations involved boys offering to tidy up or fetch and carry. The one exception was when a teacher made a general request that the class pick up rubbish and only a group of girls responded. There was a different atmosphere at All Saint College, where students were more likely to provide assistance voluntarily to teachers than at the other two schools. As was the case with teacher requests, it was boys who were more likely to be the ones offering to help.

The most striking aspect of this data is that teachers rarely requested assistance and students were equally unlikely to offer. Nevertheless, although there was only a small number of instances of helping behaviour noted, they did not suggest that girls in these coeducational classrooms were expected to undertake the 'domestic' work, fetching and carrying or tidying up after boys. Nor was there any evidence that girls were expected to help out in ways that teachers would 'not bother the boys with' (Cruddas & Haddock 2003, p.66). Indeed, the pattern identified in the literature of girls in

coeducational settings being called on to help teachers by running errands, cleaning and tidying, and smoothing the way for boys was turned on its head. Students in these schools did not conform to these predicted roles, in fact it was boys who were more likely to be called on to run errands or to offer to assist teachers, troubling the expected stereotypes. In this domain of school life, the gendered dimension of production relations appeared to be being undermined.

Conclusion

Connell's (2009) formulation of a relational theory of gender identifies four dimensions of gender. This chapter has focused on the second of these dimensions, relations of production. A range of activities were linked to this dimension of gender relations, including staff roles and responsibilities, students' subject choice, students' participation in co-curricular activities and students helping out.

Across the three schools, analysis of staff roles and responsibilities revealed a tendency for women in leadership positions to be responsible for areas traditionally linked to women's work – for example, the education of younger children in junior secondary, rather than older students in senior secondary. On the other hand, at all three schools the pastoral care programs disrupted the nexus between women and caring for students. Finally, analysis of academic leadership in gender-coded curriculum areas revealed differences between the schools: at Treetops College women were underrepresented in these positions and restricted to leading curriculum areas with links to the female sphere; at Melville College women actually outnumbered men in these positions, but were still more likely to be responsible for female-coded curriculum areas; while at All Saints College the pattern of women being responsible for female-coded curriculum areas and men being responsible for male-coded curriculum areas was not evident.

Analysis of subject choices revealed that Melville College students were most likely to enrol in subjects that reflected conservative gender choices while at Treetops College although the boys had retreated to male-coded subjects, some girls had moved into male-coded subjects. All Saints College had the most subjects where trends evident in statewide data were reversed, with both girls and boys making non-stereotypical subject choices in greater numbers than at the other two schools.

Each of the schools offered a wide range of co-curricular activities, which were identified as an important part of these schools' appeal to middle-class families. It was here, in the profile of the various co-curricular programs, that the starkest differences were observed. At Melville College sport was the pre-eminent co-curricular program, linked to its history as an elite boys' school, and the evidence suggested valorisation of hegemonic masculinity. At the other schools, sport was one of a range of co-curricular programs. Extensive outdoor education programs provided an alternative to sport, and drew strongly on the female aspects of production relations, including cooperation, collaboration and care of the land. The performing arts involved very large numbers of students at all three schools; nevertheless at Melville College music and drama co-curricular activities were completely overshadowed by sport in the public life of the school. This was in contrast to Treetops College and All Saints College where performing arts programs were prominent. However, it was All Saints College's co-curriculum program that had the greatest potential to disrupt traditional gender arrangements given the number of boys participating in the performing arts and the depth of the outdoor education program.

The final area of school life reviewed in relation to production relations was student helping behaviour. The surprising finding was that across the more than three hundred classes observed there were only a small number of instances of helping observed, and there was no evidence of girls being expected to or offering to undertake small domestic tasks; in fact there was a tendency for boys to help out.

In each school, the traditional gender positioning of production relations were reinscribed by some components of the school program and challenged by others. In relation to parents' fears, at none of the schools were girls observed to be the ones undertaking the 'domestic' tasks, nor had girls withdrawn from masculine subjects in greater numbers than in the baseline state data. Again, the data from this study do not match the negative picture reflected in parental concerns regarding girls in coeducational settings. However, there were differences between schools in gender patterns in these activities linked to production relations. In this domain it was at All Saints College that the challenges to traditional gender arrangements were most consistent.

CHAPTER 6

EMOTIONAL RELATIONS

The third dimension of gender relations is *emotional relations*. According to Raewyn Connell (2006b), although common sense suggests that emotions ‘belong in the private realm ... [t]here is abundant evidence ... that emotions and emotional relationships are a significant part of organisational life’ (p.843). Wherever people are in contact and communication with each other there are emotional relationships – in families, clubs and organisations, workplaces and of course schools. Emotional relations are not located outside of or separate from the other dimensions of gender relations but are linked to and inform each of the other dimensions.

The focus in this chapter is on emotions and relationships: how emotions are linked to either the female or male sphere, and whether relationships, positive or negative, are organised along gender lines (Connell 2009). In this chapter the climate of each school will be analysed to determine how it framed organisational life, then gender alignments evident in students’ social relationships will be examined, including patterns of interaction between students, their positive relationships of friendship and romance, and negative relationships where aggression or ill-feeling could be detected. As in previous chapters the focus of this analysis is on identifying tensions in the traditional gender hierarchies and the positioning of girls: are they equal or subordinate members of the school community?

School climate

The term ‘school climate’ has been widely used for more than a century, yet there is still ‘not one universally agreed-upon definition’ (Cohen et al. 2009, p.182, see also Caldarella 2011; Kim et al. 2014; Yang et al. 2013; You,

O'Malley & Furlong 2014). Furthermore, there is significant overlap between the various definitions of school climate and a range of other terms used in the literature, such as school culture, school ethos (Aldridge & Ala'l 2013), school environment and school ecology (Waters, Cross & Shaw 2010), with 'no consensus' about how these terms relate to one another (Aldridge & Ala'l 2013, p.47). Despite this lack of consistency these terms and definitions share the idea that schools are 'complex institutions' that are 'distinctive mini-societies' (Brady 2008, p.1), and that school climate is a multi-dimensional construct (see, for example, Caldarella 2011; Cohen et al. 2009; Collie, Shapka & Perry 2012; Levitch et al. 2008; Waters, Cross & Shaw 2010). Although most writers acknowledge that school climate reflects wide-ranging influences, which include 'tangible ... and intangible resources' (Levitch et al. 2008, p.79), there is little consistency regarding which characteristics or dimensions contribute to school climate (Caldarella 2011; Yang et al. 2013). Different authors use various combinations of facilities and physical resources, organisational structures, relationships between members of the school community and shared understandings (beliefs, attitudes, values). Many of these dimensions have been described and analysed in other chapters in this thesis. The snapshots of the schools in Chapter 1 included brief descriptions of the schools' physical resources, Chapter 4 – Power Relations and Chapter 5 – Production Relations both included discussion of the organisational arrangements and the relationships between members of the school community.

In a review of the school climate literature Jonathan Cohen and colleagues (2009) argue, 'school climate refers to the quality and character of school life' (p.182). In trying to capture this many authors have focused on the more 'intangible' aspects of school life reflected in shared beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, expectations and rituals, ceremonies, myths and traditions (Aldridge & Ala'l 2013; Brady 2008; Keiser & Schulte 2009; Levitch et al. 2008; Waters, Cross & Runions 2009). As intangible as these may be, Patrick Brady (2008) argues they have a 'profound effect' on students and staff (p.1), shaping 'the ways people, think, act, and feel' (Deal and Peterson cited in Brady 2008,

p.3). This reference to how people feel makes clear the link between school climate and emotional relations.

These intangible aspects of school climate are present in school publications, organisational and structural priorities, and the way staff and students talk about their school and the characteristics they draw attention to, both in public forums and private conversations. Although the three schools in this study were all elite independent coeducational schools in metropolitan Melbourne, they had distinctly different school climates.

Treetops College

Treetops College prided itself on its culture of caring, with the phrase ‘in an environment of care’ appearing in the Mission Statement, and ‘central to all that we do is care’ one of the catchphrases used in school advertising. These statements provide a starting point for assessing the emotional tone of the school, or school climate. A number of organisational structures were intended to promote this culture of care: the PeaceBuilders program, a student counsellor, year level coordinators and a pastoral program underpinned by mentor groups at each year level. These programs were overseen by the Student Services Facilitator, a senior staff member on the School Executive, who took responsibility for ‘the environment of care’ in the school. As discussed previously in relation to the production relations of gender, the work of caring is linked to the female sphere and at Treetops College women staff members had responsibility for school level structures promoting this culture of care. However, as also discussed in Chapter 5 – Production Relations, at the level of mentor groups and year level coordinators, men and women shared responsibility for the ‘environment of care’.

Year level coordinators and mentors were responsible for the care of the students assigned to them. In Years 7 to 9 mentors met with their mentor group on a daily basis for a one-hour session, called ‘care time’, and were

expected to monitor individual students' wellbeing. In senior years mentor groups were timetabled less frequently and students were encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves. Despite this reduction in formally timetabled mentor group meetings, students still identified strongly with their mentor.

The PeaceBuilders program had a high profile at Treetops College. According to the school diary, the program, developed in the USA, aimed to 'create an environment that establishes more peaceful ways of living in our school and wider community, and that reduces potential anti-social behaviour'. The activities conducted under the auspices of the program aimed to promote a culture of collaboration and cooperation and provide alternative approaches to conflict resolution. They included cross-age mentoring, peer mediation and friendship week. This program placed a premium on communication and interpersonal skills as an alternative to aggression and assertion of rights based on strength or size. Consequently, the program promoted an approach with strong links to the female sphere and tended to undermine hegemonic masculinity.

This focus on caring and the associated organisational structures saw male and female members of staff working alongside each other across a wide range of school activities. As discussed in the chapters on relations of power and relations of production, although men were more likely to be in positions of leadership neither males nor females were strongly concentrated within disciplines or other organisational groupings. Furthermore, probably because of the emotional tone of the school, there were very few male members of staff who embodied hegemonic masculinity. These factors combined to contribute to Treetops College being a depolarised workplace, 'in which relations between men and women were not emotionally polarized (i.e., attachments and antagonisms did not follow gender lines)' (Connell 2006b, p.844).

Treetops College placed care at the centre of the narrative it presented in

official school documentation. Organisational structures and programs with an emphasis on care, collaboration and cooperation supported this narrative. These combine to promote a school climate with traditional female or feminine qualities, and a move away from the hierarchies associated with hegemonic masculinity.

Melville College

If there is one central idea around which Melville College had built its official story it was that it prided itself on a strong tradition of being untraditional. The school motto was 'Dare to be Wise'. Wisdom may be a traditional virtue, but the use of 'dare' implies going against the mainstream. The catchphrase on many of the College's advertisements and promotional materials was 'Great minds think differently'. This celebration of difference was evident in a promotional Video/CD-ROM distributed with the school prospectus; less than one minute into the video a female student talks about the history of the school, saying '[Melville] was founded in 1866 ... even back then [Melville] encouraged free thinkers, it wasn't as rigid as most schools and it's kept that ethos today'.

These themes were evident in a range of promotional materials. On the website, for example, the principal told readers that, 'The blend of innovation with tradition, of freedom with self-discipline, of formal learning with creativity, of balance and breadth with specialisation characterise the [Melville] experience'. The central theme here, of bringing together apparently contradictory ideas, was also evident in school advertisements, which used elements of light-hearted surprise to engage viewers and readers. In one advertisement two apparently incompatible ideas were juxtaposed, the words *We only accept two kinds of students* set alongside the male and female symbols: the words suggesting tight limits – only two types of students – but the male and female symbols opening acceptance to everyone. Similarly the prospectus used surprise and intrigue to engage its audience. Neither the school name nor photos of the school or students appeared on its cover. In

fact there was nothing to identify it as a school-related document at all. The cover was very simple – on a plain background in the basic school colour was pinned a very large badge, in the school colours, which said, ‘I know where I’m going’. When the badge was removed, and presumably pinned to the prospective student, the name of the school was revealed.

In interviews with staff there were regular references to this ethos of a freethinking and less rule-bound school environment. A senior member of the campus executive who had been at the school for several decades described the Melville College approach as: ‘Probably a bit more rat-baggy, less authoritarian, a bit more left-wing, ...[students have] a strong sense of their rights’. A senior staff member from one of the other campuses picked up on this when comparing campuses. At this campus, he explained, ‘some things are hot, for example, they [the parents] *don’t like compulsion*, so compulsory sport is an issue’ (emphasis added). Another long-serving staff member declared that ‘[Melville] is exciting because people do stand up for what they think, there is very little attempt to pull them into line’.

The Year 10 boys also picked up this theme: ‘Like this is good about [Melville] here. It’s not really embedded in its tradition ... Like if you send your kids here, it’s like specifically cause it doesn’t have a traditional approach, cause its like a more alternative school’. The girls, interestingly, identified a conflict between this emphasis on individuality and the need to present a ‘good public image’: ‘Have you seen those billboards ... saying how individual the school [Melville] is ... At the same time they’re kind of trying to present us to the community as being this ... clump of people who all look exactly the same and that kind of defeats the purpose of what they’re trying to sell’. The students were clearly aware of and had bought into this narrative of the ‘untraditional traditional school’, at least to some degree.

Staff also appeared to value this approach for not being ‘quite as strict’ and focusing on ‘good relationships between teachers and students’. They had apparently resisted a move to get tougher on student transgressions around

uniforms, smoking and so forth on the basis that their relationships with the students were the priority, with an emphasis on developing students' independence. Students at this campus were described as 'more street-smart – bohemian', 'more worldly wise, given more freedom, public transport, [a] higher degree of independence'. Some staff drew particular attention to the girls' characteristics: 'savvy, streetwise', 'stronger, more affirmative, tougher, brasher' and 'lording it over' girls from the other campuses.

Alongside the official identification with the school's tradition of being untraditional, there was ongoing discussion among staff as to whether the school was still a masculine institution, after more than 20 years as a coeducational school. One aspect of this concern related to the school's physical spaces and their character, which were described by one senior staff member as the smokers/boardroom look: brown, timber, leather, old photos. There was a clear plan to change this, and, as another staff member explained, to 'feminise' spaces. Despite there appearing to be a consensus on this, there was a complication. Staff reported that changes would need to be undertaken carefully to ensure the Alumni Association, a major source of fund-raising and consequently power within the school, was not offended. The potential for offence appeared to be linked to the profile of the Association's executive group – eight of the eleven members left the school prior to it becoming coeducational, in 1978 – and it seemed this group were still attached to the boys school they had once known.

Where discussion became heated was around the style of leadership and interaction within the staff group. Many staff members described the school as having a 'blokey' culture. This term had been identified in a staff survey conducted four years earlier and apparently there had been mixed reactions to the concerns raised in this process. Nevertheless, the term had passed into the staff vocabulary and was often used in interviews in this study. When asked about the blokey culture, interviewees emphasised different aspects of it. It appeared to be shorthand for hegemonic masculinity: a culture that was decisive and action-oriented, in which sport and male camaraderie were

valorised. One staff member reported that 'warmth and discussing the complexity of life are seen as weaknesses'. In discussions the principal expressed the opinion that 'the gender problems are in relation to the staff, not the students' and acknowledged that there were 'clear antagonisms within the staff group' because of differing worldviews.

The men in senior positions at this campus were identified by some members of staff as embodying the 'blokey' culture described above; they were accused of not liking women and not listening to them. However, there were other staff members, including women, who thought such criticisms unwarranted. One woman argued that it was the 'girls whinging, [and that] Greg is fabulous, Mark is fabulous, Tom is fabulous ...' Another woman, in a senior leadership position and a member of the campus executive, reported that the management group was 'constantly aware of gender issues' and the campus principal was 'very aware of feminising space, having gender balance on interview panels' and generally 'looking after the girls'.

Several staff members had a different take on the 'blokey' culture, arguing that it was not simply a male-female divide. A long-standing female staff member described it as 'Not so much masculine as go-getting, assertive, individual' and thought that it 'might suit more men than women'. She lamented that 'At [Melville College] there doesn't seem to be time to reflect'. A senior staff member based at one of the other campuses explained: 'There have been women in senior positions, but they have tended to be comfortable with the "blokes"'. He went on to unpack this culture as follows:

'Blokey' refers to the typical 'Ozzie' male – strong interest in sport, enjoys male company, enjoys a drink at the pub, intellectually is pro-feminist, but not sure how to deal with women – not an antagonism, but regards them as from another world, doesn't know them as people. There are women who are 'blokey', but they are NOT masculine. Perhaps we should call it 'okey'. It is a mindset, someone who doesn't think reflectively; non-reflective is the primary characteristic: 'Okeys' celebrate getting on with things. 'Non-okeys' celebrate a more reflective approach.

With this understanding in mind, perhaps the women who defended the senior male staff fitted this gender-free definition of 'okeys'. They were comfortable with the blokes and may have shared their mindset, and like them celebrated 'getting on with things'. This was the one school where there seemed to be gender-based allegiances between members of staff – with groups of male teachers coming together around sport, and many, but not all, women coming together in criticism of what they saw as a dominant masculine school culture.

These two elements – a determination to be unconventional and the blokey or okey approach to getting things done – shaped the school climate. In identifying with these characterisations, Melville College staff and students were staking a claim to the school not being a traditional stiff upper lip, rule-bound, well-behaved public school. They would be noticed, they were different, they would get things done: these were no shrinking violets. The school climate here – with its assertive, individualistic and unreflective characteristics – appeared to have stronger links to the traditional male domain than the female domain.

All Saints College

At All Saints College, according to the prospectus, the key values were diversity, innovation, individuality, inclusivity and uniqueness. 'Diversity opens minds' was the catchphrase in advertisements and promotional materials. As described in Chapter 1, the school was founded by a group of religious women and, according to the prospectus, the school 'proudly continues the traditions established by the Sisters of the Church so long ago'. These traditions were evident in the daily life of the school. The school motto was *Pro Ecclesia Dei* – For the Church of God. The school employed three chaplains, but no secular student counsellors. School services were often held in the Anglican church across the road from the school and the school chapel was open at all times for private prayer. A weekly Eucharist service was held during one of the home-room periods. Attendance was voluntary,

but teachers were not allowed to timetable any competing activities during this time. Finally, the Sisters were regularly referenced in school publications and events. The school chaplain described the founding nuns as ‘lunatic’ women, who were ‘gutsy’, with a ‘great social conscience’. It may be this great social conscience that provided the bridge between these two foundational ideals: diversity and adherence to strong Anglican traditions. A section of the prospectus titled ‘Spiritual Life at [All Saints College]’ carried statements like: ‘Christian faith impacts on all we do’ and ‘[All Saints College] is also multi-faith’, concluding:

we walk that narrow path between the strength of a long and bold tradition inherited from the courageous women who founded the school, and the desire to respect freedom of choice, diversity of approach and differences in values and beliefs. We strive to work from the most conservative of foundations towards the most individual, inclusive and coherent of spiritual outcomes.

In an interview, the principal said that parents who chose the school for their children identified with these values. He described the parent group as mainly professionals, doctors and those involved in media and entertainment, who tended to be ‘left-leaning, slightly down at heel, slightly daggy’. He contrasted these parents with the leaders of the business community who chose other nearby schools. He argued that the focus at All Saints College was on developing contributing citizens rather than future leaders, and reported that the parents of girls at his school were looking to ‘girls being able to live as equals’, while boys’ parents were ‘avoiding single-sex brutalising’. It seemed the principal and the parents he described did not see hegemonic masculinity as having a place at this school.

