HEGEMONY HAS HIS HAND UP AGAIN:
EXAMINING MASCULINITIES AND RESISTANCE WHEN TEACHING
ABOUT GENDER

by
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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines interview based, qualitative research that was conducted with six male youth who were previously students in my Social Studies 11 class. Within two separate, semi-structured interviews, participants were asked to discuss student resistance to anti-oppressive pedagogy that focused on gender, and their understanding of masculinities. The initial purpose of this research was to find a relationship, if any, between acts of student resistance and the construction of masculinities. Participant perceptions of masculinities evolved as the dominant theme within the interviews. These discussions revealed that student understandings of masculinity were often entrenched in hegemonic language, yet contradictions were exposed between their rote definitions and personal narratives. Further, the use of media as a discourse became a venue for complicating essentialist understandings of masculinity, and for exposing multiple, fluid, versions of masculinities. Within these discussions of multiplicity, race and sexuality became two intersections of identity that took precedence. Also the intersection of teacher identity and the reading of identity terms emerged as a salient interpretation for gender discussions in the classroom. Throughout this write-up of the research are methodological considerations surrounding power, the construction of masculinity and race, and the further entrenching of heteronormativity, in the form of methodological interludes. Finally, within the conclusion, I consider the implications for practice and future directions for research in masculinities.
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DEDICATION

To my J's, SP, and The Vints
1 INTRODUCTION

There has been a multitude written on the social construction of gender (Butler, 1990; Butler, 1993; Connell, 1995/2005), on power and resistance (Foucault, 1978; Giroux, 1983; Kumashiro, 2004) and on student resistance in the classroom (Lewis, 1992; Moore, 1997). For example, Butler theorizes about the trouble with the construction of sex and gender (1990) and has furthered this argument in her discussion of the role of performativity in gendering through discourse (1993). Additionally, Foucault (1978) demonstrates the inevitability of resistance due to its connection with power. Using Foucault, resistance is understood as a consequence of power, and since no one can live outside of the power structures, resistance is unavoidable: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (p. 95). Kumashiro (2004), influenced by Foucault, discusses the ever-presence of resistance in the realm of learning. Many more theorists have spoken about the forms, reactions and possible reasons for resistant behaviour. In particular, Lewis (1992) and Moore (1997) also demonstrate the role of hegemony in eliciting student resistance to feminist teaching. In resisting feminist teaching, male and female students often reify the gender binary and adhere to expected gender roles within the classroom. Each of these theorists is of great interest and value to this research, and, more generally have deeply influenced my own theoretical understandings of pedagogy, gender, and student resistance.

1.1 My Head Space

While a member of the Social Justice and Humanities Teacher Education Program at UBC, I entered the teaching profession believing that an innovative way of teaching would engender eager response. The focus on oppression and injustice in society, the curriculum, and the very structure of the classroom, I assumed, would both enlighten students and provide them
with a venue to discuss racism, sexism and homophobia. Because I considered such discussions refreshing and necessary, I expected that the students would also. Much to my surprise, I found that my first few years of teaching were spent locked in discouraging struggles with students who overtly and subtly challenged the existence of such oppression, and the value of the place for such discussion within the curriculum.

These challenges, which I constructed as resistance, became both a fascination and preoccupation as I struggled to understand its roots, its effects, and its relationship to my teaching methods. I will explore the transformation of my thinking surrounding resistance further in my review of the literature. When considering the cause of resistance, I first looked at the role that my own identity played in eliciting such responses. I became increasingly aware of the relationship between my own identity and its intersection with the curriculum. Students openly questioned my motivations as a female teacher, and I read that as their suspicions about teaching they perceived to be feminist. Aside from reflecting upon the role my identity played in eliciting resistance, I examined the role that hegemony (Gramsci, 1971) and social constructions (Butler, 1990) played in my students' assertion of dominant positions within acts of resistance. Often, student resistance upheld dominant viewpoints; surprisingly, even those that did not outwardly benefit the speaker. For example, on many occasions female students in my classroom challenged the existence of sexism in Canadian society. Although such examples created increasing concern about the effect that such resistance had in reifying dominance, it began an interrogation of the role of hegemony in eliciting such reactions. As a result of the multiple 'negative' reactions to my attempts to teach in what I considered to be a socially just manner, the desire to analyze the way that my own teaching methods may incite such responses developed.

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1 Definitions of social construction and hegemony to follow in a later section.
In the past few years, as a result of reading theory, and continued reflection surrounding my practice, my perspective on socially just teaching has changed. Now, instead of looking at social justice through the binary of victim and oppressor, I continually consider the role that context and discourse play. A concept such as sexism creates an immediate and ever-present positioning of victim and oppressor as it places an essentialist representation of male as dominant over an essentialist representation of female; further, it ignores the role that context plays in creating privilege (Ellsworth, 1989). Through this omission of context, a concept such as oppression can propagate the binary of victim and oppressor. My lessons now incorporate discussions surrounding the social constructions of gender, rather than simply looking at sexism. Like Ellsworth, I want students to consider the multiple, fluid nature of identity and its relationship to context. Simply teaching about sexism and including more women in the curriculum, reifies women’s positions as both victim and Other; while also leaving the construction of man and woman untouched (Ellsworth, 1989; Kumashiro, 2004; Loutzenheiser, 2001). Additionally, the positioning of woman as victim inherent in sexism does not challenge female students to consider the contexts in which they are privileged as a result of other aspects of their identity, such as race, class or sexuality (Ellsworth, 1989). In addition, a curriculum developed around a single essentialist representation of gender dismisses the intersections of identity and falsely creates a concept of solidarity for the plight of all women (Lather, 1983). For example, race, class, sexuality and ability are factors of my identity that afford me privilege in a number of contexts. Looking at identity in relation to context, intersections and multiplicity, challenges students and teachers to continually consider the norms that are perpetuated in society, and the way these perceived norms serve to privilege certain identities in certain
contexts (Ellsworth, 1989). In my own experience, introducing intersections and context creates thoughtful discussions about identity.

The examination of context and social constructions, limits forms of resistance that result from a focus on accusations aimed at individual, fixed identities. As a result of my changing perspective on socially just pedagogy, and the transformation of my own practice, I noticed less resistance from my students. However, I also altered my thinking about the productivity of resistance. Resistance can result from hegemony (Giroux, 1983), or from the inability to accept privilege. However, resistance is also a natural aspect of learning (Kumashiro, 2004). After coming to understand the multiple faces of resistance, I am aware that it is and will always be present in the classroom.

These reflections left me both satisfied and perplexed. I was satisfied with the notion that resistance is simply part of the learning process, as it is the struggle of a learner to consider something that does not reflect their own version of reality (Kumashiro, 2004). Influenced by Kumashiro, I began to understand that every learning is an un-learning. Resistance is an outcome of learning that needs space within the classroom. The notion of space, became a revelation for me. Space is both the physical, as in the time needed within the classroom environment, and temporal, as in the time away from a discussion that is needed. Anti-oppressive teaching (Kumashiro, 2004) requires space both within and beyond my classroom. Often when resistance, or hegemonic ideals were spouted in the classroom, I sought to solve, or to overcome this thinking within a single interaction. Instead, influenced by Kumashiro’s notion that resistance often arises from unlearning what one is already invested in, I realized that both myself and my students need time away from discussions, time to consider what one another have said, before returning. This space often proved more productive.
However, in bridging Kumashiro's theory with my own practice, concerns developed surrounding the room needed. While resistant voices often mimic hegemonic structures, and when spoken provide openings for valuable discussions about the role that dominance plays in constructing the self, when pedagogically unchallenged and unanalyzed can also serve to reify dominant ideals. Within resistant talk, I remain unsettled about the line between censorship and hate speech that is exposed when engaging resistant voices. Oppositely, while I am often both angry and uncomfortable in hearing individuals regurgitating dominance, I remain convinced of the importance in hearing those voices. Further, considering discussion surrounding the relationship between emotions, silence, and power (Boler, 1999), I am aware of the propensity I have to notice, and therefore privilege, overt forms of resistance. I view resistance, in any form, as a necessary component of anti-oppressive teaching (Kumashiro, 2004). I understand resistance to be a symptom of power, and as power is ever-present it cannot be overcome (Foucault, 1980). Banning speech and thought, and pre-determining the transformative end within my classroom, simply creates a new dominance (Ellsworth, 1989). Although I remain conflicted about the boundaries of resistance, the space required, I have come to view resistance as a valuable opportunity to challenge and reveal the current dominant norms in society.