This was evident in conversations with other staff members. The Director of Admissions talked about the school providing a rounded education, where academic work, sport, the arts and outdoor education were given equal weight. As reported earlier, she believed that for many parents the fact that sport did not dominate the life of the school was a key factor and that this ‘affects the type of boys who come, they are not elite sportsmen’. She reported ‘the girls tend to be strong characters, whereas the boys tend to be

more sensitive'. The Head of the Upper School, who had previously worked in both the state and Catholic systems, described All Saints as 'one of the most gentle schools'.

Similarly, students describing the culture of the school reported that 'there's hardly any bullying here', and:

this is where our school is pretty good. I reckon we don't have much terrible things that occur. Like some places [naming two other schools, including Melville College]. I mean things are so terrible at those other schools I couldn't imagine going to school in those kind of places and I think [All Saints] really has a good record ... things are just pretty normal. You don't have fights every day. People don't go around vandalising stuff, kicking in stuff, kicking doors over and stuff.

As was the case at Treetops College, for staff, gender was not a strong organiser within the workplace. There were no concentrations of male or female staff in the formal organisational structure nor did there appear to be any informal groupings with strong gender links or characteristics, with very few male staff members embodying hegemonic masculinity.

The continuing central role of religious faith in the life of All Saints College, combined with a strong commitment to diversity and inclusivity, seemed to have shaped the school climate as a gentle, safe space for sensitive boys, free of bullying. The principal was pleased to appoint women to senior positions and described his own style of leadership as distributive, consultative and feminised, and reflective practice as his preferred approach. All Saints College was the school that placed the lowest value on hegemonic masculinity, instead celebrating approaches and values with strong links to the feminine sphere.

The three schools shared similar demographic features, but the defining values they identified with were different, which, I would argue, led to markedly different school climates. These varied school climates were the result of a complex mix of history, official discourses and relationships between staff, students and families. In the case of the two older schools,

Melville College and All Saints College, these differences can be linked to their historical foundations and traditions. Such links are not static, however. Staff, students and families choose a school (or are chosen by the school), at least in part on the basis of a perceived match between the school's values and those of the individual or family. Consequently, new members of the school community are likely to reinforce the values already articulated by the school.

Gender and students' social relationships

Schools and the relationships that students form there are central in the life of children and young people (Faircloth & Hamm 2011; Hutman et al. 2012), with these relationships assuming increased importance in adolescence (Huntley & Owens 2013; Irwin 2013; Lynch, Lerner & Leventhal 2013; Rowsell et al. 2014; Sijtsema, Rambaran & Ojanen 2013; Webber & Walton 2006). According to Alicia Lynch, Richard Lerner and Tama Leventhal (2013), one of the major transitions that occurs during this period is

a shift towards utilizing peers, rather than parents and family, as the primary source of social interaction (Brown 1990; Brown and Larson 2009). As such, during adolescence, peers begin to exert a new level of influence on a young person's behavior and development. (p.6)

Australian researchers Claire Rowsell and colleagues (2014) argue that as young people start spending more time in peer groups, the relationships become closer and these friendships become increasingly important. Maria Papapolydorou (2014) agrees, suggesting that 'students' friendships are important spaces' (p.575). As a result, peer groups are a 'vital component' (Brady 2004) of life in secondary schools.

In a school setting, peer groups draw together students with shared interests or values who feel comfortable in each others' company (Sijtsema, Rambaran & Ojanen 2013; Webber & Walton 2006). Members of the peer

group identify with each other and draw distinctions between themselves and other groups (Brady 2004). Furthermore, over time peer group members become more similar to each other (Lynch, Lerner & Leventhal 2013; Sijtsema, Rambaran & Ojanen 2013). A number of researchers report significant gender differences in peer relationships, with 'females emphasizing talking and emotional sharing, whereas males emphasize engagement in active and structured activities' (Rowse et al. 2014, p.107, see also Hutman et al. 2012). These differences reflect traditional gender stereotypes, with males aligned with agentic or instrumental behaviour and females aligned with communal or expressive behaviour (Archer 2004). In line with these stereotypes some boys report that they 'never, ever talk about their feelings' (Dmytro et al. 2013, p.370). It is not surprising, then, that some researchers have found that boys do not develop as many close relationships as girls (Hutman et al. 2012). However, there are other reports that boys value trust and loyalty in their friends and that close relationships are important to them (Hutman et al. 2012; Irwin 2013). There is potential here for boys to experience tension between a desire for close relationships and society's expectations of the independent, stoic male.

Beverley Faircloth and Jill Hamm (2011) argue that peer groups are 'inherently unstable' (p.50) and describe a process of 'degrouching' that occurs during adolescence as students move into 'multiple peer networks with more permeable boundaries' (p.52). They describe students who regard the ability to '*float*, that is, to belong to multiple networks simultaneously' (p.52), as important to their sense of comfort and belonging. The complexity of these social networks has been identified by other researchers. Brenda Newman and colleagues (2007) describe the 'complex social environment populated by many friendship groups, cliques and crowds' inhabited by adolescents and identify how adolescents regularly spend a lot of time 'tending' these relationships. The time invested in these relationships is consistent with the repeated finding that peer relationships and sense of belonging are important to this age group (Faircloth & Hamm 2011; Hutman et al. 2012; Luft, Jenkins & Cameron 2012; Mrug, Borch & Cillessen 2011;

Rowse et al. 2014) since they are central to 'sustaining well being in the expanding social world of adolescence' (Newman, Lohman & Newman 2007, p.245).

The students at the centre of this study were in Years 8 to 11, with ages ranging from 12 to 18. Despite the differences in school climates identified above, there were a great many similarities across the schools in how students related to each other. The analysis undertaken here focuses on the patterns of relationships between girls and boys across the four year levels at each of the schools. It includes friendships and romantic relationships; the ways in which the students intervened in negative interactions amongst peers; and students' reflections on these relationships.

At all three schools students were observed working and socialising in mixed groups. When describing the interactions and relationships between students, both staff and students focused on friendships, saying that students developed many strong friendships with girls and boys, but that romance at school was much less common. There was also evidence that girls and boys had a moderating influence on each other's negative behaviours, with girls acting to break up physical fights amongst boys and boys stepping in to support girls who were the victims of indirect aggression from other girls. Students at all three schools described themselves as lucky to have these experiences and opportunities, which they believed would equip them for life in the 'real world'.

The gender divide – permeable or not?

As noted above peer group relationships become increasingly important as students enter adolescence. Prior to adolescence children's friendships tend to 'show marked divisions along gender lines' (Morrow, 2006, p.95, see also Faris & Felmlee 2011). What is of interest here is whether gender continues to be a key organising factor in adolescent peer groups in the three case-study schools. Much contemporary research on adolescent peer groups

focuses on boys' groups and girls' groups (for example Dmytro et al. 2013; Hutman et al. 2012; Irwin 2013; Luft, Jenkins & Cameron 2012), but very little research reports on relationships within mixed peer groups, which were common in these schools.

High levels of cooperative and collaborative behaviour, including a good deal of physical affection, were observed across the four year levels followed at Melville College and All Saints College. Students worked and played together, and were regularly observed laughing, joking and sharing affectionate physical contact in mixed groups. Heidi Hutman and colleagues (2012) identify humour, physical proximity and touching as some of the key indicators of the closeness of relationships. The regular presence of these behaviours amongst the students was taken as evidence of close relationships existing across the gender divide. At Treetops College the style of interaction between girls and boys varied systematically according to year levels, with interactions similar to those at the other two schools amongst senior students and less interaction between girls and boys at junior levels.

Classroom seating arrangements at Melville College and All Saints College were not organised by gender. The most common pattern was for students to arrive individually or in small groups, some mixed and some single sex. Students settled into desks with apparently no regard to the gender of their neighbours. Even in classes where boys far outnumbered girls, the few girls would be dotted amongst the boys. Girls and boys worked together, helped each other and cooperated in other ways such as borrowing equipment and rearranging furniture. They would chat with girls and boys from their seats and as they moved around the classroom. Students in these classes appeared very comfortable in their interactions with both girls and boys.

Beyond the classroom the tone of social interactions was very similar. During lunchtimes and recess most students would 'hang-out' in smallish groups of three to eight students. The group would sit and chat, play low-key informal ball games such as four-square, or wander the yard chatting, regularly

merging with other small groups, often forming mixed groups, and then separating. In the past, this style of interaction was associated with girls, while boys were observed playing sport (Fairclough, Butcher & Stratton 2008; Hobin et al. 2012; Pearce & Bailey 2011, p.1372; Woods, Graber & Daum 2012). However, as discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to power relations, at these schools boys were much more likely to spend their free time hanging out with friends than on the sports fields.

At Treetops College, on the other hand, the degree to which gender acted as an organiser of students interactions varied according to age group. In the youngest group of students observed – Year 8 – there was a distinct gender divide. As they moved through the year levels, however, there was a trend towards more mixing. The style of cross-gender interaction observed in the more senior classes was very similar to that observed at the other two schools.

In the Year 8 class there were no observations of girls and boys arriving for a class together or sitting down together. It was quite common for the girls to sit on one side of the room and the boys on the other (11 out of 34 classes) and this pattern was observed across a range of subjects and in rooms with different physical characteristics and layouts. One consequence of this seating arrangement was that occasionally a student would get stranded in the ‘wrong’ part of the room. If caught in this predicament they would look embarrassed or frustrated in a way that was not observed in later years at Treetops College, or at either of the other schools. In the remaining Year 8 classes, the pattern tended to be smaller single-sex groups, interspersed. In classes where this more relaxed seating pattern had been established, arriving late seemed to be less problematic, even if this meant taking the last available seat and sitting next to someone of the other gender. Regardless of the seating arrangement, in classes where students were able to move around during class there was some visiting between groups, and between girls and boys. When talking to the Year 8 girls about the process of selecting a space in the classroom, they explained, ‘we go in and put our books down

... just seems like a *natural instinct* to [sit with] the boys if you're a boy and the girls if you're a girl ... but then we kind of like mingle during class' (emphasis added). At this year level it 'seems like a natural instinct' to sit with others of your gender. Even the most consistent 'minglers' would start from a seat with others of the same gender. It was also noticeable that in situations where individuals did not have to commit themselves to a seating position, for example, when gathered around a demonstration or waiting in a line for PE, there appeared to be a much greater degree of intermingling.

The following year, when these students were in Year 9, different patterns of interaction emerged. There were no instances of hard segregation observed and consequently no instances of students getting stranded on the wrong side of the divide and becoming uncomfortable or embarrassed as a consequence. The most common pattern in classrooms was of interspersed clusters of girls and boys and there were many instances of mixed groups arriving at classes and sitting down together. Girls and boys were often observed working together or consulting with each other. The Year 9 coordinator captured these changes from Year 8 patterns when she said, 'the segregation dissolves very quickly in Year 9'.

In the Year 10 and 11 classes at Treetops College the interspersed seating patterns were well established and there seemed to be significantly more interaction between girls and boys. These seating patterns led to more free-flowing conversations between girls and boys, with jokes and laughter often spilling from one group to the next. The structure of the timetable in Year 10 meant that students rarely moved from class to class as a group, so each class required a different negotiation of the social network on the part of the students attending. Despite this there were no observations of students who looked as if they felt uncomfortable about taking an available seat. This was indicative of a very different climate compared to the Year 8 class. At the school this transition was linked to the maturation of the students and accepted as a natural progression.

In the student groups at all three schools where the gender divide had dissolved, there was also a lot of physical contact, amongst the girls and between girls and boys. Generally it was affectionate, with students placing their hands on each other's arms and shoulders, leaning on or cuddling up to each other, linking arms, playing with each other's hair, tickling their friends, sitting on each other's laps, putting their arms around each other, and greeting and farewelling each other with hugs and kisses on the cheek. On some occasions this physical contact flowed into mock fighting and chasing. Most of this interaction was light-hearted and it seemed in the vast majority of cases that the students involved were 'just friends'. The physical contact between boys was generally of a more robust nature, with some man hugs and backslapping and plenty of mock fighting and chasing. Gentle physicality between boys was not impossible, but it was rare. One such example was at a house meeting where a boy sitting on the tiered benches was leaning back between the legs of the boy on the level behind him, who was leaning forward resting his arms on the first boy's shoulders.

In her work exploring gender regimes in organisations, Connell (2006b) describes *depolarised workplaces* as those in which 'attachments and antagonisms did not follow gender lines' (p.844). One way of thinking about the emotional relations dimension of gender at Treetops College is that in the early years of secondary school gender relationships tend to be polarised, with girls and boys having only limited contact across the gender divide, but that as they move into higher year levels there is a significant depolarisation of these relationships. In this framework the relationships between students across the four year levels at Melville College and All Saints College tended to be depolarised. Connell (2006b) describes the relationships in the depolarised workplaces she studied as 'low key and easy-going' and having a 'cool tone ... [with] less strong bonding' (p.844). The relationships observed at the three schools were depolarised to the extent that gender was not a strong organiser of relationships. In many ways, they were low key and easy-going, but in contrast to Connell's description they reflected a great deal of

warmth and strong bonding between students – of the same gender and across the gender divide.

Friendships and romance

Relationships across the gender divide at these schools could either be platonic or romantic, and these students, like others described in the research literature, ‘conceptualize other-sex friendships as clearly distinct from romantic relationships’ (Mrug, Borch & Cillessen 2011, p.876). The students in these schools talked about boy (pause) friends and girl (pause) friends or boyfriends and girlfriends.

The friendships that developed across the gender divide were commented on and valued by the students. At All Saints College a group of Year 10 girls and boys were already feeling sentimental about leaving school, which quickly led them to a discussion of friendships between girls and boys: ‘And there’s heaps ... like with co-eds there’s heaps of people whose, like their best friends are guys or like girls. Their best friends are the opposite sex, which I find really interesting and fun ... Soulmates’. The same theme was repeated by the girls at Treetops College: ‘I have to admit it’s just like you can be like best friends with a guy. Everyone is not like wow, they must be going out. Do you know what I mean?’ These students also appreciated the opportunity to develop friendships that were ‘deeper’ and not part of the ‘rating and dating’ scene. In a group of boys at Melville College one boy explained: ‘I don’t really know anyone else outside of school. And I mean it’s probably the best way because you can actually meet and know these people and sort of get a deeper sort of connection with them instead of like walking up to a party and going out with them’. One Year 10 girl at Treetops College explained: ‘Cause if you know a guy really well they kind of turn into like a girl ... But like the same relationship, you can talk to them about anything’. Another Year 10 girl pointed out that having friends who were boys meant ‘you can talk to them. If you have a problem they can tell you about the guy side’. Back at All Saints College, the girls agreed that, ‘If it’s just two, a guy and a girl, then it’s

deep and meaningful ... But if it's a group of people you just talk general stuff'. When asked whether they preferred sitting around in groups with all girls/all boys or in mixed groups everybody agreed: 'Mixed ... Yeah. You can joke around. You can feel free to talk about whatever you want ... it's, you know, seem to talk about more things when it's mixed ... a bigger range'.

Staff at each of the schools also valued these cross-gender friendships, which the Deputy Head at All Saints College described as 'natural'. Staff at Melville College commented that the students were 'very comfortable with each other', citing in support the popularity of hugging amongst both girls and boys. Staff at all three schools talked about the students 'working well together', 'helping each other', 'appreciating each other' and 'seeing each other as individuals, not boys and girls'. One senior teacher at All Saints College, who had come from a single-sex school, was 'surprised by their friendships', saying she 'loved their openness with each other'. A consistent theme of staff when describing the relationships between students was that of mateship. At All Saints College, students were described as 'good mates ... their relationships are the key ... they help each other'. At Melville College senior staff took up the same theme, where students were seen as 'Mature, relaxed, great mates with each other' and the school was seen to 'do it well':

Socially it works particularly well here – not seething with teenage relationships, but a lot of kids have a lot of good mates ... boys and girls are very supportive of each other, with school work and emotional crises, there is a lot of care and concern shown by boys to girls, girls to boys.

These friendships between girls and boys could be strong and close. There was a popular anecdote at Melville College about the wedding of an ex-student. The ex-student, a girl, included her best friend from school, a boy, as one of her 'bridesmaids' in her wedding party.

Despite these close friendships there were very few examples of romantic or couple behaviour. The fieldwork extended over more than 50 days in each school, but there were only two observations of students in clinches away from the milling crowds, both at Treetops College. Repeatedly, students

reported very low levels of boyfriend/girlfriend relationships within their year level, with comments such as, 'I can only think of one ... maybe two', 'a couple', 'not many now', 'usually three or four couples' or even none, 'not at the moment, no I don't think so'. In each case they were basing their comments on a year level of 150 to 200 students. Students were quick to talk about friendships within their year level: 'I think everyone in our year sort of all have this ... between boys and girls, a platonic relationship I think' and 'I think our year level is just mostly just friends'.

In addition to the low level of romantic involvement at school, those who were officially going out with someone from school appeared to intentionally keep it very low key at school. The couples that were identified were often not visible to an outside observer. Because there was generally a lot of affectionate physical behaviour between students, seeing a boy and girl hugging or wandering off to class arm-in-arm was no guarantee that they were 'an item', and the official couples tended to be no more overtly affectionate towards each other than many others in their peer group. Despite following the Year 8 class at Melville College for several weeks and sitting in on more than 30 classes, I was completely unaware, until students told me, that two of the students were a couple. This particular couple had been together for more than six months – a very long time in Year 8 – and their classmates agreed that they were very discreet when at school. In similar vein, the Year 10 students were very surprised that I had figured out the only couple in their midst, given that although they spent a lot of time together, they were not inclined to obvious displays of affection and were generally discreet. Even the students acknowledged that there were sometimes couples at school that they were unaware of: 'Sometimes you'll find out and you're like, but I never see them together and they're never hugging or anything ... Like it surprised you'. It was also clear that at these coeducational schools there was less pressure to have a partner to take to the school formal or dance. A significant proportion of the students went with groups of friends or 'just rolled up', an unlikely scenario at an all-boys or all-girls school.

There was general agreement amongst students that most people preferred to keep their romantic life, if they had one, separate from school: 'a lot of people sort of stick to people out of school cause they don't want their relationship going on in school'. Some students felt very strongly about this: 'like I hate going out with people from school'. Even by Year 8 students were beginning to think that having romantic relationships at school was fraught and choosing girlfriends/boyfriends from other schools had advantages. The advantages they identified were similar to those expounded by students across the year levels at the other schools, that:

- there's more choice
- you don't have to hang out with them all the time
- people don't talk about you and everything you do ...
You're like the new gossip
- if you break up then you don't have to see them every day.

Staff also commented on this preference for friendship over romantic involvement and argued that it led to very different attitudes to relationships. A senior staff member at All Saints College felt that the girls there were not as 'frenzied' as girls at girls schools, while at Melville College the acting principal commented that when he had moved to the school from an all-girls school he had been struck by the difference between the girls and their attitude to boys: the girls at Melville College were not boy mad. On a similar theme, at All Saints College a teacher commented on the lack of make up worn by the girls there compared to the all-girls school at which he had previously taught, while the Deputy Head recounted the following anecdote:

Five or six boys were asked to leave [a nearby elite boys school] and arrived at All Saints College. They were good-looking, sporty, rich types and the girls were instantly attracted but after about three weeks had abandoned them ... they said to us, we are not going to put up with that, we're not [a nearby elite girls school] girls!

Across the three schools students said that while romantic relationships were gendered relationships, gender was less relevant in friendships. They enjoyed close friendships with girls and boys at school, but were wary of becoming romantically involved. Most students chose to look for

girlfriends/boyfriends outside of school. On the rare occasion they did choose to go out with someone from school they appeared to keep that relationship low key while at school.