Throughout the process of accepting resistance, I remained fixated on the role that the social construction of gender, masculinities in particular, has in the creation of certain forms of resistance. I would argue that in my experience, male students are often more overtly resistant in the classroom. This observation has left me curious about the relationship between gender constructions and resistance; primarily, the ways in which the construction of male elicits particular forms of resistance. While the intersection of my own identity, gender discussions, and

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2 Male is used throughout to describe those individuals who either identify as, or have been constructed by others as, male.
student resistance are still a topic of interest for me, I feel that it is simply one piece in understanding the relationship between masculinities and the performativity of resistance. Within this study, talking with male students began this conversation surrounding the intersection of masculinities and student resistance. Yet, this study was far more productive in obtaining student understandings of masculinities, and of resistance; the relationship between the two themes is not fully explored. Instead, this study explores male understandings of their roles in the classroom, how they construct their sense of self, how they understand my purpose and the purpose of teaching material geared toward social justice, and how they view their own reactions. I assert that this is the beginning of a conversation about resistance and performativity.

1.2 Research questions

1. How do male students understand masculinities within the culture of the school and classroom?

2. How do masculinities, as understood by male students, influence acts of student resistance (broadly conceived) in pedagogies focused on anti-oppressive education and gender?

3. How might notions of hegemonic masculinity as understood by students, complicate current understandings of hegemony and masculinities?

The research questions above reflect the intended purpose of this study. As is the case in much research, the answers originally sought are not always gained. The interviews with the participants produced a multitude of knowledge surrounding questions one and three. That is not to say that question two is a failure, it simply was left unanswered within this particular study. Although this study does not engage theories of performativity, I intend to explore the relationship between performances of masculinities and student resistance in future research.
1.3 Purpose, rationale & objectives

As stated, the overall purpose of this study was to explore the intersection of gender constructs and student resistance. Using interview-based research, I wanted to analyze male students' understandings of the role gender constructs play in eliciting resistant behaviour toward gender teachings in the Social Studies 11 classroom. Through this research I engaged students' own voices\(^3\) and understandings of the social construction of gender and its influence on their behaviour within the classroom. It is integral to understand the influences and ideas that students are bringing into the classroom about gender. I believe that more theory should be dedicated to students' understandings of their own lives, as this does more to recognize the multiple discourses at play. Students are affected, and affect, discourse differently, and assuming that one understands these affects because you were once a youth, or student, ignores the relationship between context and discourse. Finally, the purpose of this research was to place theories of resistance and masculinities in conversation.

Theories of masculinities are relevant and necessary to discussions of resistance, as certain male bodies perform resistance in particular ways. These acts of resistance can further entrench hegemonic gender ideals, subordination and patriarchy. The construction of the male ideal is dependent on the perpetuation of a hierarchy of masculinities, of which subordinate masculinities and those constructed as female are often relegated to the role of outsider (Connell, 1995/2005). Exploring multiple versions of masculinities and challenging the hegemonic masculine ideal is beneficial to all students, as everyone is compared to and oppressed by these

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\(^3\) I recognize the tensions involved in using the term voice. For this conversation, I engage Orner's (1992) discussion of the impossibility of accessing an 'authentic student voice' due to the multiple and contradictory 'voices', silences, contexts and histories that continuously shape identity and experience.
ideals; however, in Bird’s (1996) research in particular, male participants spoke about these conflicts, but stated that they had never done anything to challenge hegemonic male ideals within their friend groups. Like the study of whiteness, the study of masculinities has often been presented as the further privileging of dominance (Ming Liu, 2005). However, masculinities are normative regimes that construct identities that are often privileged and it is crucial to make such constructions visible otherwise they risk being perceived as the neutral norm.

The original purpose of this study was to explore the intersection of masculinities and resistance; however, understandings of masculinities became a much larger theme within the interviews. This change represents my use of semi-structured interview, as both the participants and myself had a say in the direction of the interviews. After this experience, I also assert that understanding youth perceptions of masculinities is essential before attempting to connect masculinities to resistance. Much is learned about youth understandings of masculinities, the multiple masculinities and associated hierarchies within this research context, and student readings of my intended curriculum.

1.4 Significance

This study deals specifically with male student understandings of anti-oppressive pedagogy and masculinities. The work already completed on male student resistance (Lewis, 1992; Luke and Gore, 1992; Moore, 1997) is set within a framework of feminist pedagogy, not anti-oppressive, and does not employ theories of masculinities. Finally, as this study aligns with Loutzenheiser’s (2007) appreciation of youth as theorists, there is a focus on male youth understandings of masculinities. As a result, media becomes a discourse within our interviews for complicating hegemonic representations of masculinities.
1.5 On my terms

1.5.1 Anti-social justice pedagogy

Throughout my introduction I use the terms social justice pedagogy and anti-oppressive pedagogy. My intention is not to use these terms interchangeably, as each term translates very differently for me, regardless of the association of these terms in some of the literature. The distinction between these two terms represents a theoretical shift for me, which undoubtedly contributes to the differentiation I make between these two forms of pedagogy. Primarily, I associate the term social justice with the transformative ends connected with critical pedagogy (McLaren, 1998; McLaren & Farahmadpur, 2001, McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002a, McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002b). Heavily influenced by Paulo Freire (1970), social justice pedagogy seeks to eliminate oppression in society through revealing and challenging such injustice; here lies my theoretical discontent. As argued by Ellsworth (1989), Gore (1992), and Orner (1992), such pedagogy reifies binaries, such as victim/oppressor, without challenging the role discourse plays in creating societal norms, or considering the multiple, fluid aspects of identity. Additionally, social justice pedagogy works toward a transformative fixed end that is itself oppressive.

The distinction between these terms may be a result of my own theoretical transformation, resulting in the association of social justice pedagogy and my previous thinking and practice. However, I also think that social justice is a loaded term in education, and in some cases has been perverted to justify asserting dominance (Lakoff, 2004). Alternately, anti-oppressive pedagogy (Kumashiro, 2004) seeks to recognize and challenge the hegemonic structures in society without creating a new dominant norm. Such pedagogy works to challenge the "common sense" norms that permeate society, such as the reliance on binaries. Additionally,
it challenges students to consider their own desire for the norm. As the teacher/student binary is commonly accepted as natural, this pedagogy also involves recognizing and disrupting the teacher/student power structure that exists within the classroom. The further appeal and distinction of anti-oppressive pedagogy involves its focus on the recognition of normativity and privilege, such as an examination of heteronormativity rather than on homophobia. Within anti-oppressive pedagogy, there is not a focus on a single, fixed dominant discourse that supports a stagnant understanding of oppressor/oppressed. Finally, the discussions of resistance offered in anti-oppressive pedagogy appeal to my practical concerns. In order to not be oppressive, acts of resistance must be welcomed and disrupted, rather than shut down or overcome. Kumashiro (2004) argues that anti-oppressive teaching necessarily involves crisis, of which resistance is an essential part. I am attracted to Kumashiro’s theoretical alignment with Foucault’s (1978) understanding of the inevitability of resistance due to its relationship to power. This understanding of resistance diminishes the negative connotations attached to the term within my research. This is essential, as it does not present resistance as a factor that I am trying to fix through my research. Rather, it is presented as a necessary component of a classroom that I am trying to understand in order to further develop anti-oppressive pedagogy.

1.5.2 Resistance

Also influenced by Foucault (1978), I now view resistance as an inevitability and not an issue in my classroom that needs to be overcome. Resistance can be as undetectable as discourse, and the form is not as important as the cause. Much of what I first recognized within my classroom to be resistance involved vocal challenging of the existence of oppression, or the need for discussion about issues of social justice. However, resistance can be a sigh, a crossing of a students’ arms, a physical movement of a chair, a head on a desk, a verbal challenge, or an act of
silence (Boler, 1999). Resistance can also be a reaction to unsafe practices in a classroom.