Girls and boys moderating each other's aggressive behaviour

As discussed above, friendships and relationships are increasingly important to adolescents. However, the relationships they develop are not always warm and positive; there are times when negative interactions and aggressive behaviour are evident. There is a growing body of research exploring the various forms this negative behaviour can take. As is often the case, different researchers use slightly different terminology and definitions. Many differentiate between direct and indirect aggression (Archer 2004; Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz & Kaukiainen 1992; Page & Smith 2012). In this typology, direct aggression is usually understood as overt, and can be either physical or verbal, while indirect aggression 'involves deliberate social exclusion and ostracism' (Archer 2004, p.296). Another widely used term with significant overlap with indirect aggression is 'relational aggression': aggression 'intended to manipulate or disrupt a friendship or relationship' (Page & Smith 2012, p.315).

A widespread finding is that 'boys bully physically, girls bully socially' (Duncan & Owens 2011, p.306), or boys use direct aggression while girls use indirect aggression (Archer 2004; Archer & Coyne 2005; Benenson 2009; Boyer 2008; Faris & Felmlee 2011; Smith, Rose & Schwartz-Mette 2010). Research suggests that when both types of aggression are considered girls and boys are equally aggressive (Archer & Coyne 2005). The finding that boys bully directly and physically fits seamlessly with the 'boys will be boys' discourse noted in Chapter 4 – Power Relations, in which 'systematic physical violence is normalised through the blurring of boundaries between games, play-fighting and violence, with dominant masculinities tolerated and legitimised' (Ringrose & Renold 2010, p.580). The profile of indirect,

relational and social aggression amongst girls has been rising steadily since the 1990s. As Rachel Simmons (2002) argued in her book *Odd Girl Out*,

There is a hidden culture of girls' aggression in which bullying is epidemic, distinctive, and destructive. It is not marked by the direct physical and verbal behaviour that is primarily the province of boys. Our culture refuses girls access to open conflict, and it forces their aggression into nonphysical, indirect and covert forms. Girls use backbiting, exclusion, rumors, name-calling, and manipulation to inflict psychological pain on targeted victims. Unlike boys, who tend to bully acquaintances or strangers, girls frequently attack within tightly knit networks of friends, making aggression harder to identify and intensifying the damage to victims. (p.3)

There is a developmental trend whereby as children move into adolescence they become less likely to participate in direct, overt aggression and more likely to rely on indirect and covert forms of aggression (Sijtsema, Rambaran & Ojanen 2013), and this trend is stronger for girls than boys (Jenkins & Fletcher 2008; Page & Smith 2012; Smith, Rose & Schwartz-Mette 2010). Many writers agree with Simmons (2002) when she argues that girls are socialised away from 'open conflict' (Brady 2004; Page & Smith 2012; Smith, Rose & Schwartz-Mette 2010). Her book, however, was part of a wave of popular concern about 'mean girls', which included a film with that title, about which Jessica Ringrose and Emma Renold (2010, see also Ringrose 2006), along with other feminist writers, have raised concerns. They argue that this work 'tends to reduce and essentialise the relationship between gender, victimisation and bullying' (2010, p.576) through a patriarchal discourse in which 'direct aggression is held as a neutral, normative masculine standard of aggression against which the feminine is constructed as indirect, repressed and aberrant' (Ringrose 2006, p.410).

Some authors link the observed increase in indirect aggression during adolescence to the increase in importance and closeness of peer groups for this age group. Jillian Huntley and Larry Owens (2013) argue that 'indirect aggression through hurtful and manipulative behaviours such as nasty gossip, rumours, and exclusion can become the shadow side of the

interaction in these [close peer] groups' (p.237). Brady concludes that given peer groups are 'a vital component of secondary school culture', being on the receiving end of such aggression must be 'especially painful' (2004, p.363).

There is evidence that teachers and other adults regard indirect aggression as less serious than direct physical and verbal aggression, although young people themselves do not always agree with this assessment (Hutchinson 2012; Page & Smith 2012). Possibly as a consequence of this assessment, in combination with the argument that these 'behaviours tend to be subtle or covert, and purposefully open to misinterpretation' (Page & Smith 2012, p.317), researchers report that teachers and adults underestimate their frequency and damage (Hutchinson 2012; Page & Smith 2012; Sijtsema, Rambaran & Ojanen 2013) and are 'taken aback by the extent of interpersonal aggression among girls' (Huntley & Owens 2013, p.237) when it is revealed.

In the three schools, teachers reported that most negative interactions – bullying, fighting and harassment – tended to be amongst girls or amongst boys, not across genders. In line with the research summarised above, staff reported that bullying between girls took the form of exclusion and bitchiness, while between boys it was more likely to be physical fights. Bitchiness amongst girls was identified as a more common problem than fights between boys. However, teachers reported there was not much of either and many believed these negative interactions were moderated by the presence of the two sexes. This resonates with reports in the literature from single-sex schools where teachers describe 'the single-sex environment ... as reinforcing restrictive relations of masculinity and power, in terms of increasing the potential for aggression, violence and misogynistic and homophobic behaviours' (Keddie & Mills 2009, p.33). Recent research by Robert Faris and Diane Felmlee (2011) supports this observation of the moderating effect of girls and boys on each other's behaviour. In a study of aggression amongst high school students, they found that '[w]hen cross-

gender interactions are plentiful, aggression is diminished' (p.48) and '[a]dolescents who have multiple cross-gender friends are less aggressive ... on average'(p.59). Across the three schools there were very few observations of aggression between students, but on the occasions when a student actively intervened it was often a girl or girls coming between boys who were fighting or a boy or boys supporting a girl who was being excluded.

At Treetops College, while there were many observations of mock fights between students, the only observation of a serious disagreement was within a group of girls. After angry words were exchanged, one of the girls walked away from the group looking distressed and wiping away tears. It was a group of three boys who stepped in and comforted her. A teacher was able to talk with her later and establish that she felt she was being bullied by some of the girls. Similarly, at Melville College, when a Year 10 girl was excluded by girls in her class, it was a boy who went and sat with her. Boys at all three schools agreed that girls were more likely to 'gossip', 'bitch' and 'backstab' and they didn't want to be involved. The Year 10 boys at Melville College reported that when girls start treating each other badly it 'is taken very seriously ... that's because it's shocking what some girls do to each other ... I guess it's because they don't have a sort of physical outlet to fight each other that some guys do. They just double their efforts on being verbally abusive and its just terrible, some stuff that they say'. This insight that the boys find girls' behaviour towards each other 'shocking' and the things they say 'just terrible' does not fit the picture generally held about adolescent boys. However, it does fit with those observations of boys intervening in girls' arguments and supporting girls being bullied. The girls at all three schools repeatedly commented on the role boys played in changing the tenor of relationships between the girls and girls' tendency to become bitchy if they are in all-girls groups and at all-girls schools. At Treetops College one Year 10 girl reported she had a friend at an all-girls school who told her that 'you're so lucky to have guys at your school. All the girls here are bitchy because they don't have any guys to talk to'. Staff reported that while there were instances of bitchiness amongst the girls, they were often told by girls moving

into these schools from all-girls schools that there was 'much less bitchiness here than at their previous schools'.

As reported earlier, fights between boys were relatively rare and there were no serious fights observed during the fieldwork at any of the schools. The nearest thing to a fight was an altercation in the locker area at All Saints College. Two Year 10 boys were pushing and shoving, initially in a friendly manner, but it got increasingly rough and neither seemed willing to be the first to step back. An older boy walking past suggested they stop, but they continued, then a girl from a nearby locker walked over and intervened successfully. Repeatedly, staff at these schools made comparisons with their experience at all-boys schools – 'not nearly as many macho boys here as at my previous school [an elite all-boys school]', 'the boys are different ... lot more accepting, not as aggressive' – and argued that it was the presence of girls that made the difference – the girls 'disapprove of macho behaviour so it is curtailed' or the 'girls contribute to the calmness'. At Melville College one senior staff member commented that it was 'not part of the culture', while one of the counsellors who had been at the school for several decades reported there was 'much less physical intimidation now than 30 years ago when it was all boys'. Another Melville College teacher reported that a colleague who had moved to an elite boys school commented that his new school 'was such a boys school [compared to Melville]'. The head of senior school commented that there were 'some jocks' but the generally calmer, less macho environment made it 'easier for the non-jock boys'.

As discussed earlier, the notion that girls at coeducational schools have a 'civilising influence' on boys has been widespread. The data collected during this project suggest that the girls at the case-study schools did actively contribute to less aggressive behaviour amongst boys. What was unexpected, however, was that the presence of the boys resulted in girls' behaviour being moderated. These adolescent boys found the way the girls in their classes fought with each other 'shocking' and 'terrible' and actively intervened to support girls being excluded. The girls themselves

acknowledged that their behaviour changed in the presence of boys and that they were less likely to become 'bitchy'. Both girls and boys reported that the coeducational environment had an ameliorating effect on their behaviour, with less physical fights between boys and less bitchiness and exclusionary behaviour amongst girls, and that they preferred socialising in mixed groups because of the larger range of conversation and more relaxed feel of the interactions.

We're lucky – the perceived advantages of coeducation

Students consistently said that one of the key advantages of attending a coeducational school was that they learnt to work with both girls and boys. They talked about 'being used to working with' and 'being comfortable' with everyone. There was a consensus that they had the opportunity to develop their 'communication skills'. One girl explained that after their experience at school, 'You're not pressured. Like you're not going, oh, if I say this what will the guys think' and consequently 'you'll be much more calmer when you get out'. In another group they argued that their coeducational experiences meant that they 'just understand everyone' and consequently 'are more confident'. There were regular references to students at single-sex schools lacking this experience and consequently lacking these skills and confidence: 'Like you wouldn't know what to say, what to do or anything like that', which might lead to those students 'freaking out' when they had to work with the opposite sex once they left school.

One boy at All Saints College saw coeducation as the norm:

I guess it's not really co-ed will give you anything, rather it's what you won't get if you go to a segregated school. I mean if you went to an all-boys school or all-girls school, you wouldn't learn to be more confident when you're like working with girls and stuff or people of the opposite sex. And having a co-ed school is really important in that it gives you that ability to interact at ease with people.

The picture these students painted of their peers at single-sex schools was that they could 'go out and pick up with somebody at a party ... but they don't have social skills with actually speaking with them'; they couldn't interact with them 'as a normal person'.

Students saw themselves as lucky to be attending a coeducational school and repeatedly talked about the place of friendship and romance at their school compared to their picture of single-sex schools. They characterised students from single-sex schools as focused on dating over friendship. One Year 8 girl said:

They [students at single-sex schools] always just think about them as boyfriend, girlfriend, that's it. They don't be friends with them. And like if you go to a co-ed school like it's heaps easier because ... like I don't even think about that. When I meet someone I always like to make friends with them first.

This was confirmed by a Year 10 girl at Treetops College who had started her secondary schooling at an all-girls school. She talked about 'having to learn' to develop friendships with boys when she arrived at the school.

Alongside this focus on dating over friendship, the students believed that students at single-sex schools tended to get over excited about the opposite sex, describing girls from a nearby girls school as 'drooling over any guy that walks past' and the boys at boys schools being 'all bottled up'. At All Saints College one student had been briefly enrolled in a girls school and 'couldn't stand it':

Like every time someone mentioned a boy or a boy's name they say oh my god, oh my god, oh my god. I'm like what's the big deal. Like seriously. So I think if they segregate everything then it makes it so much more of a bigger deal, than if it's just left normal.

In contrast, the students at these three schools described how they had 'been growing up with these people' and had come to the conclusion that there was 'no big difference' between girls and boys.

A consistent theme amongst students was that their coeducational experience would serve them well when they made the transition to life after school because 'we live in a co-ed world'. There were constant references to coeducational schools being closer to 'the real world' than single-sex schools. Students regularly argued that the transition to university and work would be easier for them since they were used to working with mixed groups. The following exchange at Treetops College in a mixed group of Year 10 students was indicative of their thinking:

Katherine: I think it's good, co-ed. We've gotten use to learning in mixed groups and all that sort of stuff and when it comes to getting a job the workplace will most probably be mixed as well and so you'll have experience and be able to interact well with the other workmates.

Simon: Oh yeah, cause that's life. There are guys and girls and that's life.

Laura: You've got to get used to them.

The students at all three schools described themselves as confident and relaxed in the company of young people of both genders. Individuals constructed themselves as people who were comfortable with both girls and boys and able to be friends without necessarily worrying about dating possibilities. In these conversations they often compared themselves favourably to students from single-sex schools; many had stories of students from single-sex schools whom they variously described as 'big-noting themselves', being 'tongue-tied', 'sex obsessed' and 'desperate'. They were grateful that they had escaped this fate. A repeated theme was that coeducational schools provided 'a more natural learning environment' and that they were lucky to have benefitted from that.

Conclusion

The third dimension in Connell's (Connell 2009) relational theory of gender is *emotional relations*. This chapter explored this dimension at the three schools through analysis of school climate and students' social relationships. The key

questions were *Does the school climate draw on emotions that are linked to either the female or male sphere?* and *Are the students' interactions and relationships organised along gender lines?*

The school climate of each school was distinct. Treetops College espoused a 'culture of care', emphasising collaboration and cooperation, notions with strong links to the feminine. This commitment to caring and to alternatives to aggression and asserting rights based on strength, size or masculine entitlement opened up a challenge to hegemonic masculinity. A very different narrative was evident at Melville College, where 'the tradition of being untraditional' was referenced repeatedly in public statements and conversations with staff and students. The focus here was on being strong, standing against the tide, doing things differently. Some staff at the school also raised concerns about what they described as the 'blokey' culture at the school, which referred to being action-oriented and keen to get things done, with little interest in reflecting on the complexity of life at school or beyond. The school climate here – with its assertive, individualistic and unreflective characteristics – appeared to have stronger links to the male domain than to the female domain. Finally, at All Saints College, the religious foundations of the school were still strongly reflected in the public profile and daily life of the school. There was a commitment to diversity and inclusion, and agreement between staff and students that there were low levels of aggressive behaviour amongst students. Of the three schools All Saints College appeared to have the weakest links to hegemonic masculinity. From the principal down, staff and students identified with the values associated with the feminine sphere.

When students' social relationships were reviewed, the way gender operated as an organiser of relations was found to vary across the three schools. At Melville College and All Saints College students across the four year levels de-emphasised gender as a salient factor in their relationships, which could be described as depolarised (Connell 2006b). At Treetops College, while girls and boys had limited interaction in Year 8, they undertook a rapid shift

towards depolarised relationships at the senior levels, which were very similar to those observed at the other schools. Light-hearted affectionate physical contact, particularly between girls and between girls and boys, was often part of these friendships. However, students made clear distinctions between boy friends/girl friends and boyfriends/girlfriends, and were wary of becoming involved in a romantic relationship with someone at school. Consequently, there were very few 'couples' at any of the schools and those students who were involved in romantic relationships at school, tended to keep them very low key. Finally, there were many anecdotal reports and some observations of girls and boys moderating each other's negative behaviour.

Students at all levels believed that this experience of friendships and working relationships with both girls and boys would equip them for life in the real world after school. They positioned themselves as having an advantage over students from single-sex schools who did not have this opportunity. Barrie Thorne (1993) in *Gender Play* argues 'gender is not always at the forefront of their [girls' and boys'] interactions' (p.5). At the schools in the present study, much of the students' behaviour appeared to place gender in the background.

As was the case in the analysis of production relations, All Saints College showed the greatest move away from traditional gender hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity. The school climate had strong links to the feminine sphere and students' social relationships were warm and affectionate, but not strongly organised around gender. At Melville College there seemed to be some tension between school climate, which drew on hegemonic masculinity, and students' relationships, which were not organised along conventional gender lines. Finally, at Treetops College school climate was also linked to the feminine sphere, but while relationships between the older students were like those at the other two schools, for younger students gender was a strong organising principle. At all three schools traditional gender arrangements were challenged. However, at Melville College this challenge was

complicated by the strong links to hegemonic masculinity identified and there still appeared to be a potential risk that girls might be subordinate members of the school community. On the other hand the challenge was both most consistent and strongest at All Saints College.

CHAPTER 7

SYMBOLIC RELATIONS

The fourth dimension of gender relations is symbolic relations. Raewyn Connell (2009) argues that '[all] social practice involves interpreting the world ... Society is unavoidably a world of meanings' (p.83). In the analysis of gender relations, this dimension focuses on the way organisations and individuals represent themselves, the meanings that others attribute to them and the way these representations shape social practices. As Jane Wilkinson (2006) argues, 'Representations are constitutive, that is, they have both material and symbolic effects in terms of subjectivity and thus are both products and self-productive' (p.17). Connell (2009) goes on to argue that gender symbolism is present in many aspects of life – the use of language, as well as 'dress, make-up, gesture, in photography and film, and in more impersonal forms of culture such as the built environment' (p.84). This dimension draws attention to how 'gender identities are defined in culture – to the language and symbols of gender difference and prevailing beliefs and attitudes about gender' (Connell 2006b, p.839).

Two ways the case-study schools represented themselves to the wider community and their own school communities were the texts published by the schools and the uniforms worn by their students. These are examined through an analysis of both the linguistic and visual symbols of gender identity and difference. In this final dimension of gender relations, the purpose of the analysis is again to assess whether the traditional gender hierarchies have been interrupted or upheld and what the consequences are for girls in these schools.

Publications

Feminists have been concerned over a very long period about the implications for girls and women of how they are represented in words and images (de Beauvoir 1949/1972; Spender 1982). Of particular concern has been the absence of girls and women from the record of public life. Researchers have repeatedly argued that females and their achievements have been omitted from the public record and relegated to the private sphere (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Collins 2011; Marshall 1997). Nancy Fraser (1997) argues that social justice requires not only redistribution of material resources but also the recognition of marginalised or subordinated groups. She defines 'cultural or symbolic [injustice] as rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication' (p.14) which fail to give recognition to difference. The erasure of women from the public record is one way in which women are denied recognition. The ways in which we see ourselves represented in the wider world can have profound implications for how we understand ourselves, and our place in the world.

Schools publish a range of materials in which they represent their school and their students. The way both girls and boys are represented in such publications impacts on the gender regime of a school and on the ways in which students construct their gendered identity. As Yvonne Lafferty and Jim McKay (2004) argue, 'Everyday language and images play a cardinal role in both constructing and reinforcing gender differences' (p.254). To date, there has been limited research on how schools represent their students in the publications they produce. In the landmark Australian report *Girls, schools and society* (Schools Commission 1975) it was argued that many schools reinforced gender differentiation in both 'overt and obvious' ways, and 'more subtly' as a result of expectations, omissions and actions 'based upon unexamined assumptions' (pp.155-6). Nearly 20 years later, another Australian report found that 'Girls often get the impression that they are second-class citizens in schools. They are not used to acknowledging and celebrating (even to themselves) their own achievements, success,

competence and talents' (Australian Education Council 1992, p.40). A 1995 review of educational outcomes for girls in NSW government schools reported that:

Observations and analyses of school documents indicate a wide range of practices in schools – in some it was evident that considerably more space was given to displays of photographs and trophies for boys' team sports, but in others, newsletters to parents gave equal reporting of individual achievements of both girls and boys. (Cuttance 1995, p.36)

This variation occurred despite what appears to have been wide agreement that schools have a responsibility to provide a 'gender-fair culture [which provides an] equitable and supportive experience' for all students (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999, p.12). The inevitable result of these subtle, and not so subtle, messages, which Dale Spender described as 'quite pernicious' (1988, p.149), has been that in the past students 'emerge[d] from school with the implicit understanding that the world is a man's world, in which women can and should take second place' (Stanworth 1983, p.58). It was therefore important to understand what messages students in the three schools in this study were receiving from the materials their school published.