Having accepted the inevitability of resistance, and my own pre-occupation with overt forms, I posit that understanding the multiple causes of resistance is essential to anti-oppressive pedagogy. Kumashiro (2004) presents resistance to anti-oppressive pedagogy in particular as an act of hegemony, or a desire to remain ignorant. Where hegemony and a desire for ignorance are behind acts of resistance, educators can use resistance as a site of exposing dominance. Further, such acts also provide the opportunity for discussions of resistance and performativity.

1.5.3 Gender

All identities are constructed through discourse (Butler, 1990). Gender is an example of one such construct. In order to define gender, I draw on Butler (1993), who argues that gender is a regulatory practice that produces the very bodies they govern. Sex, male and female, is a false binary that serves to produce beings, and therefore reproduce heterosexual and transphobic norms. Butler asserts that gender is constructed through norms that permeate society. These norms construct an ideal, and also therefore an Other. Normative regimes regulate through exclusion those who try to live outside of the cultural domain (Butler, 1993). Subjects are therefore constructed through a series of repetitious acts that are all part of a matrix, known to Butler as performativity. The subject does not perform gender acts, rather they are the performative effects of discourse.

1.5.4 Masculinities

A major element of the construction of gender is the dominant discourse of the male/female binary. Being normal, as Butler (2004) asserts, is to be either male or female and to live by the regulations of those definitions. Masculinity is not an act performed separate from femininity, rather dependent on it (Connell, 1995/2005). The heteronormative ideal, and
dichotomous relationship to femininity, are both factors that manage masculinities. Yet, like Dalley-Trim (2007), I assert that there is no single discourse of masculinities. However, there does exist a hierarchy, or relationship between the various discourses, in which hegemonic masculinity remains the norm. Hegemonic masculinity “is constructed in relation to women and subordinate masculinities” (Connell, 1987, p. 185-186, as cited in Bird, 1996, p. 120).

Hegemonic masculinity is defined as a dominant form of masculinity in that it perpetuates the image of being a real man or boy (Dalley-Trim, 2007). This often involves the domination of men over women. Speer (2001) identifies hegemonic masculinity as white, heterosexual and successful. This research recognizes the discourse of the hegemonic masculine ideal, while also recognizing the multiple discourses of masculinities. Most importantly, as I recognize the multiple narratives surrounding masculinities, I also subscribe to Connell’s (1995/2005) understanding that hegemonic masculinity can be transformed.

1.6 Theoretical framework

Although I continue to be drawn to the solidarity and orientation towards action within critical theory (McLaren, 1998; Apple, 1982; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002), I am unsettled by the simplistic, essentialized representations of identity that are often offered through much critical theory. Further, the portrayal of empowerment that is associated with much critical theory is troubling as it relies on romantic idealism and transformative appeal. Therefore, it does not theoretically fit as an analytical tool for this project. As a result, I find myself increasingly drawn to the fluidity and intersections of identity presented in what is most often categorized as feminist, post structural theory (Britzman, 2000; Ellsworth, 1998; Orner, 1992; Gore 1992; Lather, 2006; Pillow, 2003), but remain frustrated by its lack of attention to solidarity and apparent inaction. This frustration may be a result of my own understanding, or mis-
understanding, of the transformative qualities of post structuralism. I am also cognizant that my problem with poststructural theory stems from my own desire for straightforward, useable and coherent answers. Although I continue to be theoretically unsatisfied, I am certain that a single fixed version of truth or identity does not aid in my analysis of resistance or masculinities. Nor does it take into consideration the social constructions imbued within discourses. Further, I cringe at the use of essentializing “we” language, which contradicts, or at the very least is in conflict with my romanticized appeal to solidarity noted above.

Like the aforementioned theorists, I maintain that all identities are constructed through discourse, fluid, and partial. Some theorists may consider the very act of revealing social construction as a form of change; however, this view of change lacks a space for collective action between those subjects that share similar oppression through discourse. Loutzenheiser (2005) contemplates a troubling of the academic divide between critical theory, which organizes around factors of identity, and those theorists who work to challenge notions of fixed identity. She discusses a critical embodied experience, educational imaginary, and contingent primacy as a way of bridging these “theoretical divides”. As a result, this theoretical connection is appealing as it recognizes social constructions of identity within existing materiality, but also allows for moments of political activism. Within this theoretical space, the dominant discourse of masculinity is recognized as a factor that pushes on the participants in my study in a similar way. Yet, the dominant ideal of masculinity is not the only aspect of subjectification. As a result, this theoretical divide leaves space to recognize the affect of hegemonic masculinity, while also recognizing the multiplicity of masculinities.

The bridging of critical theory and poststructuralism is useful to this question as it recognizes the prevalent discourse of hegemonic masculine ideals, while also challenging their
very existence. In using male participants, and organizing around this factor of identity, I am considering those moments in which these individuals are commonly affected by discourse. This focus on a single factor of identity is evident within critical theory. In contrast, however, I am also inviting the idea that the dominant masculine ideal does not parallel students' understandings of masculinity. Therefore, this introduces the multiple nature of masculinities that is presented in poststructural theory. Embracing plural understandings of masculinities will help shatter the male/female binary that is commonly accepted as the norm. Further, conducting the research with a diverse demographic, introduces the intersections of other factors of identity with masculinities. As a result, this theoretical compilation recognizes the affect of dominant discourse, while also challenging its very existence.

1.7 A map to the masculine

This research came out of my curiosity surrounding student resistance. The study, however, morphed into a project about masculinities. In the following chapters, I begin by outlining the literature in resistance theory and theories of masculinities that influence the theoretical framework for this study. The chapter outlining my methodological choices, and the implications of the use of this methodology, follows. I assert that my methodological choice, semi-structured interview, is inseparable from the analysis of participant definitions of masculinities, sexuality, race, and anti-oppressive pedagogy. As a result, I have also chosen to include methodological interludes after each analysis chapter. The analysis has been separated into chapters, organized around two major themes. The first outlines participant understandings of masculinities. The second considers the multiple sites of intersection within the participant's talk. Three major themes run throughout both of these chapters: the relationship between talk and understanding, the complication of hegemonic ideals, and the implications for practice.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Within this literature review, I will begin by outlining the theorists who have influenced my understandings of resistance. As my research questions developed through my concerns and pre-occupation with student resistance to anti-oppressive education and discussions of gender, specifically from male students, this literature review reflects the progression of theoretical influences in my research. Specifically, I begin by outlining the theorists that influenced my understanding of resistance, as that was the original focus of my research. Through this research, my interpretation of theories of resistance, and my practical experiences, the theme of masculinities became very prevalent. To reflect this, this literature places resistance theorists in conversation with theories of masculinities. As masculinities emerged as a dominant theme within the research, a substantive portion of this literature review is dedicated to these theories. However, I also use theories of masculinities to inform theories of resistance; I assert that these theories offer explanations about the causes and understanding of male student resistance. Oppositely, I feel that resistance theory can inform conversations about the social construction of masculinities. Further, the theoretical intersections of masculinities and resistance are used to inform pedagogical possibilities. Finally, this literature review recognizes the potential space for discussions of performativity, resistance and masculinities.

2.1 Resisting theories

In looking first at reproduction theorists (Bourdieu 1990, Bowles & Gintis 1976; Gramsci,1971), who portray resistance of hegemony as a factor of reproduction, the role that power plays in the production of all resistance became evident. Bowles and Gintis (1976) attribute the survival of capitalist hegemony to the hidden curriculum that informs students' behavior, and therefore reproduces class-based hierarchies in society. Reproduction theory also
reveals the way that the dominant culture imposes its own definitions upon society as a way of recreating dominance. Although reproductive theory’s focus on class does not satisfy my understanding of identity as multiple and intersecting, its explanation of resistance as an act of power, and of the invisible societal norms involved, are two central insights that influence my own thinking. Although a return to reproduction theory grounded my theoretical understandings, the presentation of resistance as an inevitable reproduction of social hierarchy dismisses any element of agency.

Resistance theorists (Apple 1982; McRobbie 1978; Willis 1977) contrast the deterministic certainty of reproductive theory. Giroux (1983), often introduced as a radical pedagogue, began to recognize the role of human agency within acts of resistance. However, this early theory failed to attend to intersections and changeability of identities. For example Willis’ (1977) focus on class ignored the way that the lads acts of resistance often served to uphold gender binaries. McRobbie (1978) attempts to counter Willis’ omission by focusing her research on girls, but she too perpetuates fixed identities that ignore intersections. Returning to resistance theory challenged me to consider one’s own obedience and complicity within the oppressor/oppressed binary, one that ignores the importance of context and the multiple, shifting factors of one’s identity. As a result of the lack of troubling of identity, the above theorists did not parallel my understanding of resistance.