Private schools in Australia and across the English-speaking world operate in a 'competitive, corporatised market' (Meadmore & Meadmore 2004, p.375). In this marketplace 'impression management' (Schlenker cited in Symes, 1998, p.133, see also Saltmarsh 2007, p.339) becomes central to the business of attracting and keeping 'customers' – students and their families. As Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen (2001) argue, 'direct marketing is now considered a normal and uncontroversial practice through which schools seek to attract students and, thus, finance and reputation' (p.127). The way these three schools represented themselves in these materials may or may not have been a true reflection of the schools' actual practices. However, these representations were the result of very deliberate choices, shaped in part by what the schools believed their customers wanted to hear. In so far as this is true, they may provide valuable insights into how the schools

aspired to be seen (Hooper 2011; Knight 1992; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; Saltmarsh 2007).

As players in the education market (Aitchison 2006; Bonner & Caro 2007; Campbell, Proctor & Sherington 2009; Doherty 2007; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; Power et al. 2003; Whitty 1997), the three schools, published a range of attractive, 'professionally produced' materials (Kenway & Bullen 2001, p.128), which are one aspect of the 'symbolic architecture' (Synott & Symes 1995, p.141) of the school. Sharon Gewirtz and colleagues (1995) refer to this as 'glossification' (p. 127), image improvement aimed at attracting students. A school's advertisements, prospectus, annual magazine and website are aimed at different audiences. Advertisements placed in the media are designed to attract the attention of potential customers: families with school-age children; prospectuses are provided to potential customers who approach the school for further information; and annual magazines are distributed to current students and through them their families. Websites fulfil multiple purposes, being accessed by each of these groups.

The representation of gender in these publications was analysed using three criteria:

1. the amount of space devoted to girls and their activities compared to boys and their activities;
2. the extent to which representations of gender were stereotypical;
3. the presence or absence of gender-inclusive language.

Advertisements

School advertisements usually fulfil several purposes. They develop a recognisable brand that differentiates the school from other schools (Keller 2013; Moor 2007) to attract new business, in this case enrolments (DiMartino & Jessen 2014; Hooper 2011), and reassure those who are already committed to the 'brand' (Evans, Jamal & Foxall 2009; Hunt 1970).

School advertisements, like any others, are selective and strategic in the images and messages promoted to their customers. They present what they consider to be their most desirable features and in so doing shape expectations about contemporary education and the kinds of students who might be produced as a result of attending their schools (Blackmore & Thorpe 2003, Kenway & Fitzclarence 1998). It seems likely that the choice of words and images would strongly reflect key aspects of a school's identity and philosophy.

I noted advertisements over the period of a year from the Melbourne press, and noted when I observed them on billboards and trams (see Table 7.1). Melville College was the only school for which multiple advertisements were identified.

Melville College was a very active player in the Melbourne education market at the time of this study. Seven Melville College advertisements were recorded, and it was the only one of the three schools to use billboards and trams in addition to printed materials. Not only did it have more advertisements, it was also the only school that explicitly drew attention to being coeducational. The heavy emphasis on advertising its coeducational credentials may have been a consequence of its single-sex history. Several senior staff reported that members of the general public were still inclined to assume it was a boys school. Of the seven advertisements for Melville College, three drew attention to the coeducational character of the school. For example, one used the wording, 'We've got education down to a fine balance' over a sketch of a male and a female symbol balanced on a see-saw. As discussed in Chapter 6, this use of word play and elements of the unexpected was linked to the tradition of being untraditional, which was central to the school's identity and was clearly part of their pitch to the market.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
No. of advertisements identified	1	7	2
Location	Daily newspaper	Daily newspaper Billboard Tram	Daily newspaper
Key catchphrase	Tomorrow's learning today	Great minds think differently	Diversity opens minds
Style	Close-up portrait with text under it	Branding achieved by dominating use of the very strong school colours	Softer colours and images with faded edges
Type of visuals	Photo	Simple sketches or collage of photos	Photo
Subject of visual	Primary girl with magnifying glass	A range of students and activities Slightly more girls in photographs	Primary students outdoors 'catching frogs' Girl in foreground

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Language used to describe members of school community	Your child	Students Parents	Your child
Explicit reference to coeducation	No	Yes	No

Table 7.1: School advertisements

The other two schools did not appear to be driven by the same need to establish their coeducational credentials, but they did choose to foreground girls in their advertising. All three schools, as previously identified, had an enrolment imbalance, with more boys than girls, which school leaders believed was a result of the longstanding, widespread community belief that while coeducational settings were advantageous for boys they were potentially risky for girls (American Association of University Women 1998; Australian Education Council 1993; Cuttance 1995; Gill 1989; Jackson & Bisset 2005; Jackson & Smith 2000; Tsolidis & Dobson 2006). This pattern in marketing was also identified in some British coeducational schools which had similarly directed their efforts to recruiting girls (Ball & Gewirtz 1997). The principal at Treetops College explained that because of the imbalance in enrolment applications, the marketing advice had been to 'foreground girls' in their publicity materials to emphasise that girls were 'getting a fair go'. For each of the project schools the presence and centrality of girls was a key aspect of the identity they projected in their advertisements.

The schools' advertisements were careful not to valorise boys over girls in text or image and to use gender-neutral language. Consequently, they did not reinscribe the traditional gender hierarchies, and due to the foregrounding of girls may have provided a subtle challenge to them.

The school prospectus

The school prospectus was the centrepiece of the information package provided by each of the schools to any member of the public who inquired about enrolment. In the Australian context, where education is conceptualised as a marketplace and parental choice is 'part of the prevailing orthodoxy of the modern school' (Symes 1998, p.133), the prospectus is a central document. As Peter Knight (1992) has suggested, '[p]rospectuses tell the world how the schools want to be seen' (p.56). Like advertisements, they are a key contributor to 'school brand management' (DiMartino & Jessen 2014, p.1) and provide an opportunity for schools to present themselves 'in

their own terms' (Fuller & Dooley 1997, p.406). That is, they may or not be accurate representations of a school and its activities, but they provide insights into a school's values and ideals (Hooper 2011; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; Saltmarsh 2007) – what the school 'aspires to be' (DiMartino & Jessen 2014, p.12).

A small number of studies have focused on school prospectuses (McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012) and most have linked them to the marketisation of education (DiMartino & Jessen 2014; Gottschall et al. 2010; Knight 1992; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; Saltmarsh 2007; Symes 1998; Wardman et al. 2013; Wardman et al. 2010). The majority of these studies have focused on how prospectuses are used to 'persuade audiences and leverage advantage in the marketplace' (McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012, p.2) and identify schools as 'desirable entities, distinct from their competitors' (Saltmarsh 2007, p.337). Only a minority of studies have undertaken a gender analysis. In one study, the gender constructions used in the prospectuses of a group of elite Australian single-sex schools were analysed (Gottschall et al. 2010; Wardman et al. 2013; Wardman et al. 2010) and found to be reinscribing traditional gender hierarchies. Boys were represented as 'embodying the idealised qualities of the hyper-masculine subject: active, heavy, skilled, dangerous, dirty, interesting, virile, strong, independent, capable, rational, knowing, hard' (Gottschall et al. 2010, p.23) while girls were represented as 'pretty, passive, smiling ... posing for the camera' (Wardman et al. 2010, p.256). An earlier British study (Fuller & Dooley 1997) was the only study located that undertook an analysis of gender representations in school prospectuses from coeducational schools. It focused on a group of schools that had previously been boys-only but which now enrolled some girls (Fuller & Dooley 1997). This study documented, amongst other criteria, the space given to girls and any statements about coeducation or equal opportunities. They found that girls were present in approximately one-third of photographs but less evident in the text.

The prospectuses from the three schools examined in this thesis were very different in visual style but there were strong similarities in their size, high-quality production and contents (see Table 7.2). These prospectuses, like many in the English-speaking world, were very polished productions (Fuller & Dooley 1997; Knight 1992; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012; Wardman et al. 2010) designed to communicate a 'vision' of the school to prospective clients (Meadmore & Meadmore 2004, p.377).

Each prospectus opened with a welcome from the (male) principal accompanied by a portrait photograph, itself a message about gender to the community. Two of the three, Treetops College and Melville College, then followed the same structure: a section covering whole school approaches, followed by double-page spreads on each stage of schooling and on the arts and sport. A different framework was used in the All Saints College prospectus. There were no comparable double-page spreads, but much of the same material was addressed, although outdoor education was the highest profile co-curricular activity. This prospectus had a stronger focus on the emotional and spiritual growth of students; the information was organised around five identified values, with sections on parents, families, community, nurturing the child's growth and spiritual growth (see Table 7.2). In each of the prospectuses, sport and the arts were treated in a relatively even-handed way, masculine pursuits were not valorised, and the gender hierarchy was seemingly not being reinscribed.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Title	Celebrating the individual	I know where I am going	Diversity opens minds
No. of pages	32	26	28
Style	Bold, with lots of photographs and strong colours	Bold, with lots of photographs and strong colours in an activity-style book with a large detachable badge on the front cover in place of a title and a range of inserts – a model to make, a board game, pamphlets, a CD of music and a CD-ROM, and the enrolment form, all incorporated in the booklet	Restrained/elegant white cover with embossed title, title page with school logo and name, followed by '... is an Anglican coeducational school founded in Melbourne in 1895' and a small photo of a girl and boy (the girl in the foreground)
Layout	Different coloured backgrounds with each double-page spread including at least several photographs	Considerable variation in the layout from page to page, some including a single large photo, some with a mixture of large	Each section a large (double-page spread) photo followed by white pages with small text in columns with neat headings

		and small photos and some pages with only a collection of small photos.	and smaller photos in collage arrangements across the pages
Themes shared with advertising and websites	Releases and enhances the talents of the individual Lifelong learning Self-directed learning Pathways to success Tomorrow's learning today Global citizens Care is central to all we do		Diversity opens minds Diversity, innovation, individuality, inclusivity and uniqueness
Additional themes	The importance of 'great teachers' and an emphasis on innovation – 'Melbourne's education innovator'	'A ... education is about learning, discovery, resilience, relevance and academic achievement.'	Inclusivity of culture Innovation in learning Deconstructing the classroom Celebrating our individuality Uniqueness of spirit 'Nurture the mind – shape the individual.'
Structure	Whole school information	Whole school information	Organised around key values

	<p>followed by double-page spreads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each stage of schooling • the arts • physical education and sport • outdoor education 	<p>followed by double-page spreads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each stage of schooling • the arts • sport <p>Single page spreads:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outdoor education • international programs 	<p>of diversity, innovation, individuality, inclusivity and uniqueness, with a section devoted to each. Each section introduced by a large double-page spread photo. Diversity the largest section (6 pages), beginning with discussion of coeducation, including the stages of schooling</p>
Introduction from principal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Statement on coeducation	<p>No statement about the benefits of coeducation. Principal simply describes the school as 'a non-selective, coeducational school'.</p>	<p>Coeducation – 'perhaps the best and most obvious argument for coeducation is that "life is like that"'. 'Studies have shown that students from coeducational schools generally perform better in</p>	<p>Coeducation foregrounded with first substantive text after the introduction, a brief paragraph addressing coeducation. 'Coeducation – preparing for life beyond the classroom'; 'girls and boys come together</p>

		<p>tertiary studies than those from same sex schools’.</p> <p>First substantive text following the introduction</p>	<p>naturally to share and learn ... teachers ensure that girls and boys are provided with an equal opportunity to voice their opinions and ask questions. Coeducation at ... equips our students with the social skills they need for life beyond the classroom.’</p>
CD-ROM included	No	Yes	Yes

Table 7.2: School prospectuses – general features

In a recent Australian study of prospectuses from 'elite' schools, Paula McDonald and colleagues (2012) report that 'most co-educational schools were silent on the issue of conferred benefits of a mixed-sex educational environment' (p.12). This was the approach taken in the prospectus from Treetops College, which did not explicitly argue the case for coeducational education. However, both Melville College and All Saints College chose to tackle this problem head-on. Immediately after the introduction from the principal there was a strong statement about the advantages to both girls and boys of coeducation. In the case of All Saints College it was a paragraph, at Melville College this was the first of the double-page spreads. This focus on the advantages of coeducation in the prospectus for Melville College, and to a lesser extent All Saints College, may again be linked to their prior history as single-sex schools.

The school prospectus is a key part of a school's public relations strategy (Hooper 2011; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012) and first impressions are all important (Copeland 1994). The similarity in the information provided by the three schools was striking, pointing to a convergence in their understandings of what parents were seeking when considering sending their children to an elite independent school. This reflects the findings of an earlier British study which concluded that 'schools are busily managing their images in the same ways' (Hesketh & Knight 1998, p.34). Some researchers argue that in a market environment schools do not differentiate themselves but rather become more similar in order to maximise enrolments (Hesketh & Knight 1998; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012). It was notable that although academic results were not ignored, the emphasis here on co-curricular activities was similar to that reported by Joan Forbes and Gaby Weiner (2008), that is the schools showcasing their high-quality facilities and highlighting the value-adding these schools promise (Hooper 2011; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; O'Flynn & Petersen 2007; Wardman et al. 2010).

Language

The language used to describe members of each school community was carefully chosen in relation to gender. Gender-neutral terminology was to the fore: 'student/s', 'individual/s', 'young people' and 'child/ren' were the most commonly used terms (see Table 7.3). Again there were significant parallels in the way students were described, with emphasis given to 'thinking', 'minds' and 'citizenship', along with terms such as 'the whole person' and 'young adults'. The adults in the school community were also described using gender-neutral labels like 'teachers' and 'parents'. This was in contrast to the English prospectuses studied by Mary Fuller and Pauline Dooley (1997), in which schools were unable to 'sustain non-sexist language' (p.409) and were prone to revert to referring to their students as male. In contrast, the girls in the schools in this study were not written out of the school's story. The one context where gendered terms were used was in discussion of the benefits of coeducation. Both All Saints College and Melville College used the phrases 'girls and boys' and 'boys and girls'.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Language	Student Individual Young people Child Young adult Graduate Leader Global citizens Friend Peer Applicant Teacher Adult Parent Mentor Staff Counsellor	Student Individuals Young person Children Whole person Thinkers Learners Teachers Parent Boys and girls/girls and boys – used alternately in discussion of coeducation and in two other instances	Students Individual Young person, Child/ren Whole person, Young minds Leaders, Citizens, Friend, Your child Teachers, Parents, Specialists Girls and boys – used in discussion of coeducation Sisters and women in reference to the nuns who founded the school

Table 7.3: School prospectuses – language

Photographs

Sixty to eighty photographs appeared in each of the prospectuses (see Table 7.4), the vast majority being of students. Almost all of these represented students as enthusiastic, excited and happy, with the occasional photograph of a student deep in concentration or looking thoughtful and reflective. The activities portrayed in photographs covered all the elements in their marketing materials. The majority of photographs emphasised the value-adding the school saw itself as providing, with students depicted in specialist classrooms, on excursions or participating in co-curricular activities. This is a similar range of content as identified in an earlier British study (Hesketh & Knight 1998).

It has been reported that superficial attention to gender equity can mask an androcentric bias, where male interests are prioritised (Beyer et al. 1996; Epp, Sackney & Kustaski 1994; Fuller & Dooley 1997). However, in these prospectuses activities linked to males did not receive greater attention than other activities. Rather, there were more photographs of the creative and performing arts, which are generally regarded as more typically feminine than masculine. In almost all instances, stereotypes were avoided, with both girls and boys represented in each arena of activity. There seemed to be a strong emphasis on the message that, at each of these schools, girls and boys of all ages would have endless opportunities to participate in this wide range of activities. While each prospectus carried the implicit message that all activities were open to all students and that gender stereotypes were not endorsed, All Saints College took this a step further, with a small number of photographs that actively went against gender stereotypes.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Photos	Students (without teachers) 68 Students with teachers 6 Principal with students 1 Other 4 Total 79	Students (without teachers) 78 Principal 1 Total 79	Students (without teachers) 35 Students with teachers 4 Principal 1 Inanimate objects from school environment 22 Total 62
Gender in large photographs	Double spreads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys represented on each 	Double spreads: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girl-only (large photo) 1 boy-only (small photo) 1 girls and boys on all the rest Main photographs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls 4 boys 2 girls and boys 4, however two had a girl foregrounded with the boy(s) faded into 	Large double-spread photos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girl 1 boys 0 large group of girls and boys 1 girl and boy 2 girl and a young child in costume where it was unclear whether the child was a girl or a boy

		the background	
Gender in small photographs	<p>Groups of mixed gender 28</p> <p>Girls in groups or individually 29</p> <p>Boys in groups or individually 18</p>	<p>Groups of mixed gender 21</p> <p>Girls in groups or individually 29</p> <p>Boys in groups or individually 26</p>	<p>Groups of mixed gender 7</p> <p>Girls in groups or individually 18</p> <p>Boys in groups or individually 12</p> <p>There were some photographs where the gender of the child was unclear due to a costume, make-up or the size of the image</p>
Gender stereotyping	<p>On most pages, both girls and boys participating in the range of activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playing music and sport • participating in outdoor education • using computers and other information technologies <p>The exception was the arts pages, which only had photos of girls,</p>	<p>Girls and boys of all ages participating in each of the activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • music • art • sport • outdoor education • computer use 	<p>Girls and boys participating in a range of activities</p> <p>Photos of counter-stereotypical behaviour:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls' outdoor education and woodwork • boys providing comfort • boys foregrounded in drama and singing

	although there were photos of boys playing music on other pages.		
Activities in photos	School work 6 Computers 2 Sport 6 Outdoor ed 12 Music 3 Art 5 Drama 4 Dance 0 Play 7 Other 26	School work 15 Computers 6 Sport 9 Outdoor ed 4 Music 9 Art 8 Drama 2 Dance 0 Play 0 Other 25	School work 3 Computers 0 Sport 6 Outdoor ed 3 Music 3 Art 3 Drama 5 Dance 1 Play 0 Other 15

Table 7.4: School prospectuses – photographs

In the study of the prospectuses of elite single-sex schools (Gottschall et al. 2010; Wardman et al. 2013; Wardman et al. 2010), in addition to stereotypical representations of girls and boys, researchers also identified particular photographic techniques that reinforced these messages. Boys were photographed against ‘hard, “man-made”, imposing structures’ while girls were placed in “natural” settings such as rolling green lawns, autumnal trees and flowering gardens’ (Wardman et al. 2013, p.286). Boys were positioned at eye-level or above the camera, placing them in ‘positions of power’ (p.253) while girls were photographed from above, ‘which reinscribes a historically gendered submissiveness or heterosexual subordination’ (p.252). In portraits girls were much more likely to be looking directly at the camera than boys, and while soft focus was popular in photos of girls it was not used in photos of boys. Furthermore, boys were photographed out in the world getting their hands and faces dirty, both literally and metaphorically (Gottschall et al. 2010), while girls were photographed in domestic spaces with ‘fluffy blankets ... heart-themed pillows and teddy bears’ (Wardman et al. 2010, p.254).

The prospectuses from the coeducational schools participating in the current study were much more like the prospectuses from the boys’ schools than from the girls’ schools in the study described above. The vast majority of photos were of students doing things and more of these photos included girls (40% girls-only; 30% boys-only; 30% mixed). There were only a handful of head and shoulder portraits, none of them employing soft-focus, and girls and boys were equally likely to be the subject. There were very few photos of students against backdrops of ‘hard, “man-made”, imposing structures’ (Wardman et al. 2013, p.286), but many of girls and boys outside in nature in all its guises – sometimes soft and gentle, but more often challenging. Generally, photos were only taken from above when the students, girls and boys were doing something at ground level – sitting on the classroom floor, sitting on the ground during a field trip – though one exception was a girl abseiling down a rock face. There was a range of photos of girls and boys

engaged in physical challenges that left them looking dirty or wet or sweaty, and there were no photos with fluffy blankets, love hearts or teddy bears.

In another Australian study, McDonald and colleagues (2012) found that the prospectuses from the elite private schools they studied were 'reproducing and reinforcing hegemonic social ... discourses' (p.2). This certainly appeared to be the case in the prospectuses from the single-sex elite schools discussed above. However, the coeducational schools in the current study represented all their students engaging in the full range of activities. Consequently there were no strong differences between the representations of girls and boys, providing a challenge to hegemonic gender discourses.

The gender breakdown of the photographs was an important focus of analysis. As discussed previously, feminists have long held concerns that girls and women have been erased from the public record and rendered invisible (Arnot, David & Weiner 1999; Collins 2011; Marshall 1997; Wilkinson 2006). Yet in each of the three prospectuses photographs of girls outnumbered boys – despite fewer girls than boys being enrolled in each school. Similarly, a British study of prospectuses found that photographs of girls outnumbered those of boys (Hesketh & Knight 1998). Furthermore, as discussed above, in the vast majority of photos, girls and boys were represented in similar ways. This continued the pattern of foregrounding girls that was identified in relation to advertisements, appearing to confirm a marketing strategy designed to reassure parents that girls are not second-class citizens in these coeducational environments.

Multi-media materials

The prospectuses from two of the schools, Melville College and All Saints College, also included CD-ROMs as part of the package. Colin Symes (1998) has argued that at the turn of the millennium these CD-ROMs had a two-fold purpose: not only did they provide information about the school, they also demonstrated that the school was 'keeping abreast of the latest technology'

(p.140). He did not analyse any of these CD-ROMs for content or format, and there were no other studies located that undertook any content analysis. The two CD-ROMs under consideration here both contained video representations of the schools, but were very different in style (see Table 7.5).

The Melville College video was narrated by two students, a girl and a boy, both school prefects. In their sports uniforms, the student narrators appeared to be having fun – running, laughing, splashing in the pool and popping into frame from odd angles – while both the adult contributors talked about life at the school being fun. This was a continuing theme in the school's identity. The All Saints College video took a more restrained approach, with an emphasis on choice and individuality and a compilation of interviews and video clips of school life narrated by a well-spoken woman.

Both videos included a range of interviews with students and senior staff, and in addition, the All Saints College video had interviews with three parents. In the Melville College video, most of the students talked about the wide range of choices available. Similarly, in the All Saints College video, the intention appeared to be to emphasise the range of possibilities available to both girls and boys. As in the other materials, the language used in these videos was gender neutral: 'student', 'child', 'individual', 'person', 'young people' and 'parents' were the terms used in both videos.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Title	N/A	<i>A race around Melville College</i>	
Narrator/s	N/A	Introduced and narrated by 2 students who were prefects at the time, 1 female, 1 male, both wearing sports uniforms	Well-spoken woman
Style	N/A	Fun, light-hearted video, with the narrators running between locations, popping into screen from odd angles, splashing each other in the pool and other pranks	Range of interviews, with students, senior staff and parents Montages of short clips of students and school Opening sequence with girls and boys in uniform entering main school gates Followed by interview clips of 6 girls and 3 boys of different ages

			Format moving between interviews and visuals of students undertaking a range of activities, with voiceover
Theme	N/A	Fun – principal identified fun as a central part of the school experience; in the wrap-up the female narrator talked about the school being fun	Choice, individuality
Interviews	N/A	2 members of staff, 1 female, 1 male, 8 students, 3 girls and 5 boys	4 members of staff, 2 female, 2 male 30 students, 16 girls and 14 boys
Gender mix	N/A	Wide range of students undertaking wide range of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mixed 20 • girls 10 • boys 16 	Wide range of students undertaking wide range of activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mixed 56 • girls 68 • boys 73

Activities	N/A	Classrooms – 6 Computer – 1 Sport – 8 Outdoor education – 0 Drama – 4 Music – 6 Art – 1 Also an extended sequence from a school trip to China and segment on VET hospitality program	Classrooms – 20 Computers – 32 Sport – 22 Outdoor education – 4 Drama – 10 Dance – 10 Music – 17 Art – 21 Playground – 31 Other – 29
Language	N/A	Students Child Individual People Young people	Students Children Individual Person Young people Citizens of the future Thinking adults Individual student

		Parents	Kids Girl or boy, her or his ability Girl and boy co-captains Parents Teacher Staff Adults Lad, younger son (parent)
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Table 7.5: CD-ROMs included with prospectuses

In the Melville College video there was more than a hint of the girl being more sensible, or at least less silly, than the boy. When talking about famous past students, the female presenter said she was going to be a future prime minister and the male presenter said he was going to be a paediatrician, then changed his mind to footballer, his co-presenter rolled her eyes. Later she was the one who got splashed at the pool and in the summing up she was the responsible one who reminded him they had a class to go to. This message, that girls are more sensible and responsible than boys, was also evident in the All Saints College video. In this case it was a parent, who had been a student at the school, who put forward this idea. In an interview in which she talked about the changes resulting from the move to coeducation, she approvingly described the school as now being 'full of boys, full of life'. With slightly different degrees of approval both these audio-visual productions appeared to be buying into the stereotype of the energetic young male who is not bound by the rules of the school, the belief that 'boys will be boys'. By implication they also reinforced the notion that girls are the 'sensible, reliable, responsible' ones (Hirst & Cooper 2008, p.440), hence their role in civilising wild boys, which is part of the community's understanding of coeducational schools.

Although the boy and girl narrators of the Melville College video, who were on screen for much of the time, provided some gender balance, more boys than girls were interviewed, and while the largest number of film clips represented mixed groups of students, there were more boys-only film clips than girls-only. Similarly, boys outnumbered girls on the All Saints College CD, where the largest number of film clips was of boys, followed by girls and lastly mixed groups. This represents a clear shift from the printed prospectuses of all three schools, where each contained more photographs of girls than boys.

In reviewing the prospectuses, and the materials included with them, there were a number of patterns identified. In all the materials there was careful use of gender-inclusive language. In these prospectuses, activities linked to

boys, such as sport, did not garner more space than activities linked to girls, such as the arts. In almost all instances there appeared to be an attempt to avoid stereotyping the wide range of activities on offer, and activities were almost always portrayed as equally available to girls and boys. It seems these prospectuses, like the ones surveyed by Fuller and Dooley (1997), were 'carefully compiled' (p.406), in this case to emphasise the message that the schools did not succumb to gender stereotypes, rather providing a wide range of activities to girls and boys alike. In each of the prospectuses there were more photographs of girls than boys. However, on the two CD-ROMs there were more portrayals of boys than girls. It is unclear why this occurred, but it was a pattern that was also evident on school websites, discussed later in this chapter.

Annual magazine

Materials provided to members of the school community included handbooks for parents and students, curriculum handbooks, student diaries, annual magazines and regular newsletters. These provided further insight into the schools' expectations about students and families and the way that particular schools positioned girls and boys. This is an area of school life that has received little attention in recent research literature, but in the past there was concern that girls were acknowledged less than boys in these records of school life (Australian Education Council 1992; Collins et al. 1996; Stanworth 1983). Annual magazines were analysed as representative of these materials, using a similar framework to the one used to analyse the prospectuses. Analysis focused on the prominence given to various aspects of school life, as measured by space and number of photos and representation of gender in photographs. The gender of contributors was also considered. Tables 7.6, 7.7 and 7.8 present numerical data on the general features of the magazines, range and balance of contributors and activities represented in photographs.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Title	Forum	The Chronicle	School name used as title
Editorial staff	2 female staff members with acknowledgement and thanks to 5 other members of staff (3 female, 2 male – with the 2 males drawn from the visual arts staff and information technology staff)	4 section editors all female Sport and outdoor education male, The online and multimedia aspects of the project – 2 males	No reference in the magazine to the editorial team, but it was overseen by the Director of Marketing and Community Relations, a female administration staff member
Style	Informal style Shades of green and grey with some pages of colour photos Some photos provide background images or patterns behind the text Most pages have collages of photographs	Less colourful with more conservative layout Colour scheme more subdued – mauve, white and straw No photographic collages, though most pages had several photographs, some pages devoted to photographs	A very formal style All photographs black and white and more than a third formal class or team photographs Formal photographs generally large, most often filling half a page Informal photographs generally less than a quarter of a page

	Wide variety of fonts	No variation in font	Formal photographs dominated the magazine Consistent page layout and font used throughout
Cover design	Male Year 12 student	No acknowledgement	No acknowledgement
Size	A4 format 96 pages	A4 format 160 pages (123 pages analysed, those sections devoted to whole school and campus of interest)	A4 format 176 pages
Introduction	Principal (male) Followed by student leader reports	Pages from Managing editor (male) President of council (male), Principal (male), chaplain (male)	Magazine opened with head of school (male) reviewing the year, the chaplain (male), followed by student leader reports

		Campus section began with overview by campus principal (male)	
Structure	Double-page spread devoted to each year level of junior school and double-page spread for each of the four houses, interspersed between other activities Remaining structure based on activities (see below)	First section covered material pertinent to the whole college, followed by sections devoted to each campus, followed by a large section of sports results for the whole college and finally academic results, awards and student rolls for the whole college. Whole school section: chaplains (both male), historical photos, fundraising, library, Clunes (2 pages), international (8) Campus section:	Rest of magazine divided between senior school (110 pages), with sections on the upper school (3), the lower school (3), and the junior school (48 pages), including sections on kindergarten (3), junior (5), middle (4) and senior (4) primary. A small section at the end on out-of-school care (1), staff (6) and parents and friends (2)

		<p>overview from campus principal (male) (2 pages), sections on each stage of schooling written by the sub-school head –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparatory (female) (3) • junior school (male) (3) • middle school (male) (3) • senior college (male) (4) <p>Females almost invisible up to this point in the magazine as a consequence of a school hierarchy dominated by men. Then the subject matter shifted to co-curricular activities</p>	
Student leaders	<p>School captains report: 2 female and 2 male, including photo</p> <p>Student council report: male school captain, including photo of</p>	<p>Middle school prefect report co-authored by middle school captains, female and male</p>	<p>School co-captains report: 1 male and 1 female, including photos of co-captains and co-vice captains</p>

	student council members with senior staff	Senior prefect report co-authored by Senior College captains: 1 male and 1 female Also photos of middle school leaders and senior college prefects with senior staff	with principal and of prefects with principal
House reports	House reports: 8 pages (8%) Each house a double-page spread, written by teachers Most photos of sports events, but each house collage with at least 1 photo of performing arts events – music and dance – and most with a photo of house leaders	House reports – 2 pages (2%) Each house a half page, apparently written by teachers All photos of sport, though reference to a quiz, debating, chess, house lunches	House reports: 25 pages (14%) Each house 2 pages written by co-captains 3 pages of class photographs: 6 formal class photos (Forms 1-6), a formal photo of house leaders, female and male co-captains and 3 female and 3 male co-vice captains with the heads of house (a female and male teacher) Also between 2 and 5 informal photos with each house report,

			mostly of informal groups or individuals, approximately half the photos apparently taken at sports events
Activities (no. of pages) academic pursuits	Academic events 5 Curriculum 2 Student stories 6 Total 13 (14%)	Academic results 4 List of students 6 Total 10 (8%)	Academic studies 14 Curriculum 4 Student writing 4 Oratory 2 Library 2 Awards 6 Form 6 student achievements 5 Total 37 (21%)
Creative and performing arts (no. of pages)	Student art 2 Student photographs 2 Music 6 Drama 2 Total 12 (13%)	Student art 2 Music 5 Total 7 (6%)	Student art 3 Music 9 Drama 9 Total 21 (12%)
Sport	Sport 5 (5%)	Sport 62 (50%)	Sport 36 (20%)

Outdoor education	Outdoor education 9 (9%)	Outdoor education 3 (2%)	Outdoor education 11 (6%)
International	Tours 7 International students 1 Total 8 (8%)	International 8 (7%)	Overseas exchanges 4 (2%)
Community building	Charity 1 Peacebuilders 1 Total 2 (2%)	Community service ½	Social service 1
Social events	Social 2		
Staff	Departing teachers 4	List of staff 2 Staff movements 1	Staff 6

Table 7.6: The annual magazines – general features

Each of the project schools had an annual magazine, put together to celebrate the year. This analysis is based on the annual magazines from 2001. The smallest, from Treetops College, was 96 pages long; the largest, from All Saints College, was almost twice that, at 176 pages. They contained reports, examples of students' work, and photos, and were edited by members of staff. All three magazines were published at the end of the academic year as a record and souvenir for students and families. Although not strictly speaking advertising materials, like the prospectuses, the school magazines had the appearance of a 'professionally prepared publication' (Meadmore & Meadmore 2004, p.377). Again, there was an emphasis on those aspects of school life that were promoted as 'value-adding' to the student experience (Forbes & Weiner 2008; Hooper 2011; Meadmore & Meadmore 2004; O'Flynn & Petersen 2007; Wardman et al. 2010).

It was apparent that the three magazines covered much of the same sort of content, with sections devoted to the various levels of schooling and a range of co-curricular activities, with contributions from students and staff. The gender analysis of photographs in the three magazines also identified some common themes. In each magazine most non-sporting photographs of students were of mixed groups. Nevertheless, when girls-only and boys-only photographs were compared, the pattern identified above in relation to prospectuses was repeated: an overall tendency to have more photographs of girls (either individually or in groups) than of boys (either individually or in groups). Further, the central message of both the prospectuses and the magazines was that a wide range of activities was available to all students, with photographs of girls and boys participating in everything from drama to rock-climbing. The magazines largely avoided the stereotyping of activities – with dancing the one activity consistently gendered in all three school magazines.

The Treetops College magazine had the most informal, contemporary style of the three magazines and gave relatively even coverage to a range of activities. Academic pursuits, house reports, the arts, sport, outdoor

education and international students and tours each contributed between 5% and 15% of the content of the magazine. It had many more photographs than the other magazines, with an average of seven photographs on each page. Compared to the other two magazines, this one had the highest number of student contributions (78%), the most examples of student artwork and photos (41%) and the highest proportion of photographs of students unaccompanied by teachers (71%). Combined, these suggest that Treetops College magazine was positioned as an opportunity for students to participate, gain experience and be recognised. Foregrounding students in this way was potentially empowering for them. This magazine was also the one in which girls and female members of staff had the highest profile; girls contributed more articles than boys (55%: 45%) and female staff contributed more articles than male staff (78%:22%), and in the analysis of photographs of students there were more photographs of girls than boys, in both non-sporting and sporting contexts.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Articles	Total 160 Female 96 (60%) Male 64 (40%)	Total 182 Female 65 (38% of known authors) Male 106 (62% of known authors) Unnamed 11	Total 181 Female 87 (48%) Male 94 (52%)
Staff articles	36 (22% of contributions) Female 28 (78%) Male 8 (22%)	167 (92% of contributions) Female 59 (38% of known authors) Male 98 (62% of known authors) Unnamed teachers 10 Non-sport: Female 11 (41%) Male 16 (59%) Sport: Female 48 (37%) Male 82 (63%)	49 (27% of contributions) Female 23 (47%) Male 26 (53%)

Student articles	124 (78% of contributions) Female 68 (55%) Male 56 (45%)	15 (8% of contributions) Female 6 (43% of known authors) Male 8 (57% of known authors) Unnamed 1	132 (73% of contributions) Female 64 (48%) Male 68 (52%)
Student art and photographs	Female 26 (63%) Male 15 (37%)	Female 1 (taken with the artist) (50%) Males 1 (taken with the artist) (50%) 1 of a male artist-in-residence	Female 10 (71%) Male 4 (29%) 2 of male visiting artists and their work

Table 7.7: Annual magazines – contributors

The Melville College magazine was more formal in style than Treetops College magazine and the coverage of sporting activities was given far greater prominence than any other activity. Half the magazine was devoted to reports and photographs of sporting activities, while academic pursuits, house reports, the arts, outdoor education and international activities each contributed less than 10% of the content. It had the smallest number of photographs of all the magazines, with approximately two photographs per page. This magazine had the fewest student contributions (8%), only two examples of student artwork, and fewer photographs of students without teachers (50%). This appeared to reflect a very different approach to the publication of the school magazine, with its emphasis on professional writing and presentation and less use of the magazine as a vehicle for empowering students. At Melville College only a select handful of students had a voice in the magazine compared to the other two schools. It also had the fewest contributions from girls (girls 43%: boys 57%) and female staff (female 38%: male 62%), although for students the ratio of contributions did reflect the enrolment profile. There were more photographs of girls than boys participating in non-sporting activities, but when the photographs of sports teams and activities were analysed there were more boys pictured than girls.

The All Saints College magazine was the most formal and traditional of the three magazines and its coverage of activities lay between the other two. Most space was given to academic pursuits (21%) and sports (20%), followed in order of prominence by house reports, the arts, outdoor education and international activities. Like the Melville College magazine, there were approximately two photographs a page, and approximately half the photographs were of students unaccompanied by teachers (48%). However, the style of photograph was very different, with the majority being large formal group portraits, many of which invoked typical gender stereotypes. Although there were no examples of students participating in stereotypically gendered activities, every formal group photograph of senior students (Forms 1-6) had students conforming to traditional, highly gendered rules: boys resting fisted hands on their spread out knees, girls sitting demurely

with knees together and hands clasped in front of them. The fact that students consistently adopted these poses suggested that they may have been told by the photographer or teachers to sit this way. These representations confirmed highly gendered expectations, with boys spreading out and taking up extra space, girls sitting neatly, covering themselves protectively (Adair 1992). These gendered differences are reflected in the current social media controversy about 'manspreading' on public transport (Fitzgibbons 2014).