For a time, I aligned with the possibilities offered in critical theory (McLaren, 1998; Apple, 1982; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2002), heavily influenced by the work of Freire (1970). Such theory seemingly offered a hopeful perspective on pedagogy and student resistance. Although, it provided a clearer representation of the multiplicity of resistance, the same concerns surfaced surrounding static, uncomplicated representations of identity entrenched in the notion of
the oppressor/oppressed. Within such theory, resistance is presented as both an integral challenge to hegemony and as an act of dominance. The latter understood by Freire (1970) to be the oppressor living inside the oppressed. Although critical theory temporarily settled much of my discontent surrounding resistance, particularly its relationship to hegemony, it was impossible to dismiss the many theoretical challenges that positioned such theory as a new dominant discourse due to its attachment to a fixed transformative end (Ellsworth, 1989; Gore 1992; and Orner, 1992). Ellsworth (1989) parallels the desire within critical pedagogy to overcome acts of resistance to a new form of dominance. Foucault (1978) recognizes the multiplicity of resistance:

Instead [of a single source of resistance] there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. (p. 95)

Influenced by Foucault, poststructural theorists (Ellsworth 1989; Gore 1992; Kumashiro 2004; Orner 1992) present resistance as an inevitability, instead of as an obstacle to be overcome.

Using Foucault (1978), resistance is understood as a consequence of power, and since no one can live outside of the power structures, resistance is unavoidable: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (p. 95). Kumashiro (2004) encourages resistance through a model of learning through crisis, a factor that he feels is necessary for learning to occur. Resistance then, can be used as a tool for exposing binaries, power and identity construction. As is seen in Loutzenheiser (2001), the resistance from a student surrounding the possibility that a black woman could be queer provided the possibility for discussion: “From this seemingly simple start, we spent the
good part of the next week discussing why labels and language matter, why relationships are in the public eye, and how sexual identities cross lines of race, gender, and class” (p. 201). Loutzenheiser’s classroom example points to two elements of an environment focused on disruption and discomfort rather than on overcoming resistance. First, the student’s comment was not shut down as being inappropriate or incorrect, instead it was used to explore identity, binaries and societal norms. Second, the method of disruption does not provide for formulaic, fixed learning experiences. This resistant comment became the catalyst for messing and disrupting social norms. Poststructural viewpoints use resistance to expose what cannot be seen, power. As is seen in both Kumashiro (2004) and Loutzenheiser (2001), the disruption of power structures within the classroom creates an environment of crisis, which recognizes that learning is not scriptable and, in turn, makes room for the unknowable (Ellsworth, 1989).

2.2 Resisting this as a conclusion

At this point in my reading of theory and my own informal action research within my classroom, I thought my understandings of resistance were settled. I no longer saw resistance as something to be overcome, but instead viewed it as a useable site for inciting discussion. However, I was still left curious about the forms of resistance to which I was most attentive. Further, I was intrigued by the seeming relationship between overt forms of resistance and white male bodies. In turn, I was curious about the way that literature about gender, specifically masculinities, could inform my understanding of resistance. Since my perception was that those students most overtly resistant were boys and often boys in dominant positions. In this research context, I attach the term dominant to those male students who are popular, often athletic or musically talented, and who possess a great deal of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990).
2.3 Always sitting in the front row

Gender is not natural, rather it is performed on and mediated through the subject (Butler, 1990). Giving the appearance of biological difference, this can result in male and female students performing differently from one another. More accurately, it can impel those constructed as male or female to uphold behaviour that perpetuates these very gender binaries. Within the literature discussing the intersection of resistance and gender, three themes became apparent. Theorists spoke about the relationship between female instructors, curriculum surrounding gender, and acts of student resistance (Lewis, 1992; Luke & Gore, 1992; Moore, 1997). Specifically, Moore and Lewis discuss the manner in which many female students challenged discussions of gender and heteronormative masculinities. While, Eyre (1993) outlines typical acts of male resistance and performance within the classroom.

Lewis (1992) reveals that resistance is not just a reaction of male students toward feminist teachings; in fact, often female students are sooner to defend the male students from perceived attacks in feminist teachings. She describes the female students’ reactions as a psychological hold that the patriarchal system can achieve. Patriarchy, Lewis further explains, places a hold on the female consciousness regardless of the physical presence of a man in the room. Moore (1997) also experienced similar reactions from her female students. As a result of using feminist theory, Moore evidenced student resistance in three different forms: dismissal, disregard for overwhelming statistics, and “victim blaming”. The students, mainly female, identified feminist theory as a form of “male bashing” and viewed its teaching as indoctrination. Challenges surrounding the motives of feminist pedagogy are often more evident when the teacher identifies as female.

Luke and Gore (1992) discuss the difficulty that female practitioners face in discussing
gender and hegemony in the classroom. They further their discussion of resistance by
highlighting the challenges they receive regarding objectivity; women who teach gender issues
are charged with utilizing too much of their own opinion. Moore (1997) invites a male colleague
to her class to discuss many of the gender issues that she had introduced. Her observation, and
discussion with the colleague, revealed a marked difference in negative reactions from the
students. Each of these theorists identified similar forms of resistance, and similar questions
surrounding subjectivity. These articles inform my research on the most basic level as they
parallel many of the experiences from my own practice. On a theoretical level, they introduce the
role of gender performance into explorations of student resistance. However, while many look at
‘male’ acts of resistance, they do not consider theories of masculinities in relation to these acts. I
assert that this correlation will produce salient theory surrounding the way acts of resistance can
be used to explore, or expose, performances of gender within the classroom.

For example, Eyre (1993) offers the example of dominant male voices in her class that
utilized ‘we’ terminology to describe their discontent surrounding discussions of
heteronormativity. Reading her narrative through theories of masculinities (Connell, 1995/2005;
Kehler, 2007; Kehler and Martino, 2007; Mac an Ghaill; 2004), reveals productive information
about the way the hegemonic male ideal, construction and subordination are accomplished
through certain acts of resistance. As an educator, the most revealing element of this experience
for Eyre was her inclination to listen to the authoritarian voices in her classroom. Eyre challenges
educators to consider their inclination to fixate and react to dominant voices. The tendency to
pay attention to certain voices serves to further privilege and perpetuate normative forms of
communication. Moreover, particular identities that may be associated with these dominant
forms of communication maintain positions of privilege within the classroom. Eyre’s narrative
highlights the propensity of educators to validate overt acts of student resistance. Further, if viewed through theories of masculinities, it begins to connect overt acts of resistance with performances of masculinities.

As male students are often portrayed as overtly resistant within the literature, there remains a need for further conversation about the cause of such forms of resistance, or the propensity to associate such forms with male bodies.

2.4 Quit waving your hand, it’s not your turn

There were three dominant themes in much of the literature on masculinities: the construction of masculinities, multiplicity of masculinities, and the intersection of heteronormativity and masculinities. Within the first theme, the construction of masculinities, there is discussion of the hegemonic masculine ideal, dominant discourse surrounding this, and the maintenance and reification of this ideal. While debate exists surrounding the existence of hegemonic masculinity, or normative masculine ideals that are dependent on context, much of the literature recognizes the privileging of particular versions of masculinities, and the subordination of those versions of masculinity that don’t adhere to the ideal, or of femininity. This discussion of subordination, speaks to another prevalent theme in the literature, that there are multiple versions of masculinity. These discussions of plurality recognize the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and ability, to name a few factors of identity. In relation to masculinities and sexuality, much of the literature asserts that the regulation of masculinities is heavily entrenched in heteronormative surveillance. In fact, the regulation of sexuality cannot be separated from discussions of masculinities. Martino (2007) reveals the way that dominant versions of masculinities even come to be desired by gay males, in his discussion of ‘straight-acting men’. These three themes are dominant in the work of the theorists who have informed
my research; however, dominant media forms represent very different versions of masculinities. It is important to recognize this context, as it represents the lens of much of the popular understandings of masculinities within the mass media and educational settings. As a result, it is the popularized understanding of masculinities to which my research will be understood and compared to.

2.5 Context of masculinities research

Currently there is a misguided, reactionary context of research surrounding the 'boy crisis' in schools. Within much popular culture and academic texts, there is a prevalent understanding of masculinity as singular and fixed (Connell, 1995). Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) state that this is often presented as a 'biological determinism and competing victims syndrome with boys' interests being set against those of girls' (p. 1). Often this is framed as though boys and masculinities are under attack due the feminization of education. Epstein et al. (1998, as cited in Foster, Kimmel and Skelton, 2001) explain that within these popularized arguments surrounding the boy crisis, much of the blame for the 'victimization' of boys is placed on women:

In the context of education and debates about boys' underachievement, the supporters of the 'Lads' Movement develop a range of arguments which blame women for the failures of boys. If it is not women teachers, it is mothers, if not mothers, it is feminists; most often it is a combination. (p. 4)

Many writers, as outlined by Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) claim that feminism, or the women's movement, has done 'damage' to boys. Beyond blame, a number of news reports and academic texts use statistics related to low academic standings for male students to support the panic around this 'crisis' (Connell, 1989). Much of these discussions relate to boys and literacy.
Many solutions to this problem involve making curriculum and books more boy friendly, or increasing the amount of male teachers (Griffin, 2000). However, these media forms are highly problematic as they perpetuate an essentialized understanding of a singular masculinity.

Kehler and Martino (2007) describe this as a moral panic that is at the forefront of media forms that perpetuate the perception that male students are universally affected by a singular, dominant discourse. Kehler (2007) states that attempts to help the boys 're-establish power' in schools, through such things as literacy, asserts hegemonic masculinity. Within this understanding, attempts made to re-center 'the boy' in the classroom and in educational policy should be looked upon with suspicion as they essentialize the experiences of boys and regulate particular representation of masculinities. According to Kehler the danger does not only come from the misunderstanding of masculinities, but in the active attempts to re-inscribe a particular version of masculinity. He notes:

By essentializing young men and boys as a coherent and homogeneous group, current practices and approaches in schools contribute to and perpetuate a naturalized discourse of masculinities that fails to acknowledge competing racial, ethnic and sexual identities that invariably contribute to the ways in which young men understand and take themselves up as subjects within schools. (2007, p. 274)

Further, as Mills and Keddie (2007) point out, such arguments fail to challenge male students to accept the ways that they are privileged in society. Kehler furthers this discussion by troubling the affect of these rigid understandings, and asserts instead the plurality of masculinities.

It is here, in these competing and overlapping contexts that masculinity is lived and experienced differently and is thereby dependent on the opportunities and social settings within which boys operate. Localized settings such as school provide boys and young
men with a number of opportunities to construct different masculinities. (2007, p. 261)

Kehler's explanation is relevant to my own research context, as it rejects both the notion of a singular masculinity and the narrow arguments espoused in the 'boy crisis', and recognizes both the importance of intersections of identity and context, and the role of negotiation in gender. Instead, this offers a theoretical construct which has the possibility of complicating the way common sense notions of masculinities are taken up and perpetuated in schools.

Martino (2007) also speaks to the problems inherent in this limited understanding of masculinity as a singular concept, to which the male body is attached; there are assumptions implicit in the male body and its association with masculine behaviours. For example, much misguided policy suggests that increasing male bodies, male educators within educational institutions, will 'masculinize' education and alleviate the mythical boy crisis. This presents an untroubled understanding of gender, as it assumes female bodies are already being served by the supposedly feminized curriculum and school setting, and that male bodies are being neglected of their 'need' for masculine curriculum, role models and classroom activities. The prescription and construction of gender upon the male and female body is overwhelming within such rhetoric.

The male body is married to a singular form of masculinity that it supposedly exudes and transmits to the male students in the classroom through its mere presence. Not only does this manufactured crisis and victimization of boys ignore the plurality and fluidity of student identities, but its supposed solutions also fix the masculinity of male teachers as it fails "to adequately deal with the complexities and significance of male teachers' masculinities" (Martino, 2007, p. 1).

The context of this 'crisis', is the popular understanding to which my own research is framed. As a result, some assume my research within masculinities is an attempt to alleviate the
'victimization' of boys in the classroom. Oppositely, others assume that any research in masculinities further privileges males and works to re-center the male in the classroom and counters the work of feminist pedagogy. However, influenced heavily by the work of Connell, Kehler, Mac an Ghaill, and Martino, my research is in reaction to this supposed crisis. While I assert that masculinities ought to be placed at the center of pedagogy, it is not at the expense of feminist theory, instead it places the work of masculinities alongside that of femininities. It pushes male students to consider the ways that: they are constructed, they negotiate their identities, they police masculinities and reify norms, and they are privileged.

2.6 Under (con)struction

Within the literature that influences this research, masculinities is understood to be socially constructed; "that is gender is not fixed in advance of a social interaction, but is constructed in interaction..." (Connell, 1995/2005, p.35). Mac and Ghaill (1994) asserts that schools are primary sites of the production and regulation of gender. Specifically, he states that "the school microcultures of management, teachers and students are key infrastructural mechanisms through which masculinities and femininities are mediated and lived out" (p. 4). Connell (1989) echoes this understanding, positioning the school as an active element in the construction of masculinities: "Schools do not simply adapt to a natural masculinity among boys or femininity among girls. They are agents in the matter, constructing particular forms of gender and negotiating relations between them" (pp. 291-292). The construction of masculinities involve, in fact are dependent on, discussions of hegemonic masculinity, of plurality, and of heteronormativity; however, as these three themes are also substantial elements on their own, I have chosen to separate my discussion of masculinities accordingly. While recognizing the weight and influence of these three elements within the construction of masculinities, I will be
focusing on how masculinities are constructed within this first section. A discussion of construction includes hegemonic masculinity, challenges to the hegemonic ideal, negotiating masculinities, and the relationality and privilege inherent in the construction of masculinities. Due to my own focus on pedagogy, curriculum, and the classroom context, I will also focus on the role of the school and the institutionalization of masculinities.

2.6.1 Hegemonic masculinity

Within Carrigan, Connell, & Lee's (1985) understanding, hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to subordinate gender identities, and as hegemony constantly needs to be won, it actively subordinates in the process. That is hegemonic masculinity involves subordination over women and over men who do not subscribe to the male ideal. It also involves complicity in this process of subordination. Hegemonic masculinity is the popular, common understanding of what it means to be a real man or boy (Dalley-Trim, 2007). This image, according to Mac an Ghaill (1994), "is characterized by heterosexuality, power, authority and technical competence" (p. 12). Speer (2001) parallels this understanding; however, adding 'white' to the list of descriptors. Connell (1996, 1995/2005) explains the role of compliance inherent in the construction of masculinities, as definitions of masculinities simply become a matter of 'social fact'. He explains that within hegemonic masculinity there is compliance, negotiation and fluidity: "hegemony, then, does not mean total control. It is automatic and may be disrupted—or even disrupt itself." (1995/2005, p. 37). Expanding on this, Connell states that hegemonic masculinity follows an 'ebb and flow', a 'currently accepted strategy', that few men actually meet, but most men benefit from the 'patriarchal dividend'. As I recognize that hegemonic masculinity does fluctuate as it is influenced by changing priorities and discourses, I
would like to explore further the impact of normative discourses of masculinities upon
hegemonic masculinity.

Connell recognizes that hegemony is not a static structure, and can be transformed. I parallel my thinking with Connell’s (1995/2005) discussion of the malleability of hegemony:

At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted.

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (p. 77)

Connell stresses the dynamic character of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony. This is crucial to my own understanding of hegemonic masculinity; yet, I think more theory needs to be dedicated to the ‘reverse’ impact of alternate discourses and hegemonic masculinity. A static understanding of hegemony rejects the weight of changing influences, like that of technology. Mac an Ghaill’s description of hegemony, for example, includes ‘technical competence’. This is an obvious recognition of the changing structures in society. Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) challenge the reliance on an uncomplicated understanding of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, while recognizing the place of hegemony in analysis, they also call for a discussion of the role of context and fluidity of hegemonic masculinity, which aligns with my earlier criticism of Connell’s work. I assert that more work needs to be done around the influences on, not the influences of, hegemonic masculinity. Recognition of a hegemonic masculine ideal does not mean a dismissal of the plurality of masculinities, yet it maintains an acknowledgment of subordination and patriarchy. I assert that masculinities are always presented against a hegemonic masculine ideal. However, there are always multiple contexts in society, and
although the descriptions above recognize a Western understanding, they do not recognize the multiple, global contexts within society in which Western hegemony is constructed and maintained. Within Canadian society, although there is a dominant structure, there exists contexts in which alternate, normative forms of masculinities are enacted and maintained. More theory needs to be dedicated to the multiple normative discourses of masculinities, their active subordination of ‘inferior’ forms of masculinities or femininities, and their impact on hegemonic masculinity.