The level of student contributions in this magazine (73%) was similar to that of the Treetops College magazine and it included 14 examples of student artwork. Contributions from girls and boys (girls 48%: boys 52%) came closest to being even. Similarly, female and male staff contributed in more equal numbers (female 47%: male 53%). There were more photographs of girls than boys in both sporting and non-sporting contexts.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Photos	Total 578 Students only 481 Students and staff 38 Staff only 10 Principal 1 Inanimate 48	Total 263 Students only 63 + 69 (sport) Students and staff 40 + 62 (sport) Staff only 13 Principal 1 Inanimate 16	Total 345 Students only 135 + 29 (sport) Students & staff 44 + 38 (sport) + 48 (classes) Staff only 15 Principal 1 Inanimate 27
Gender – female, male, mixed			
Students only	Groups of mixed gender 148 Girls in groups or individually 147 Boys in groups or individually 119 SPORT Groups of mixed gender 4 Girls in groups or individually 38 Boys in groups or individually 25 Total 67	Groups of mixed gender 33 Girls in groups or individually 17 Boys in groups or individually 13 SPORT Groups of mixed gender 5 Girls in groups or individually 29 Boys in groups or individually 35 Total 69	Groups of mixed gender 64 Girls in groups or individually 40 Boys in groups or individually 31 SPORT Groups of mixed gender 5 Girls in groups or individually 14 Boys in groups or individually 10 Total 29

Students and staff	Staff included 34	Staff included 40	Staff included 44
	Male and female staff with:	Male and female staff with:	Male and female staff with:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 7 girls 0 boys 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 7 girls 2 boys 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 10 girls 0 boys 0
	Female staff with:	Female staff with:	Female staff with:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 8 girls 4 boys 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 14 girls 5 boys 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 10 girls 2 boys 1
	Male staff with:	Male staff with:	Male staff with:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 12 girls 1 boys 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 7 girls 0 boys 4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 17 girls 1 boys 3
	SPORT	SPORT	SPORT
	Staff included 4	Staff included 62	Staff included 38 (all but 1 formal team photos)
	Male and female staff with:	Male and female staff with:	Male and female staff with:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 3 girls 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 3 girls 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys 4

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boys 0 <p>Female staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 0 • girls 0 • boys 0 <p>Male staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 0 • girls 1 • boys 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • boys 0 <p>Female staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 0 • girls 21 • boys 2 <p>Male staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 1 • girls 5 • boys 29 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls 0 • boys 0 <p>Female staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 3 • girls 2 • boys 3 <p>Male staff with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls and boys 7 • girls 9 • boys 10 <p>Many photographs were formal group portraits, most included a member of staff.</p> <p>Total 122 including:</p> <p>classes 48 (30 senior classes included several members of staff always both female and male, primary classes only included the</p>
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			one teacher 14 women and 4 men) student leaders 15 sport 37 music ensembles 11 other 11
Staff only	Staff only 10 Male and female 3 Female 1 (on equestrian page) Male 6	Staff only 13 Male and female 4 Female 1 (2 primary teachers in fancy dress) Male 8	Staff only 20 Male and female 6 Female 4 Male 10
Gender stereotyping Photos of either girls or boys (but not both) involved in	House music dancing 3 girls 1 mixed Top performers 5/5 girls portrait shots 2/6 boys Junior concert boys' warrior dance; girls' ribbon dance Dinner dance: girls glamorous, boys fooling around	Girls dancing Girls singing Girls choir Girls swapping clothes Girls in fancy dress	Dancing: 4 photos of girls, 2 individual portraits and 2 groups Boy playing chess Public-speaking prize winner – boy

stereotypical activities	<p>Boy pulling silly face</p> <p>Bare-chested boys 2</p> <p>Hockey portrait photos: 4 girls, 0 boys</p> <p>English investigation: 7 girls, 2 boys</p> <p>Aerobics: all girls</p> <p>Canoeing: all boys</p> <p>Yr 7 OE mixed: 11 4 girls, 8 boys</p>		<p>Formal photos: girls with knees together and hands clasped, boys knees apart and hands fisted</p>
Photos of either girls or boys (but not both) involved in counter stereotypical activities	<p>Teddy bears picnic: 6 boys, 3 girls</p> <p>Boy with small children</p> <p>Boy hugging tree, listening to fairies</p> <p>House Sports reports</p> <p>6 girls, 1 boy</p> <p>5 girls, 2 boys</p> <p>7 girls, 3 boys</p> <p>2 girls 4 boys</p>	<p>Boy with primary school friends</p> <p>Boys cooking</p> <p>Girls outdoor ed</p> <p>Girl sitting on a boy</p>	

Activities represented in photos			
Academic pursuits	Student leaders 7 School work 77 Computers 1 Public speaking 0 Total 85 (13%)	Student leaders 3 School work 10 Computers 0 Public speaking 0 Total 13 (5%)	Student leaders 15 School work 20 Computers 4 Public speaking 3 Total 42 (12%)
Creative and performing arts	Music 45 Art 38 Drama 19 Dance 14 Total 116 (17%)	Music 16 Art 9 Drama 10 Dance 0 Total 35 (13%)	Music 26 Art 18 Drama 31 Dance 4 Total 79 (23%)
Sport	Sport 75 (11%)	Sport 149 (57%)	Sport 75 (22%)
Outdoor education	Outdoor education 85 (13%)	Outdoor education 6 (2%)	Outdoor education 21 (6%)
International programs	International programs 28 (4%)	International programs 14 (5%)	International programs 6 (2%)

Table 7.8: The annual magazines – photographs

A pattern was identified that linked the history of the school, the place of sport in the life of the school and the way in which gender and sport were represented. Melville College, with strong ties to its history as an elite boys school, gave the greatest priority to sport and continued to place reports of boys sport ahead of the reports of girls sport. All Saints College, which has a history as long as Melville College's but as a school for girls, gave significant prominence to sport but chose to foreground girls sport, placing reports of girls sport first. This may have been an attempt to work against the valorisation of boys sport (Elling & Knoppers 2005; Keddie & Mills 2009; Shilbury & Deane 2001; Stell 1991). However, when it came to how much was written, a harder variable to control centrally, twice as much was written about boys sport than girls sport. Finally, Treetops College, the newest of these schools, with no history of single-sex education, placed the least emphasis on sport and did not use gender as an organiser in its reporting of sport.

These glossy annual magazines, full of photographs and reports, distributed to every student as a record of life in the school for the year, did not simply reflect that life back to the school community objectively. On every page it was evident that choices and omissions had been made. The final products inevitably played a role in shaping the shared understandings of what was valued at each school. It was the magazine from Treetops College, in which equal prominence was given to a wide range of activities in which both girls and boys were engaging and the language minimised the focus on gender, which was the magazine most likely to undermine traditional gender hierarchies. In contrast, the Melville College magazine, with its strong emphasis on sport and fewer contributions from students generally and girls in particular, did the least to challenge the ascendancy of hegemonic masculinity, while the All Saints College trod a middle path.

Websites

The rapid expansion of the Internet since the mid-1990s means that every organisation, from the makers of breakfast cereal to the Australian Taxation Office, has an online presence. At the time of this research many schools were taking up the opportunity to develop 'a strong presence' on the internet, which 'provided a new vehicle' to 'communicate their image to the world' (Smith 2007, pp.63-4). However, as Christopher Drew (2013) notes, research in the area of school promotions has been primarily focused on prospectuses, and there have been few studies of school websites; none were located that focused on gender representations.

Each of the schools had a well-developed website consisting of both a public area and a private area. This move towards the use of websites to communicate both within the school community and to reach out to the wider community had been accelerating in Australian schools (Meadmore & Meadmore 2004). Drew (2013) argues that the primary purpose of the websites of elite private schools is to 'communicate ... and promote their elite image' (p.183), and that internal communications and administration are secondary functions. The private area or intranet embedded in the schools' websites was used for internal functions and available only to members of the school community by using a password. The public areas of the websites were reviewed for gender content and representations (see Table 7.9). Because of the fluid nature of any online presence, the descriptions below are a snapshot of each website in early 2004.

School	Treetops College	Melville College	All Saints College
Catchline	Knowledge era schooling	Daring to be wise	Diversity opens minds
Key phrases	<p>The knowledge network</p> <p>Learning, a lifelong experience</p> <p>Self-directed learning</p> <p>Pathways to success</p> <p>Global citizens</p> <p>Releases and enhances the talents of the individual</p> <p>Care is central to all we do</p>	<p>Liberalism and excellence</p> <p>Tradition</p> <p>Developing the whole person through timeless principles of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to know to do to live with to be with innovation and wisdom 	<p>The key values of diversity, innovation, individuality, inclusivity and uniqueness</p>
Coeducation	Not explicitly referred to	<p>A world class co-educational independent school</p> <p>'There is no better, nor more natural way, than coeducation'</p>	Coeducational, Anglican, innovative, future, progressive

		<p>‘Coeducation at ... prepares girls and boys for the real world beyond school. In such an environment – the most natural and beneficial – they are able to grow, to think and to learn to live together.’</p> <p>‘Coeducation – living together harmoniously in society and learning from one another is more important now than ever before. This applies to learning from the other gender as much as learning from other cultures. Coeducation allows students to develop social skills and understanding of one another, which is critical in learning to live and to work together for a better world.’</p>	
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Visuals	Groups of students involved in active pursuits Very few teachers	Groups of students involved in active or informal pursuits computer, music and sporting activities	Students involved in sport, outdoor education, music and drama activities Group in school uniform Teacher portraits beside biographies and principal's welcome
Gender	Mostly mixed groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys approximately equal 	Mostly mixed groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys approximately equal 	Mostly single-sex groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> girls and boys approximately equal
Language	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual child young people his or her 	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual students young people girls and boys 	Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> individual child

Table 7.9: School websites

These websites were critical to the image management of these schools. As Drew (2013) points out, a school's website is often the first contact a prospective client – usually a parent – has with a school. Consequently, he argues, they 'function as high-stakes texts' (p.179). This is in contrast to prospectuses, which are sent in response to potential clients who have already decided they are interested, and annual magazines, whose primary audiences are the families and students who are already a part of the school community. At the time these websites were reviewed, a website immediately marked the school 'as a digitally savvy, contemporary and professional institution' (Drew 2013, p.178). As Symes (1998) notes, school promoters will do 'anything to press home ... that the school is keeping abreast of the latest technology' (p.144).

The students at Melville College, where all students from Years 7 to 10 were required to have a personal laptop computer, were well aware of this marketing imperative. They argued that the laptop computer program was primarily a marketing tool, and some of them were not impressed:

Tom: It's obvious. I mean they try to use them as educational tools but it's obviously ... it's all an advertising ploy really to say we are the most advanced teaching and learning ... Yeah, we're at the cutting edge so come to our school.

Nick: Yeah we just said, we were talking about it before, like it's just all advertising and how they're saying we are the best.

Spiro: Yeah.

Nick: Cutting edge in technology.

Spiro: That's such crap.

Each website had many photographs, most of which depicted co-curricular activities and computing. Not only did these activities provide visually interesting images, but as in the other materials, they also pointed to the 'value-addedness' that private schools promote as the reason to move out of the government school system (Meadmore & Meadmore 2004, p.376). Similarly, Forbes and Weiner (2008), in their study of independent Scottish schools, reported the emphasis was on activities beyond the purely academic performance of the student cohort. They argue that school websites 'suggest particular values and a menu of practices that produce

particular forms of embodied capital – capitals which in the view of the school will be of particular benefit to “their” young people’ (p.518). The three schools in this study followed this pattern, with the majority of images portraying students participating in co-curricular activities, developing well-rounded portfolios of skills.

On the Treetops College and Melville College websites, most photographs were of groups of students that included both girls and boys, while the All Saints College website had more photographs of individual students and single-sex groups. The language used was carefully gender neutral – ‘student’, ‘child’, ‘individual’, ‘young person’. Melville College was the only school to occasionally use an explicit gender description such as ‘girls and boys’. This follows the same pattern as was identified in the prospectuses, where the phrase ‘girls and boys’ was also used by Melville College. There are potentially two ways of interpreting the use of this phrase by Melville College. It may be that its occasional use was intended to emphasise the presence of girls to readers who were at risk of slipping back to thinking of this school as a boys’ school. On the other hand, it may be that within the school itself non-gendered terms were still read as male, and therefore the tendency to be explicit about the presence of girls. Either explanation suggests a continuing tension in relation to the presence of girls at this previously elite boys school.

The Treetops College website picked up on many of the phrases and themes evident in the prospectus. For example, as in the prospectus, there was no explicit reference to coeducation, and ‘the culture of care’ was again discussed. A number of key phrases used on the website such as ‘knowledge-era’ and ‘global citizens’ pointed to an emphasis on a global future. This contrasted with the more traditional focus of the other two schools. The website included many photographs, and the representation of girls and boys was approximately equal, with most photographs being of mixed groups of students. As noted in relation to the prospectus, most of the photographs depicted co-curricular activities and computing.

As with the advertisements and prospectus reviewed previously, Melville College's website made explicit reference to and argued the case for coeducation. It was visited early in the project when it had included a page devoted to discussing the benefits of coeducation. On revisiting the site in 2004, explicit statements about the value of coeducation appeared throughout the website. For example, 'Coeducation at ... prepares girls and boys for the real world beyond school. In such an environment – the most natural and beneficial – they are able to grow, to think and to learn to live together' (see Table 7.9 for other examples). Neither of the other schools argued the case for coeducation in this way on their websites; as noted above, Treetops College did not explicitly mention being coeducational and All Saints College simply stated that it was an 'Anglican coeducational school'. This mirrored the variation in emphasis on coeducation found in advertisements and prospectuses, and added further support to the suggestion that Melville College was intent on highlighting its shift from a boys' school to a coeducational school.

All Saints College was founded by Anglican nuns and continued to draw heavily on their legacy in the themes on its website. There were web pages entitled 'What we believe' and 'Spiritual life', where it was stated that the school 'proudly continues the traditions established by [the nuns]' and that the values instilled into the All Saints College culture by the nuns are 'as relevant today as they were a century ago'. This was in sharp contrast to the emphasis on the Treetops College website on a global future.

The messages delivered via a website are inevitably more complex and multi-layered than those in the other hardcopy publications reviewed in this chapter, but there are some similarities. The emphasis on careful use of gender-neutral language was again evident. In advertisements and prospectuses there were more photographs of girls than boys. However, on the websites, as was the case with CD-ROMs included in the prospectuses from Melville College and All Saints College, visual representations of girls did not outnumber those of boys. It is unclear why there was this difference; in each case, where the format was static girls were foregrounded, with more photos of girls, while in the representations in the more fluid multi-media

formats boys outnumbered girls. Keeping in mind that prospectuses are in many ways an idealistic representation of the way schools would like to be seen (DiMartino & Jessen 2014; Fuller & Dooley 1997; Hooper 2011; Knight 1992; McDonald, Pini & Mayes 2012; Saltmarsh 2007), it may be that the differences in formats reflected the degree of editorial control the school could exert. In the static format of advertisements and printed prospectuses the foregrounding of girls could be controlled, while with websites and CD-ROMs, which are less amenable to central control, more images of boys than girls were used. Even though photographs of girls did not outnumber photographs of boys on these websites, girls were depicted as participating in the full range of activities in approximately equal numbers with boys; which meant girls were still over-represented in the visual mix on these websites, but to a lesser degree than was the case in the schools' static publications.



In many of these published materials there seemed to have been a concerted effort to minimise the representation of gender differences. The consistent message was that there was a wide range of opportunities open to all students and that students at these schools, girls and boys, availed themselves of these opportunities. The vast majority of articles and reports, other than those linked to sport, made careful use of gender-neutral language and were accompanied by photographs of both girls and boys. In the static format promotional materials there was a tendency to foreground girls, which, at least at Treetops College was part of a deliberate marketing strategy to reassure parents and perhaps the girls themselves that they got 'a fair go'.

It was in Melville College's publications that the greatest contradictions were evident. On the one hand, it was in these publications that the strongest statements regarding coeducation were made and where the editorial control seemed strongest, with very low levels of student contributions. In some of the publications reviewed here, editorial control seemed to result in a stronger presence of girls. However, the annual magazine from Melville College had the lowest proportion of female contributors, and activities linked to the feminine sphere came a poor second to sport, and boys sport in

particular dominated the magazine. Despite having been coeducational for several decades, Melville College had a much longer tradition reaching back to the nineteenth century as an elite school for boys, and it seemed that there were strong traces of this earlier identity still evident in the annual school magazine. Although Melville College may have struggled to maintain an even gender balance in the annual magazine, in the other materials from the school there was a clear strategy to represent girls and boys as equals who shared the same activities and opportunities.

Across the three schools, wherever girls and boys were represented in similar ways and gender stereotypes avoided, a space was created for the school community, and students in particular, to see girls and boys as more alike than different, which had the potential to present a significant challenge to the traditional gender hierarchies.

Uniforms

A school uniform is rich in symbolism. According to Connell's (2009) theoretical framework, 'gender symbolism' (p. 83) is present in many aspects of the way that we present ourselves to the world. As will be discussed here, school uniforms are awash with gender symbolism. In addition to gender, as Andrew Wilkins (2012) argues, the school uniform 'represents the school that the learner attends, and is indicative of the values, beliefs, ethics, traditions, identity and general image that the school maintains, as well as the discipline sustained' (p.159). On a similar note, Rebecca English (2004) describes students in uniform as 'transportable advertising' (p.53) and as a consequence school uniforms are part of the impression management undertaken by schools operating in the education market (Symes 1998). As Kenway and Bullen (2001) note, 'Most schools are obsessed with students' appearance and the uniform is a central feature of this obsession' (p.143). The three schools participating in this research were no exception and all required students to wear a school uniform and regulate other aspects of their appearance.

In Australia, school uniforms have been 'part of the basic fabric' of school life since the middle of the twentieth century (Holden 2005, p.16). Parents are reported to equate well-dressed students with good school discipline (English 2004, p.53) and say that 'the requirement that a uniform be worn' (Daniels 2004, p.46) is one of the reasons for choosing to send their children to private schools. Schools that require students to wear a formal uniform almost universally provide trousers for boys and skirts or dresses for girls. Skirts 'differentiate the female from the male ... and are the physical markers of sex ... confirming "traditional" gender identities ... they have ... implications for how girls are treated, viewed ... and how they are able to move' (Happel 2013, p.94). This has been a source of concern for feminist educators for many decades. In the 1980s, Michelle Stanworth (1983) identified how girls uniforms were more restrictive and inhibiting than those of boys. In the 1990s an Australian report argued that 'the pleasure our culture derives from gazing at girls who look feminine conflicts with girls' freedom to run around unselfconsciously and to develop their gross motor talents as boys are encouraged to do' (Collins et al. 1996, p.170). The problem as explained by Alison Happel (2013) is that 'Skirts restrict movement in real ways; wearers must negotiate how they sit, how they play, and how quickly they move. Skirt-wearing, consciously and unconsciously, imposes considerations of modesty and immodesty, in ways that trousers do not' (p.94). Consequently, skirts '[demand] a particular type of gender performance' (Happel 2013, p.93) and can contribute to 'confirm[ing] gender hierarchies' (Swain cited in Spencer 2007, p.236).

The uniforms worn by students at the three schools participating in this study were not only part of each school's public image campaign, but also a powerful gender marker with all the symbolism of traditional gendered dress codes. The girls wore a dress in summer and a tunic or skirt in winter, while the boys' uniform was a shirt, and shorts or trousers. Everyone had access to a jumper and a blazer for warmth. At both Treetops College and Melville College the girls had the option of wearing grey trousers, but it was almost universally ignored. At Treetops College I did not see any girl wearing the grey school trousers and many students were unaware that this was even

possible. At Melville College one Year 10 girl consistently wore the trousers, but she was the only one on a campus with approximately 500 girls enrolled.

The girls at these two schools were unanimous in their responses when asked about the trousers – none of it was positive. The messages were repeated in conversation after conversation: ‘They’re uncomfortable’, ‘Just make them comfortable’, ‘They’re really ugly’, ‘Yeah these are ugly’, ‘They’re weird’, ‘They’re yukky’. Clearly, they did not like the trousers, but much of this seemed to be linked to the fact that they were the same as the boys’ trousers. Often the negative assessments were linked to the fact that the trousers were ‘too boyish’: ‘They’re like guy pants’, ‘You feel like a guy if you wear the pants’, ‘It’s a boys uniform’, ‘Not going to wear pants ... at school you know you just feel too much like a guy if you wear pants’. At Treetops College, even the Year 8 boys when asked about the girls’ refusal to take up the option of trousers acknowledged the issue of gender confusion: ‘They probably don’t want to look like boys’, ‘Classified as a guy thing’, ‘Because they might look like guys’.