2.6.2 Constant negotiation

Imperative to Connell’s understanding of hegemonic masculinity is a discussion of negotiation. Individuals take up hegemonic masculinity differently; this negotiation involves adopting particular characteristics while rejecting others:

It is indeed important to recognize that differing masculinities are being produced. But to picture this as a marketplace, a free choice of gender-styles, would be misleading. These ‘choices’ are strongly structured by relations of power. In each of the cases mentioned, the differentiation of masculinities occurs in relation to a school curriculum which organises knowledge hierarchically, and sorts students into an academic hierarchy.

(Connell, 1989, p. 295)

Connell’s description is significant, as it recognizes the force, the power, the ever-presence of a hegemony. Further it recognizes the negotiation and fluidity involved in the formation of gender; however, this does not happen in isolation of the system, it can be both resistance and conformity. For example, he speaks to the way that male bodies may take up athletics instead of intellectual achievements. Important to Connell’s (1989) argument is also the idea that school, although often an important element, is not the only factor of socialization. He asserts that the
family and workplace, among other factors, also play a role; these contexts can also be contradictory to one another. Mac and Ghaill’s (1994) discussion of his research at Parnell School supports this discussion of negotiation and the plural versions of masculinities that emerge as dominant within varying contexts, as he states: "...specific versions of student masculinities were structured by and acted out in response to specific pedagogic and disciplinary forms of the entrepreneurial curriculum" (p. 41). This description is key to my understanding of masculinities, as it asserts the importance of context, of performing or acting out of masculinities, of the influences these contexts have on the versions of masculinities that emerge, and of the transformative influences on hegemonic masculinity, as is evident in the ‘entrepreneurial curriculum’. Using Marx (1951), Edley and Wetherell (1997) poignantly explain this process of negotiation: “However, as Marx might have said, whilst men make their own identities, they do not make them just as they please. They make them under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past” (p. 214).

2.6.3 It’s relational

A large portion of defining masculinities, and those who are constructed within this discourse, is the notion of not being female (Davies, 1989; Bird, 1996). The majority of the literature includes in its definition of masculinities, its relationship to femininities (Bird, 1996, p.120). Although theorists recognize the plurality within masculinities, there is a hegemonic male ideal that stands in direct opposition to its female counterpart. While femininities have been constructed through the process of exclusion (Boler, 1999), masculinities depend on dominance, inclusion. As Connell (1995/2005) writes, masculinity is dependent on its counterpart, femininity; and this co-dependence further entrenches gender binaries. He states:

‘Masculinity’ does not exist except in contrast with ‘femininity’. A culture which
does not treat women and men as polarized character types, at least in principle, does not have a concept of masculinities in the sense of modern European/American culture.

(p. 68)

Connell’s assertion introduces the role of cultural influence and masculinities. Considering the different ways that masculinities are taken up and performed in countries around the world is significant to classroom discussions of gender; these considerations provide tangible examples of the way norms are constructed.

An integral act in the regulation of masculinities is this separation from femininities; “all things feminine are taboo” (Kehler, 2007). Martino (2007) describes this as a fear of the feminine, which is central to the way that masculinities are policed. This policing is done through peer interactions which perpetuate a dominant form of masculinity that few males actually live up to (Connell, 1995/2005). Research conducted by Dalley-Trim (2007) with male students has demonstrated that many boys like to play out dominant versions of masculinities. This is evidenced in much of the policing done by boys within schools to regulate the masculine norm. Homophobia, name-calling, competition, and separation from the female students are just some elements of this regulation (Dalley-Trim, 2007). Bird (1996) also discusses the propensity of men to seek out other men to be competitive with, so as not to display femininity.

2.6.4 Challenging (He)gemony

Influenced by Dalley-Trim (2007), I assert there are multiple discourses of masculinities; however, I do not think this recognition of multiple discourses discredits hegemonic masculinity. On the contrary, following Connell (1995/2005), I declare that these multiple representations are formed in relation to and subordinated by hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, I subscribe to Connell’s defense of hegemonic masculinity, and assert that it can be disrupted. Within the
discussion of hegemonic masculinity, I recognize many challenges. If hegemonic masculinity is in fact malleable, what accounts for the changes in the dominant ideal? Does the process of negotiation, rejection, and acceptance eventually disrupt the dominant ideal? How are the varying forms of masculinities formed and how do they influence hegemonic masculinities?

Demetriou (2001), considers the lack of discussion of the way hegemonic masculinity is influenced by other forms. Specifically, he critiques Connell’s explanation of how current hegemony came to be, stating that his description is void of how other forms of masculinities came to be in relation. Stating that this presents the two as a dualism, as it does not explain the negotiations within the relationships of masculinities. While I agree with Demetriou’s critique that there is little discussion of how varying forms of masculinities came to be, I defend Connell’s explanation of hegemonic masculinity. I do not think we can dismiss the relevance of hegemonic masculinity on the formation of identity, simply because it can also be changed. However, I think there is room within masculinities research for further discussion of the way other forms of masculinities came to be, and their influence on hegemonic masculinity. This is where Demetriou’s discussion of ‘non-white’ or ‘non-heterosexual’ elements within hegemonic masculinity is important.

2.7 Multiplicity

Understanding the construction of the masculine is not limited to the hegemonic masculine ideal (Dalley Trim, 2007). As stated, I recognize the existence, weight, and privilege associated with hegemonic masculinity; yet, I assert that a discussion of the multiple forms of masculinities, and their formation, is equally as important. This recognition involves a discussion of intersections of identity, warnings surrounding over-simplification, and a re-assertion of the importance of context.
The concept of a singular masculinity ignores other factors of identity such as race, class, ability and sexuality (Griffin, 1995). As Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996) explain:

"Masculinities do not have a one dimensional identity, rather they embody multiple dimensions. For example, there are white-working class gay masculinities alongside Asian middle-class heterosexualities." (p. 51).

In recognizing that there are masculinities, rather than simply a singular masculinity, it is important to not fall into the essentialist representations of these varying forms. Connell (1995/2005) complicates masculinities further, as using intersections of identity such as race and class can also produce essentialized understandings of masculinities: "Difference between race or class settings is important to recognize, but it is not the only pattern of difference that has emerged. It has become increasingly clear that different masculinities are produced in the same cultural or institutional setting" (p. 36). In other words, as the intersection of other factors of identity may affect the construction of masculinities, this construction is not prescribed through that one factor:

With growing recognition of the interplay between gender, race and class, it has become common to recognize multiple masculinities: black as well as white, working-class as well as middle-class. This is welcome, but it risks oversimplification. It is easy in this framework to think there is a black masculinity or a working class masculinity (Connell, 1995/2005, p. 76).

I assert that this is where a large amount of the theory on identity rests, within these over-generalized understandings of intersections. As a result, this is the way that it is taken up in pedagogy. Educators are looking for more information to represent, for example, the Chinese male experience. This is as problematic as feminist teaching that rests at including more women,
Frank et al. (2003), complicate the common sense notions of masculinities by acknowledging instead, its complexity in relation to context:

That is masculinity is often practiced differently cross-culturally, intra-culturally, and individually. An Indo-Canadian boy might understand and perform masculinity differently than an African Nova Scotian boy. However, the African Nova Scotian boy may also perform masculinity differently in different contexts, for example in school versus church. (p. 120)

As masculinities are multiple, fluid, subordinate, privileged, relational and hinged in context, these are the messy complicated representations of identity that need to be discussed in both the classroom and theory.

2.8 (He)teronormativity

The binaried relationship between masculinities and femininities that is perpetuated in the construction of masculinities also emphasizes the norm of heteronormativity, through its assertion that one should be attracted to the Other. For high school boys demonstrating a heteronormative masculine ideal is one of their greatest concerns (Frank et al., 2003). The danger of the heteronormative practices within schools, is that they are often unnoticed, and a natural aspect of a fixed understanding of masculinities. This invisibility is anything but neutral, rather it is a violent act of identity regulation.

Mac an Ghaill (1994) outlines three ways in which schools become sites of heteronormative production: the internal discourse of the school, the inclusion of particular identities and the deligitimation of others, and the prioritizing of the norm. He identifies the active ways that teachers regulate these elements, then considers the role and perceptions of females perpetuated in this process. Finally, Mac an Ghaill considers the affect and reading of
heteronormativity within a group of young gay male students. His research recognizes the role of the educational institution in the perpetuation and construction of gender. This reinforces the notion that schools are a primary site for the disruption of these norms. Moreover, he considers the impact that compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1981) has, not only on those who identity as the sexual Other, but also on those who supposedly adhere to this norm.

Kehler (2007) explores the way that this concept of compulsory heterosexuality in schools can affect male relationships: “More often than not, the connections young men make between masculinity and heterosexuality lead many to abandon close relationships and instead invest more firmly, more deeply, and more publicly in a normative masculinity” (274). Kehler and Martino (2007) assert that often this policing is done by other males, claiming through the words of one of their participants, that ‘guys don’t really care what girls think, they care what other guys think’. This is not to dismiss the role that those constructed as female can also play in the reification of heteronormativity. Mac an Ghaill (1994) also claims that male peer-group interactions constitute spaces in which masculinities are constructed, amplified, and validated: “Here, young male students learnt the heterosexual codes that marked their rite of passage into manhood” (p. 53).

This also manifests itself in the ‘homophobic surveillance’ that occurs by the dominant group, who regulate a mandatory heterosexuality. Employing Foucault’s discussions of surveillance, Haywood (1993, as cited in Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1996) demonstrates how language is used to regulate masculinities and sexuality. He discusses the use of terms, such as ‘wankers, bum bandits, gays and poofs’, as a way of subordinating the male bodies identified as the “Academic Achievers”. Haywood’s description is rich, as it points to the active way that bodies are constructed through language, how a normative sexuality is regulated, how versions
of masculinities are subordinated, and how multiple versions of masculinities (evident in his discussion of gay masculinities and academic masculinities) exist. Using responses from a research participant, Kehler and Martino (2007) establish the entangled relationship of masculinities and heterosexuality in their discussion of boys asserting their sexuality by boasting about their sexual exploits with girls. Allen (2005), parallels this understanding in her discussion of focus groups, as the boys in her group often used talk to signify heterosexuality.

Kehler (2007) states that men who resist heteronormativity and counter hegemonic processes of masculinities are bound to find themselves on the proverbial normative fringes of masculinities. This observation is extraordinarily important to my research, and classroom practice, as it provides an explanation for student resistance to conversations that attempt to challenge the hegemonic male ideal. Those that resist heteronormativity are placing themselves at risk, these risks need to be recognized and where appropriate openly discussed.

2.9 Masculinities and resistance

2.9.1 Cause

I assert that my reading in masculinities, has informed my understanding of resistance from male students surrounding discussions of gender; it may arise from their inability to define themselves. This inability to define oneself results from a fear of aligning with the feminine and a lack of new language that complicates hegemonic masculinity or represents the multiple versions of masculinities. When students attempt to define the self, or their understanding of others they are often forced to incite the norm, often through a need to compare to the ‘ideal’. Edley and Wetherell’s (1997) presentation of the lack of everyday discourse surrounding new forms of masculinities is an excellent representation of this notion. The male participants in their study reject the physical strength of the rugby players, yet they still assert the importance of
strength within masculinities by claiming their own mental strength. One of the participants in their study claims to not be like the macho rugby players, but then re-asserts his masculinity as he fears that his statement may be read as declaring femininity. Often, like in my own study, the boys would trail off when they lacked words to explain their understanding of the world. In trying to define themselves, comparisons seem restricted to either side of the gender binary. Bird (1996), highlights this in her discussion of the use of the word effeminate to describe queer masculinities. Language is bound to normative ideals, and students may resist their inability to navigate outside of such discourse. Male students might recognize that they are unable to define themselves without contrasting the ideal, or else risk alignment with the feminine. This unliveable space (Butler 1993), creates a fear of exclusion and therefore resistance.

2.9.2 Performances of masculinities

The research on masculinities assists in framing overt student resistance as a performative act of masculinities. Readings in masculinities demonstrate the pressure to perform and define oneself through the hegemonic masculine ideal, even for those individuals who resist such a construction (Edley and Wetherell, 1997). Further the extensive literature surrounding the regulation of masculinities and heteronormativity (Connell, 1995/2005; Kehler, 2007; Kehler and Martino, 2007; Mac an Ghaill, 2004) lends itself to discussions of resistance and performativity. The intense peer group policing within schools may cause students to perform dominant versions of masculinities in fear of being pushed to the fringes of masculinities (Kehler, 2007). More research and reading on my part needs to be done to connect the concept of performativity with resistance theory.
3 METHODOLOGY

In this interview based qualitative study, I conducted two semi-structured interviews with six male youth from diverse demographics, including race and socio-economic status. In previous years, the youth were enrolled in my Social Studies 11 class, which was taught with a focus on anti-oppressive pedagogy (Kumashiro, 2004). Social Studies 11, in particular, provides the opportunity for many discussions surrounding gender, power, heteronormativity, privilege, and whiteness, and many overt acts of student resistance have been exhibited and recognized within this context. As a researcher I am interested in student perceptions of gender and masculinities and how these are played out in the classroom. I chose to conduct my research exclusively with male students, as, in my observation, they were often the most overtly resistant to pedagogy surrounding gender. For this particular study, I wanted to examine the relationship between these overt acts of resistance and performances of masculinities. Interviewing provided the opportunity to engage student perspectives' of gender and masculinities, concepts that I have explored within my classroom. As I recognize the ability of student's to theorize their own lives (Loutzenheiser, 2005), youth understandings of gender, masculinities and resistance are at the forefront of my research and my methodological choice. These conversations provided the opportunity to discuss the incidents that I had labeled resistant or oppositional behaviour with former students. Through these talks, the relationship between masculinities and student resistance was explored. Within the interviews themselves, there was the opportunity for

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4 Within the write-up and analysis of this research I chose to focus on ‘talk’ instead of the general concept of language. This is a conscious choice, as my analysis focuses on spoken language, not language as a grandiose concept. I also chose to use the term talk, as I assert that it better represents my understanding of the interview process and recognizes the context of the participants, who would not use a term such as ‘speech acts’. Further, as I state that the everyday talk surrounding masculinities perpetuates a notion of hegemonic masculinities, I posit that this is an important word distinction.
exploring student perspectives, as well as the ways in which gender identities are constructed within the very talk of the interview. The diverse demographics of the participant group also provided the opportunity to explore the multiplicity of masculinities, and intersections with other factors of identity, such as race.

3.1 (Me)thod

Although all interviews involve power relationships, role-playing, and researcher motivations, semi-structured interviews allow for the participants to be more involved in the direction of the interview (Flick, 2006). The increased focus on each interviewee’s interests decreases the potentially essentialist understandings of male youth held within the use of formulaic, standard questions. Participants can generate their own topics for discussion instead of being fixed to my understandings of their interests, observations or concerns. Within each interview there was space for the individual to introduce his own understandings. This is particularly evident in the media choices that each participant used, as the participants chose media that I have never viewed or that I would not associate with youth. As the participants were involved in the direction of the interview, this asserts an understanding of the “students as worthy experts and theorists of their own lives” (Loutzenheiser, 2005, 4). Interviewing or interviews, focuses on the representation of student experience through their own talk. This talk recognizes the unique context of these youth, and does not rely on my understanding of observed behaviours. The understandings asserted by the participants, instead, served to challenge observations and labels that I had constructed about male youth. This is particularly important to my own understanding of resistance, and behaviour that I had labeled as such.