Many of the girls thought that if the trousers were ‘girl trousers’ and they liked them, they would wear them, but this was a big ‘if’. In order to be liked the trousers would have to meet strict criteria. They needed to be ‘comfortable’, ‘stylish’, ‘tight’, ‘[personally] fitted’, ‘like jeans’ and ‘a decent colour’. However, the girls were not optimistic that trousers that met their criteria would be an option. As one Year 8 girl at Treetops College said, ‘But I don’t think they’ll make them’. Although many of the girls were prepared to consider the possibility of girls’ trousers, there were others who thought they would stay with the skirt at school. As one Year 10 student at Treetops College said, ‘Because they’re pants. And all other schools that I know people they [the girls] all wear skirts and the boys wear pants’.

At All Saints College the girls did not have an option of wearing trousers as part of their uniform. When it was raised as a possibility, the first response was positive. However, this was quickly followed by a ‘reality check’:

hang on our school would give us horrible pants – yeah they would – have you seen the pants the girls are allowed to wear at [Melville] they're foul, they're really off – do girls wear pants at [Melville] – you're allowed to they're really yuk – they're gross.

The girls were united in not wanting to wear the school trousers, despite agreeing that they rarely wore dresses or skirts out of school, preferring jeans and 'girls' pants'. Although they had rejected the trousers option, it seemed that wearing dresses and skirts was nevertheless problematic. At all three schools the girls catalogued a series of disadvantages associated with wearing skirts – they were often cold and there was the constant risk that the skirts would reveal their underwear. 'It's so bad having a skirt because if you run too fast your skirt goes up and the wind blows – actually you're really restricted like you can't do anything like you can't do sports and stuff if you have a dress on'. In an attempt to mitigate this problem, across the three schools girls reported similar strategies: 'I wear bike shorts under them' or 'As long as there's boxers underneath I'm happy'.

The girls at Melville College tended to wear their skirts shorter than the girls at the other two schools, which meant that the problems for them were exacerbated. In addition to this the architects of the Middle School building had placed the power and internet outlets for the laptop computers on the floor under the desks. This meant that to plug in their computers students had to get down on the floor and reach under the desks. For the girls in short dresses and skirts this presented a challenge. They would be on their knees, one hand trying to plug in to the outlet and the other behind them pulling down on their skirt to try and make sure there was no hint of underwear. This inevitably required those constant 'considerations of modesty and immodesty' referred to by Happel (2013, p.93).

The sport/PE uniform at Treetops College provided an interesting contrast to the formal school uniform. As part of the sport/PE uniform there was a unisex tracksuit and polo shirt which many students, both girls and boys, seemed to wear for extended periods. In discussions about the formal uniform the tracksuit pants were pointed to as a contrast, 'Like these pants are fine, like sports, but the other pair ...'. The tracksuit and polo shirt were not strongly

identified with either girls or boys. They were described as comfortable and students appeared to take any opportunity to wear them in preference to the formal school uniform. On the day sport was held students would wear their tracksuits all day.

While the girls had talked about not wanting to wear the same trousers as the boys, when it came to the sport/PE uniform, wearing the same tracksuits and polo shirts as the boys did not bother them. It seemed that the main issue was wearing trousers that they regarded as boys' trousers, which would therefore risk marking them as boys.

These observations and conversations suggested that most of the girls were keen to mark their 'not-boyiness' by not wearing 'boys' trousers, and there were some who despite the disadvantages of skirts would continue to mark their gender by wearing a skirt at school even if more acceptable pants became an option.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have undertaken an analysis of the symbolic relations dimension of gender in the three schools under study. Two visible symbols of the school and gender were examined – publications and school uniform. This analysis revealed contradictory trends.

The marketing publications in this analysis appeared to pay careful attention to presenting each school in gender-neutral terms. The combination of language carefully chosen to elide gender, an even spread of attention to activities coded female and male, and a choice of photographs to ensure that girls and boys were represented as participating in almost all of these activities provided a strong example of the 'cultural neutrality' that Connell (2006b) identifies as a '[a refusal] to mark gender difference or marking it only in limited ways' (p.846). Furthermore, it was noted that although boys outnumbered girls at each of these schools, there were more photographs of girls than boys in each school's print-based publications. This appeared to be

another aspect of a deliberate strategy to reassure parents who feared that the boys in these coeducational settings may overwhelm their daughters. In contrast, in the multi-media materials analysed – the websites and the CD-ROMs included in two of the prospectuses – visual representations of girls did not outnumber those of boys, and it was suggested that the fluidity of these multi-media materials made it more difficult to maintain tight editorial control.

The annual magazine from Treetops College continued the pattern of cultural neutrality identified in the other publications, but markers of the traditional gender hierarchy were evident in the annual magazines from Melville College and All Saints College. At Melville College it was the overwhelming dominance of sport, and boys sport in particular, that valorised hegemonic masculinity; at All Saints College it was the more than 70 formal group portraits, in which students sat in traditional gendered ways, that provided a constant reminder of the traditional gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, the high visibility of girls in these materials had the potential to counteract any concern that girls might understand themselves as invisible or unimportant.

Across these publications, those from Treetops College provided the most consistent challenge to traditional gender hierarchies. There were some reminders of these hierarchies in the annual magazines from the other two schools, but despite this the overwhelming message across all the publications analysed was that girls and boys were actively involved in all aspects of school life; at these schools they worked and played together and shared in a wide range of experiences, they did not inhabit different worlds. This message was one that had the potential to undermine hegemonic masculinity and hierarchical gender relations, as girls claimed their place alongside boys.

In sharp contrast to the de-emphasising of gender evident in school publications, the school uniform appears to be a residual but powerful gender marker. It conforms to the traditional gender stereotypes, and is a constant and highly visible marker of gender difference. Again, in the realm of symbolic relations, strong, contradictory currents were evident.

CHAPTER 8

THESE ELITE COEDUCATIONAL SCHOOLS: POTENTIALLY DISRUPTING THE TRADITIONAL GENDER HIERARCHIES

In this chapter, I return to the key questions posed in this study. I argue that the three elite coeducational schools examined in this thesis challenged traditional gender hierarchies in a range of ways. However, the gender regimes were complex, and at each school there were also examples of these traditional understandings being reinscribed. Careful analysis of the gender regimes of these schools has revealed that there were differences between the schools and therefore it was not possible to generalise about them. I then reflect on the study, looking back at the process, and the role played by Connell's 'thinking tools' – the four dimensions of gender (Connell 2009, p.85), and looking forward to some of the questions posed as a result of this study. Finally, I turn to the issue that lies at the heart of these schools' involvement in this project: the gender imbalance in their enrolments and the underpinning concern that coeducational schools are 'risky' environments for girls. I argue that the risks had abated in these schools and that they provided opportunities for gender equity work that are not possible in single-sex schools.

These three schools: disrupting and reinscribing traditional gender hierarchies

The first of the questions posed by this research was: 'Are these three elite coeducational schools disrupting or reinscribing the traditional gender hierarchies?' The analysis of gender regimes in these schools revealed that the traditional gender hierarchies were disrupted at many points. Alongside this, some aspects of life in these schools were continuing to reinscribe the

traditional gender hierarchies. Both challenges and disruptions were identified in all four dimensions of gender; some were evident in the gender regimes of all three schools, while others were evident in only one or two of the schools.

Similarities in the gender regimes of the three schools

In the analysis of power relations, at all three schools gender equity was readily apparent in many arenas. For example, student leaders were appointed in female/male pairs. This had the potential to be a powerful disruption of the association of leadership with masculinity and men and boys. Contrary to much of the previous research, which reported that girls were silenced or marginalised in coeducational classrooms, girls were observed to be more likely to contribute to the productive work of classrooms than boys and contribute more than their fair share of the noise. In their free time, the majority of the boys at these schools chose to 'hang out' with friends in preference to playing sport, and there were very low levels of aggressive behaviour such as fighting. Neither of these behaviours accorded with hegemonic masculinity.

In relation to the analysis of production relations there was greater variation across the three schools, but there were some significant commonalities. The nexus between women and caring for others had been disrupted in the staffing of all the pastoral care programs, with women and men appointed in equal proportions. At all three schools it was unusual for students to be called on to help or to volunteer their assistance, but across the three schools, boys were slightly more likely to be the ones helping out, regardless of the task. Girls were not called upon to look after or tidy up after the boys, as had been reported in earlier literature (Cruddas & Haddock 2003; Francis 2005; Kenway et al. 1998; Stanworth 1983).

In the emotional relations dimension, the salience of gender was de-emphasised. The analysis of students' friendships revealed that in the senior year levels, across all three schools, most students valued friendships in

which gender was not foregrounded, and preferred to keep their romantic relationships out of school or at least out of sight. These relationships, in which the salience of gender was de-emphasised, were described as de-polarised (Connell 2006b). A surprising finding in this domain was that not only did girls have 'a civilising influence' (Tsolidis & Dobson 2006, p.215) on the boys, but girls' negative behaviour was also moderated by the boys, with some intervening to support girls who were the victims of bullying behaviour. Both students and staff at these schools believed that there was less aggressive behaviour in these coeducational settings than was the norm in single-sex settings.

Finally, in the analysis of symbolic relations it was evident that all three schools actively built a public image that was gender neutral (Connell 2006b, p.844) and that represented girls as 'getting a fair go'. The marketing materials from all three schools used carefully chosen language, avoiding gender-specific terms, and activities from both the male and female spheres were given equal prominence. The many photographs, designed to reassure prospective parents and students, represented girls and boys participating in all of the activities and opportunities on offer.

Despite these significant disruptions, Connell (2008a) argues that gender regimes are 'multi-dimensional ... and liable to have internal unevennesses and tensions' (pp.136-7). This was the case in these schools. There were also patterns in the social relations of gender that did not challenge the traditional gender hierarchies, but rather had the potential to reinscribe them. For example, in all three of schools men were overrepresented in the leadership profile, and the women who were part of leadership teams tended to have responsibility for areas of school life linked to the female sphere – younger students and curriculum areas with connections to traditional female roles and strengths. Similarly, the formal school uniform at each school was a residual, but powerful gender marker, with girls wearing skirts and dresses that required constant 'considerations of modesty and immodesty' (Happel 2013, p.93).

In conclusion, these findings demonstrate that across these schools traditional gender hierarchies were disrupted in a number of similar ways. There were many shared opportunities to complicate the traditional gender hierarchies. However, there were also various ways in which all three schools reinscribed traditional gender hierarchies, which remain symbolically powerful. Despite this, there were also many differences identified between them, even though their headline demographics were similar, and it was these differences that defined each school's distinct gender regime.

Treetops College

At Treetops College there were many aspects of school life that had the potential to interrupt traditional gender arrangements in addition to those described above. In relation to power relations, the links between power, physical strength and hegemonic masculinity were disrupted at several levels. Sport, with its strong links to hegemonic masculinity, was represented as just one among many co-curricular activities, while the outdoor education program, which, I argued, sat between the male and female spheres, appeared to be more central to the life of this school. In addition to this, the PE classes were mixed, which gave students the opportunity to compare the reality of girls' and boys' sporting ability against the stereotypes. In relation to production relations, girls in VCE enrolled in the masculine subjects of maths and science in greater proportion than for the rest of the state. In respect of emotional relations, the official school climate was invoked in the phrase: 'Central to all that we do is care'. This was the catchline on much of the school's publicity material – arguably a substantive foregrounding of a feminine approach. Supporting this climate of care was a range of school structures and policies. Finally, in relation to symbolic relations, all the school's publications, including the annual magazine, were gender neutral in their use of language and representations of school life.

Despite this there were some areas of school life where the traditional gender hierarchies continued. Under power relations, a stark contrast was shown to the mantra of a climate of care, with Treetops College being the only one of the schools where verbal, sex-based harassment directed at particular

individuals was observed. There was also a culture in which the boys made up and used insulting nicknames linked to girls' physical appearance, with the excuse that it was 'just a joke' and the girls put up with it. In the analysis of production relations, the women on the staff at Treetops College were more restricted to areas of responsibility with strong links to the feminine than was the case at the other schools. In the analysis of students' VCE subject choices, boys were less likely to enrol in female-coded subjects than was the case across the state and Treetops College was the only school where there were VCE subjects that had effectively become single-sex classes within a coeducational setting.

Despite very consistent attention to gender equity in the formal structures and policies, and many examples of the traditional gender hierarchies being challenged – for example, the mixed PE classes where girls competed fiercely against the boys – it was at Treetops College that boys' gendered subject choices were strongest and where the most sex-based harassment was observed. This will be taken up later in this chapter.

Melville College

At Melville College, in addition to those characteristics shared with the other schools, there were aspects of school life that significantly undermined hegemonic masculinity and also those that reinscribed it powerfully. In the analysis of power relations, we saw how the boys reported that the girls at the school would not tolerate any sexist behaviour or sex-based harassment. It did appear that the girls at Melville College were more confident, more assertive and less likely to tolerate sexist behavior from their male classmates than girls at the other schools. Furthermore, in respect of production relations, the boys were more likely to select female-coded subjects than was the case in the statewide data. In both these ways the boys at Melville College did not conform to hegemonic masculinity.

In stark contrast to this, analysis identified a cluster of characteristics with strong links to hegemonic masculinity. Foremost amongst these was, in the discussion of power relations, the staffing profile and the sports program. The

senior staffing of the school was described by some as 'blokey', and was more dominated by men than at the other schools. The valorisation of the sports program led to it being the preeminent co-curricular activity. Sport was extremely well resourced and demanded a large and regular investment of time from students and their families. It dominated the annual magazine and boys' sport was positioned as more important, more worthy, than girls' sport. This worked against the strong public message of commitment to coeducation and to girls within that context, and further consolidated the links between sport and hegemonic masculinity.

Under production relations, the contrast between the sports program and the other co-curricular programs was noted. Sport was compulsory, while the outdoor education and performing arts programs were optional and, although very popular with students, were almost invisible in the school; hence their potential to challenge or disrupt the valorisation of hegemonic masculinity was limited. Furthermore, in respect of symbolic relations, the annual school magazine had the lowest level of contributions from female staff and students as compared with the other schools, and close analysis of the publicity materials revealed the message that girls were more sensible and reliable than boys; that they were not the larrikins.

The contrast at Melville College was between the reinscription of traditional gender hierarchies and hegemonic masculinity via the sports program and publicity materials and the boys' less gendered subject choices and absence of sex-based harassment, which interrupted the traditional gender hierarchies.

All Saints College

There were several ways in which the traditional gender hierarchies were unsettled at All Saints College. In respect of power relations, the low profile of sport was so central to the school's identity that senior staff argued that the boys attracted to the school were 'not elite sportsmen ... they tend to be the more sensitive types'. Observations of the boys at All Saints College supported this characterisation; sport did not seem to be at the centre of their

universe. This was the school where no sex-based harassment was observed, and only a single observation of coarse language. In relation to production relations, in the formal curriculum both girls and boys were more inclined to enrol in subjects that worked against gender stereotypes than at the other schools. In a similar vein, the co-curricular sports program was just one among a range of activities available, appearing to rank behind both outdoor education and the creative and performing arts in the life of the school.

One instance of the traditional gender hierarchies being reinscribed that was not shared across the three schools was revealed in the analysis of symbolic relations. In the large formal group photographs that dominated the annual magazine, the girls and boys took up highly gendered poses, with boys spreading out and taking up extra space, and girls sitting neatly. The formal and traditional style of these photos emphasised gender differentiation.

At All Saints College, despite being the school with the highest proportion of boys enrolled, the disruption of the traditional gender hierarchies was more consistent across this analysis than at the other schools. In this school other factors, which will be discussed below, were exerting a strong influence on the gender regime.



The analysis of the gender regimes of these schools was undertaken in order to answer the key question: 'Are these three elite coeducational schools disrupting or reinscribing the traditional gender hierarchies?' From this analysis it is clear that there is no simple answer to this question. At each school there were many instances of the traditional gender hierarchies being disrupted, but there were also some instances of them being reinscribed. On the basis of the analysis undertaken here, it appears that at each school disruption of the gender hierarchies was occurring across more of the aspects of school life reported here than reinscription. In many aspects of school life there was a commitment to formal gender equity or to systematically de-emphasising gender, which Connell (2006b) refers to as

'degendering' (p.840). This was reflected in a range of processes and behaviours that undermined traditional gender divisions. The strong emphasis on not marking gender in many areas, combined with the mantra that men and women can do anything, provided an enabling framework.

I argue that students at these three schools had the opportunity to learn to work and play together in ways that did not foreground gender. Student relationships across genders were low-key and easy-going, with students focusing on the benefits of friendship, while romantic relationships were rare and often invisible. This appeared to mirror the 'depolarized' workplaces described by Connell (Connell 2006b, p.842).

The students at these schools were aware of the negative discourse that surrounds coeducational schools, as discussed in Chapter 2. However, they argued that gender was not the primary organiser of their relationships, that they treated each other as people and friends rather than boys or girls, and that they had long since gotten over any 'thrill' or distraction of being at a coeducational school. They were adamant that students at single-sex schools missed out on the opportunity to develop the skills and friendships that are essential for living in a coeducational world. These students positioned themselves as advantaged, both now and into the future.

The girls and boys in these schools shared in a wide range of experiences; they did not inhabit different worlds. Furthermore, they recognised this and this understanding itself has the potential to further undermine hegemonic masculinity and the traditional gender hierarchies.

The contributions of class, culture and history to gender regimes

In the analysis undertaken so far, differences between the gender regimes in these schools were revealed but the patterns and contradictions within them are yet to be explained. The gender regimes of organisations usually share many characteristics with the gender order of the society in which they are

located, although they may also depart from them. The ways in which a school's gender regime departs from the gender order, and is different from other schools, is potentially related to the particular class and cultural location of the students and the school, and to the history of the school (Connell 2009). Students in a school bring with them the gender expectations and dispositions of their families and close community (Morrow 2006), and this may reflect class positionings since it can be argued that class 'permeates the micro politics of our lives (Lynch & Lodge cited in Smyth, Mooney & Casey 2014, p.3). Emma Renold (2005) finds that:

The only girls able to sustain their resistance to the overt (hetero)sexualisation of femininity were the more conformist high-achieving middle-class girls. (Middle) class and (high) academic ability were thus key signifiers for both girls' *and* boys' construction and maintenance of non-hegemonic (hetero)masculinities and (hetero)femininities. (p.163 emphasis in original)

This finding appears to be in line with earlier evidence that 'in more middle class schools there is less traditional sex stereotyping' (Delamont 2001, p. 30). In addition to this, gender understandings embedded in policies and processes are likely to be deep set in the history of the school, as the 'way things are done here'. Not only can differences in the gender regimes of schools be linked to their social location and history, there is an argument to be made that a school's culture and values become self-perpetuating as families and students who share a similar worldview are drawn to the school (DiMartino & Jessen 2014). This leads to the consolidation of that culture and values, and confirmation and strengthening of the differences between schools. These three schools vary in both their class and cultural location, and have different histories, which can assist in understanding the differences identified in their gender regimes.

Although these three schools were categorised as 'elite' at the commencement of this study, it became clear that they did not enjoy the same location in relation to class and culture. Class, another complex and contested term, can be:

understood through social relations ... as a form of social division that is determined by economic and cultural exchanges ... Economic *and* cultural attributes shape people's opportunities and choices in a market economy and thus determine their social class. (Fahey, Prosser & Shaw 2015, p.17)

Johanna Fahey and colleagues (2015) invoke the notion of privilege in their discussion of elite schools, where privilege 'refers to the special entitlements that are granted to a restricted group, in this case those largely social, economic and political advantages that accrue for the students who attend these elite schools' (p.1). They go on to describe the role that history, tradition, bodily presentations and performances, and locations and spaces play in marking the elite school out from its surroundings and in the 'formation of elite identities' (p.21). In this framing the different locations in relation to class and culture of the three case-study schools would have resulted in different levels of privilege.

Treetops College was established in the 1970s – at the time that the other two schools shifted from single-sex to coeducation. In contrast to the other two schools, Treetops College was located on the edge of the metropolitan area, almost 30 kilometres from the CBD, and as a result drew its students from the suburbs around it and the rural areas beyond. The socioeconomic status of these families was not as high on average as that of the other two schools, with more parents coming from small business and trade backgrounds. Nor did Treetops College have the traditions or history of the other two schools. Girls and boys had always been present and there had never been a need to make space for the 'other'. It seemed that from the start the focus had been on contemporary values and an even-handed approach to gender, and it was at Treetops College that the school structures provided the most consistent challenges to the traditional gender hierarchies. Despite this, as identified above, it was also the school where the traditional gender hierarchies were still strongest in key areas of school life – in boys' subject choices and the occurrence of sex-based harassment, including insulting nicknames for the girls. These relationships powerfully reinscribed traditional gender hierarchies. It seemed that the explanation for this might lie outside the school. Were the students at Treetops College bringing

traditional gendered subjectivities with them to school? This was the school with lower levels of privilege. Neither a sense of history and tradition nor demarcation of the school from the community around it was central to the school narrative. The sense of entitlement was not as strong. Did this contribute to more girls and boys conforming to gender stereotypes than challenging them?

On the other hand, Melville College was located close to Melbourne's CBD, with grand buildings looking across an oval to a tree-lined boulevard. There was a 'palpable sense of privilege' (Fahey, Prosser & Shaw 2015, p.1) here. The elegant spaces, displays of school history and famous alumni, and green sports fields surrounded by high fences and gates set it apart from the surrounding community. It drew its students from across Melbourne, from upper-middle class families with professional and business backgrounds. The students were described by staff as 'aware of their rights', 'savvy', 'street-smart' and 'less authoritarian' than those from nearby elite schools. The school's history as a boys' school seemed to cast long shadows across many aspects of school life. The even more masculine profile of the senior staff and the 'blokiess' that was causing concern to some female members of staff may be linked to that history. The valorisation of the sports program above everything else, and boys' sport over girls' sport, almost certainly flowed from Melville College's boys school history. The characterisation of the school as 'larrikin' was redolent with extroverted masculine confidence. However, despite this there were many ways in which the boys there did not embrace all aspects of hegemonic masculinity. For example, they did not play a lot of informal sport during their free time and they reported that they would never address insulting nicknames to the girls for fear of getting their 'balls kicked in'. As Carrie Paechter (2006a) has identified:

it is notable that it is largely those men who have other sources of hegemonic power, through their race and class positions, who are able overtly to distance themselves from some hegemonic masculine forms (though of course they still benefit from the patriarchal dividend. (p.256)

This may well have been the case with these boys, who were located in a very privileged social position. Furthermore, the girls at Melville College appeared to have the agency and space to take their place alongside the

boys in many aspects of school life and to take a stand against any hint of sexual harassment or name-calling. At Melville College there were aspects of school life that reinscribed hegemonic masculinity juxtaposed against relationships that challenged the traditional gender hierarchies.

A few kilometres away, All Saints College faced a busy street. The gracious converted houses that were the public face of the school blended into the streetscape, hiding the larger, more modern buildings behind them. Like Melville College, the students travelled from across Melbourne. The parents of the students here were 'not bastions of the business community' but rather from media and entertainment or the professions, and described with affection by the principal as 'slightly daggy'. The history of All Saints College led to very different alliances and priorities than at Melville College. The school celebrated the religious and spiritual traditions passed down from the founding Anglican nuns, and religious observances and celebrations were part of daily life. In relation to privilege and a sense of entitlement, All Saints seemed to be placed between the other schools. In contrast to Melville College, sport did not have a central place in the life of the school, with both outdoor education and the performing arts appearing to engender more enthusiasm from the students and the school community. The students were more reserved and less street-smart than their contemporaries at Melville College, but the relationships across genders were similarly relaxed and low-key. Bullying, teasing and sexual harassment were at very low levels and it was described as a 'gentle' school. It was here that there was the most consistent disruption of the traditional gender hierarchies.

Each of these schools was an extremely complex organisation, confirming the observation made by Amanda Keddie (2009) that 'schools are not unified entities' (p.41). The use of Connell's multi-dimensional framework of gender relations enabled some of 'the internal unevennesses and tensions' (Connell 2008a, pp.136-7) in gender regimes to be identified. I have argued that some of this complexity can be traced back to the geographical location, class location and history of the schools. It was not possible to order the schools from most to least gender equitable. Each one presented a mosaic of gender arrangements, in many ways challenging the gender hierarchies, but also

displaying instances where they were reinscribed. In each school the way these processes fitted together was unique, reminding us that institutional cultures matter (Connell 2006b, 2009; Dillabough 2001).

The implications for other schools

The case-study methodology has shown unique patterns of similarities and differences between the schools studied in this thesis. The findings here show the dangers of generalising across schools. This study had a very specific location in relation to class, culture and history. Gender relationships do not stand above class. As Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett (1982) noted more than 20 years ago, gender and class ‘do interact, and that means all the time’ (p.180). It is likely that many of the findings that were common to these schools may be specific to middle- and upper-class settings.

For example, these middle- and upper-class students were generally engaged with the school project (Swain 2005). They aspired to academic success, which framed their engagement with school and was clearly reflected in their classroom relationships and subject choices. Furthermore, they participated enthusiastically in co-curricular activities, which were full of potential for developing leadership skills and a personal profile that was ‘balanced, well-rounded and successful in many fields’ (O’Flynn & Lee 2010, p.61). Students with less investment in school and school outcomes might show different patterns of engagement. The low rates of romantic relationships might also have been specific to this setting for quite pragmatic reasons. As reported, students repeatedly said they preferred to keep their romantic relationships outside of school. For most of them this was possible due to friendships with students in other independent schools – coeducational and single-sex. These friendships often went back to primary school, since in middle- and upper-class settings in Melbourne students from a local government primary school often scatter to a wide range of secondary schools. It is possible that this is a very different situation to that found in lower SES communities, where the vast majority of students from a number of feeder primary schools all converge on the local high school. Students in

these schools may have far fewer opportunities to socialise with students outside their own school, unless they socialise with young people who have already left school, which has been found to lead to a variety of negative impacts (Mrug, Borch & Cillessen 2011). Consequently, it may be more problematic for them to keep their romantic relationships separate from school.

As soon as we start to look beyond these three schools we can see how critical the local context is to the life of a school and the gender relationships developed within it. These case studies cannot tell us how gender relationships will be understood and acted out in other schools. Rather, they may be indicative of how changes in gender relations and gender-equity work can lead to changes in traditional gender hierarchies in schools.

Reflections on this project

In this section I reflect on this project from two perspectives – looking backwards and looking forwards. Firstly, I discuss the process of analysing the gender regimes of these three schools using Connell's theoretical framework and her four dimensions of gender (Connell 2009; 2002) and reflect on the usefulness of this approach. Then I identify the questions that have emerged as a result of this work.

Useful thinking tools: Connell's dimensions of gender

Connell (2012) has argued that relational theories of gender are 'the most promising approach' to understanding gender, which she describes as a 'multidimensional structure operating in a complex network of institutions' (p.1675). She has identified four dimensions of gender as 'tools for thinking' (2009, p.85) that facilitate analysis of these complex relationships. Although the concept of an organisational gender regime is widely used in research in schools, this thesis may be the first research where the four dimensions of gender – 'the thinking tools' – have been used to conduct a systematic analysis of the gender regime in a school setting. The literature search did not locate any other examples.

This theoretical approach provided an enabling framework for this research that was valuable in both planning and analysis. In the planning phase, the four dimensions of gender prompted thinking about the schools from these very different perspectives and threw light on aspects of school life that might otherwise have been ignored. Consequently, they assisted in making decisions about where to look, who to interview and what data to collect. They also provided an organisational framework within which data from many and varied aspects of school life could be considered. During the analysis this framework facilitated a wide range of data to be organised in ways that brought into focus the symmetries and disjunctions present in the data. As was seen throughout the analysis, the dimensions were neither independent entities nor necessarily internally consistent. However, it was possible to identify constellations of observations that came together and assisted in the understanding of the different gender regimes. As Connell (2006b) states, 'having an explicitly multidimensional model of gender allows us to see that incoherencies and lags are common' (p.846). The presumption that there would be tensions and inconsistencies between and within the dimensions of gender assisted in seeing the dynamic nature of the gender regimes of the schools and increased the explanatory power of the analysis.

Nevertheless, having undertaken this analysis there were some questions left unanswered. The gender regime so carefully observed could not be fully explained by the internal logics of the school. I have argued that it is necessary to look beyond the school itself to the social location of the students, their families and community to understand some of the disjunctions evident in the analysis of gender regimes.

Questions raised by this study

This study focused on schools that occupied a very specific location in time and place, yet despite their similarities, each school's gender regime had some distinct characteristics and it was not possible to generalise across schools. This highlights that caution needs to be taken before extrapolating from any one school or group of schools to other schools, even if they appear

similar. Analysis of the gender regimes of schools that occupy different social locations would enable the identification of the possibilities and risks those students face, thereby providing a broader base on which to build our understanding of how schools' gender regimes develop and how they impact on students and their learning.

On the basis of the research reported here, I have argued that coeducational settings can provide significant challenges to the traditional gender hierarchies and provide experiences for students that assist that process. However, there were some negative aspects of life in these schools and it is clear that to build on the potential identified will require continued work. Further research that seeks to identify how to maximise the opportunities that coeducation presents, along with research about how to minimise the potential counterproductive effects, will be essential.

Furthermore, there is a caveat. These schools were focussing on ensuring that all of the students, girls and boys, had access to a wide range of opportunities designed to enable them to follow pathways into successful careers. This was largely conceptualised as opening up to girls the opportunities that had previously been open to boys. There was a silence around what this might mean for boys or indeed the relationships between girls and boys.

This continues the pattern, evident from the 1970s onwards, of changing the girls to increase their chances of success in an essentially male world. Sara Delamont (2001) reports that despite young women like those in these schools having 'higher aspirations and more credentials' most will find that 'their credentials are *not* transferred into labour market success or egalitarian marriages'. Delamont concludes that 'Men have not changed' and consequently little has changed for women (p.111). Many authors agree, Michael Flood (2015) explains that 'gender inequality is intimately tied to men's practices and identities [and] ... Fostering gender equality requires change in these same arenas, of men's lives and relations' (p.4), while in *Feminism and men* Nickki van der Gaag (2014) argues that '[u]nless men become central to discussions about gender ... they will continue to be a

block to the achievement of gender equality' (p.210). Both authors agree that while many men and boys declare in principle support for equal opportunity in education and the workplace for women, much smaller numbers are prepared to share childcare and domestic responsibilities which is key to women being able 'to participate more fully in society' (van der Gaag 2014, p.213).

In these schools, I did not see any evidence of engagement with these debates. The underlying narrative was that what constituted success and the pathways to that success were not changing, all that was changing was that there would now be successful young women alongside the successful young men. This reflects Anne Summers (2013) observations of the corporate world. In *The misogyny factor* she reports that many company boards having elected a woman to their ranks 'take for granted that having women board members should not make a difference to the way things operate' (p.88). This expectation that women can and should simply 'fit into' the current structures and roles of public life reflects a much wider pattern in the gender order. Preparing young people for future success defined by this male-centric view is not specific to these three schools, or coeducational schools more generally, it is representative of an approach observed in other elite schools, whether they are coeducational or single-sex (see for example Fahey 2014; Forbes & Lingard 2015; van Zanten 2015; Weis 2014).

However, there is an argument that girls continue to be set up for disappointment, their high hopes being dashed on 'the exigencies of the ever-changing gender order and the impact of child-bearing and child-rearing on women' (Forbes & Lingard 2015, p.121). There is a space for schools to start conversations about how girls and boys approach decisions about career *and* family. To achieve gender equity we not only need to equip girls to have careers, but we also need to equip boys to be equal partners in family life by changing their expectations of what the future might hold.

In tandem with a focus on the shape of gender relationships, there also needs to be attention to the quality of those relationships. Schools are about much more than reading and writing. Students spend a very large proportion of their growing-up years in them. Inevitably they learn a great deal about

how to interact with other people, both male and female, as a result of that experience. It is therefore important that research continues to explore the best ways to develop respectful relationships and to ensure that schools and teachers have sound advice available (Fabes et al. 2015; Fabes et al. 2013; Liben 2015; Ollis 2014).

There is a body of research that suggests that how we teach has more powerful effects than whether we teach in a single-sex or coeducational setting (American Association of University Women 1998; Daly & Duffy 2004; Hattie 2009; Lingard, Martino & Mills 2009; Lingard et al. 2002). Continuing research about the learning and teaching experiences that make positive differences for all students regardless of gender and sexuality, regardless of background, remains central to the research endeavour (Fabes et al. 2015; Liben 2015).

Finally, in the years since the data for this study was collected there have been powerful shifts in the place of sexuality and sexualities in the life of teenagers. Firstly, at the time of this study there was very little questioning of sexuality visible in these schools. Both students and staff reported that it was extremely rare for students to engage with the possibility that they were anything other than heterosexual, let alone to 'come out'. Given the recent changes in mainstream responses to homosexuality, research that explores whether students in schools like the three in this study are now more comfortable engaging in questions around their sexuality would be illuminating (Allen 2011).

Secondly, there has been an explosion in communication technologies. The students at the centre of this analysis were not facing the challenges of social media, cyberbullying and sexting that young adolescents now face (de Vries et al. 2014; Ringrose 2010; Ringrose et al. 2012; Rivers & Barnett 2011). One of the key findings of this study was the de-emphasising of sexuality in the friendships amongst students at these schools. A very real question is whether this has changed as a result of the changes in technology and in the wider society.

In Conclusion

These three schools: limiting the risks for girls

The second of the questions posed by this research was: 'Are these three elite coeducational schools still "risky" environments for girls?' Implicit in this question is a comparison between coeducational and single-sex settings, and a suggestion that single-sex schools are either risk-free or at least less risky than coeducational settings for girls. I argued in Chapter 2 that single-sex settings were not risk-free, so the substantive question becomes: 'Are single-sex schools less risky for girls than coeducational schools?'

All schools, whether coeducational or single-sex, are located within the broader gender order of their society; they cannot be entirely isolated or independent from it. Consequently, the 'macro-social practices' of that society will be 'reflected' in the classroom. However, they will also be 'reconstituted' by the school (Hirst & Cooper 2008, p.443), and it is the ways in which they are reconstituted that will mark the differences in schools' gender regimes. Joscha Legewie and Thomas DiPrete (2014) take up this idea in relation to gender when they argue that 'widely shared and hegemonic gender beliefs manifest differently across schools' (p.260); and that the local school context, through its structures, relationships and interactions 'can influence the salience of gender' in students' lives (p.262), resulting in stereotypes being 'intensified or mitigated' (p.263). The reflection of broader societal understandings and practices within a school is never a perfect reflection. As was evident in these three schools, the values and representations of the broader society are refracted through the history, local culture and class location of a school and its community.

In the three 'consciously coeducational' (Sadovnik & Semel 2002, p.134) schools in this study, gender was not foregrounded. Rather the schools aimed to ensure that all activities and opportunities were open to all students, regardless of gender. This provided many sites of potential challenge to

gender stereotypes. These were found where girls and boys shared experiences, roles and responsibilities across the wide spectrum of school life, including student leadership; daily classroom life; co-curricular activities ranging from outdoor education to dance; mixed physical education classes; and cross-gender friendships that developed independently of romantic involvement. On balance, the schools studied show that coeducational schools that systematically attend to gender equity, expecting girls and boys to participate in the same range of activities and share the same experiences, can challenge those stereotypes in ways that are not available in single-sex settings.

The findings and insights from this project repeatedly confirmed the 'gender similarities hypothesis' (Hyde 2005, p.581): there was far more overlap in the behaviour of girls and boys observed than there was stark contrast or, in other words, the variation within each gender group was greater than the difference between the two groups. The coeducational reality at these three schools provided many opportunities for students to experience this overlap firsthand. They talked about these similarities, keen to explain that 'we're all the same'; 'there's no huge differences'. Although there were some instances of traditional gender hierarchies being reinscribed at each of these schools, their students were no longer confined to narrow stereotypical understandings of gender or gender relationships.

I argue that the outlook for girls in these three coeducational schools was not as bleak as earlier portrayals of coeducational schooling suggested. The gendered patterns of behaviour and gender inequities/inequalities that have been observed and reported in the literature over the last five decades appear to have receded; although clearly this is not to say that they have vanished, and there is more work to be done at each of the schools.

Coeducational settings do have *the potential* to adopt a multi-dimensional perspective within which gender is one, but not the primary or overriding organising principle, thereby providing an environment in which to equip girls and boys to work cooperatively and hence promote gender equity. These routine opportunities to test the traditional gender stereotypes are not

possible in a single-sex setting that foregrounds gender as the key characteristic dividing people and declaring that girls and boys are so different that they need to be educated separately. This founding principle creates a real danger of 'reproducing narrow and restrictive definitions of gender' (Goodkind 2013, p.400).

The strong caveat here is that in order to see the potential in coeducational settings realised there needs to be a clear commitment to gender equity, reflected in strong policies and high staff awareness. Furthermore, these on their own will not be enough unless the participants actually expect girls' and boys' participation and achievement to be comparable (Riordan 1998). These three elite coeducational schools made substantial efforts to ensure that gender equity principles were applied to their schools' formal structures, policies and procedures. In addition, many of the families, staff and students appeared to have an expectation that girls and boys would be equal contributors to the life of the school, something that would not necessarily have been the case in previous decades. One hypothesis regarding these changed expectations would be based on the changes that have occurred in the gender order within which these schools operated. As Connell (2002, p.74) argues, there has been 'a vast change in presuppositions' – and the change from an expectation that girls and boys will inhabit separate spheres to an expectation of gender equality is an example of this.

As a result of the combination of these three factors – the daily testing of stereotypes, the formal commitment to gender equity and the expectations of the school community that girls and boys are not separate and opposite groups – these schools appear to have provided a productive environment for addressing the educational needs of students independent of assumptions based on gender. I am arguing that the benefits of these opportunities outweigh the potential disadvantages resulting from the remnant stereotypical gendered behaviours – described in the literature of the last 50 years – that are still evident.

Returning to the market location of these elite coeducational schools, the reason they initially cooperated with this research was that they were

struggling to enrol as many girls as boys. Moreover, this uneven enrolment was seen as a further disincentive to many girls and their families, leading to the continuation of the gender imbalance. In their attempts to address the concerns of these families, gender equity programs and policies became central to these schools, and demonstrating gender balance in all aspects of school life became a central marketing strategy. The market imperative in these schools was driving gender equity work.

In conclusion, although gender relations in these elite coeducational schools continued to be complex, the concerns of middle-class parents that such schools presented a 'risky' environment for their daughters (and that therefore attending a single-sex school would be a better alternative) appear to have been unwarranted.

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