I chose to audio record, as I wanted to focus my analysis on the way that talk/language is employed within the interview. Davies (1989) asserts that language has a constitutive force, so it
is with language that I would like to study the sculpting forces of masculinities. As I view gender as a construction of discourse, I recognize the interview itself to be a forcible, repetitious act of gender construction (Butler, 1990). Interviewing provided the unique opportunity to consider the ways that my own talk often constructs male. This is particularly evident in many of my subject choices, use of last names, use of ego boosting, and binaried talk. With its focus in talk and discourse, I assert that interview is the most appropriate method for revealing the reliance on the use of gendered language. Best (2003), in her discussion of interview and race, discusses the role that talk can play in further entrenching identities. As both Butler and Best have affected my understanding of talk and identity construction, I consider the manner in which the interviews themselves were conducted, questions asked, and assumptions made, to have perpetuated essentialist understandings of gender and the male/female binary. Recognizing this, it is crucial these assumptions of similarity or difference are analyzed in order to interrogate our common sense (Kumashiro, 2004) understandings of gender, and the way talk acts to perpetuate these understandings.

3.2 The three r’s: recruitment

Male students from all three of my Social Studies 11 blocks during the 2006/2007 school year were invited to my classroom during three consecutive lunch hours. School announcements were used to organize these initial meetings. During these meetings students were given initial contact letters and the process of the study, including anonymity, voluntary participation, and time commitments, was explained. Through the initial contact, I explained that I wanted to speak with male students who had completed my Social Studies 11 course about reactions to course content and how the course was taught, particularly relating to understandings of gender and school. Potential participants were informed that the research would be in the form of two
interviews, of approximately one hour in length outside of school hours, in which we would discuss their understandings of gender, masculinity and student resistance. I explained that my choice to interview was in order to use students' own voices and understandings of gender and its influence on their behaviour within the classroom. Their voluntary participation was framed in relation to my own graduate work, in which I would be academically benefiting. I explained that the interviews would be transcribed, analyzed, and then used as the basis of my thesis. Students were assured that the decision to participate, or not participate, would have no academic or personal affect on them within the school community. All students that came to my room as a result of the announcements were given parental consent and participant assent forms to take home for consideration, in addition to the initial contact letter. Each was informed that I would be conducting initial interviews in January and February, and that the first six to eight students to hand in their permission forms would become participants in my study. I sought a maximum of eight students in order to keep the study manageable, as there would be two interviews with each participant. I posit that only six students returned the forms, as many students might find the time commitment, or the very conversation, outside of their comfort zone. Of the six that did choose to participate, a few referenced that their motivation to participate was their interest in talking about their opinions and experiences, their interest in the topic, and of wanting to help me out with my schooling.

3.3 The three r's: research site

The research was conducted at Brookside Secondary School. The school is located in an urban center in a Western province in Canada, and is one of the largest schools within the district, with approximately 2000 students. Within the school there are students from grades 8-12. As it is a public school, the curriculum is provincially mandated. The school is well known
for its music programs, and the band, choir and strings classes draw many students into the school. The drama and film department are average in size, compared to some smaller school in the district where drama is more of a focus, yet the students who are involved in the drama productions within the school are very close knit. Basketball, badminton, rugby, soccer and volleyball would be the four major team sports at the school. Yet, basketball is the highest profile sport within the school. Academically, the school is quite mixed. There is an enriched program within the school, but it is only comprised of approximately 90 students between grade 8-10. There are also honours classes offered in grades 11 & 12 within the Math, English and Language departments. Alternately, there are modified courses within all grades for English, Social Studies, Science and Math. The school is comprised of a mix of students from lower socio-economic co-up housing and middle-income single-family homes. It is a co-ed public school with an ethnically, racially and economically diverse student population, comprised of an approximately sixty to seventy percent Chinese Canadian and twenty percent Indo-Canadian populous. I have been a faculty member of the Social Studies and English Departments for over seven years.

3.4 The three r’s: research participants

All of the participants are currently enrolled in grade 12 at Brookside Secondary School, and were previously students in Social Studies 11 class in the 2006/2007 school year. My classroom becomes the setting as these students have a commonality of experience in that particular space. The six participants were the only individuals, of the approximately forty invited, that handed in permission forms. All six of the participants took part in the initial interview. Only five of the six made themselves available for a follow-up interview. Each of the participants identifies as male and ‘straight’. The demographic information below, is a summary
of the information provided by the participants. The identity labels, and word choice surrounding these labels, represent the language and understandings of the participants themselves. All of the pseudonyms were selected by the participants and the peer and teacher names used have been changed to protect anonymity.

Bart is a seventeen-year old, grade 12 student, who has attended Brookside for his entire high school education. His choice of pseudonym, Bart, was influenced by the popular television show, The Simpson’s. He was born in Canada, and came to Brookside from a local elementary feeder school in the catchment area. He identifies as Indo-Canadian, and speaks both Punjabi and English. Racially he identifies as South Asian, but rarely uses this identifier, more often choosing the ethnic label, Indo-Canadian. His parents were born in India, and immigrated to Canada. Currently, he lives with his mother, father, brother, and grandfather. He considers his family middle class. Bart identifies as Hindu, and volunteers at his Temple in order to demonstrate the importance of his faith to his life. He also volunteers at Brookside, in addition to his involvement with the school store and the annual Desi Days celebration. After graduation, Bart plans to attend a local University and obtain a Bachelor of Science before enrolling in Medical School.

John Malkovich is an eighteen-year old, grade 12 student, who considers himself ethnically, Asian. More specifically, he hyphenated his identity as Asian-Canadian. He labeled his race as Sino-Vietnamese, Japanese. One of his parents was born in Beijing, the other Vietnam. Within his home, where he lives with his mother and father, both English and Chinese are spoken. His older sister has left the family home to attend university. The term middle class was used to identify his socio-economic status. Malkovich was born in Canada, and has completed all of his schooling in the Brookside catchment area. There are both Buddhist and Baptist religious influences in his home. Within the school, Malkovich is involved in band,
theatre, choir and film. He plans to complete a music degree and/or attend film school after graduation. He also identified as a 'wannabe gangster rapper' and 'internet celebrity'. Whether or not these labels were intended with an ironic tone, I still feel they give insight into Malkovich’s character. Malkovich’s choice of pseudonym is a reference to the famous actor who appears in such films as *Adaptation*, *The Man in the Iron Mask*, and the film about a fictionalized version of himself, *Being John Malkovich*. The film *Being John Malkovich* is popularly known for troubling issues of consciousness.

John Smith is a seventeen-year-old, grade 12 student, who has also completed all of his schooling in the Brookside catchment area. He identifies as Canadian, and racially positioned himself as ‘Caucasian?’. He lives with his mother, and one of his two older sisters, and identifies as lower-middle class. His entire family was born in Canada, and English is the only language spoken at home. He did not affiliate with any religion, or identify any religious influences. Unlike the other participants, Smith has taken two courses with me and helped to coach the Girls’ Ice Hockey team alongside myself and another Brookside teacher. Other than hockey, he is also involved in rugby, x-country, and track. He did not position himself as part of any particular group at school. After graduation, he plans to attend college for two years, and then transfer to university. Neither the college, university, or program of study were specified. As is discussed in Chapter 5, John Smith’s choice of pseudonym was based on a name that he believed would sound white.

Mr. X is a seventeen-year-old, grade 12 student, who considers himself ethnically, Chinese. More specifically, he hyphenated his identity as Chinese-Canadian. Racially, he also used the label Chinese. I have chosen to distinguish between the racial identification chosen and his use of hyphenation to represent his ethnic identity, as Mr.X often disassociates with his
Chinese background, and stressed his Canadian identity, and the number of generations his family has lived in Canada. This distinction recognized Mr. X’s understanding of culture as an aspect of ethnicity. Within his home, he lives with his mother, father, and younger brother, and only English is spoken at home. His parents were both born in Canada, and he has completed all of his schooling in the Brookside catchment area. He did not identify any religious influences or affiliations, and identified as middle class. At Brookside, he is involved in student government, band, band executive, and grad committee. He plans to attend a local college for two years and then transfer to a local university, although he did not declare an area of study. He indicated that he was ‘not quite sure anymore’ what group he fits into at school.

Sal Paradise is an eighteen-year-old, grade 12 student, who considers himself ethnically, English-Scottish-Irish-Canadian. Paradise understands his race to be Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and Norse. Within his home, where he lives with his mother and father, he is the eldest of four boys. Both he and his parents were born in Canada, and English is the only language spoken at home. His father is a Baptist pastor, and he and his family are involved in the Church. He uses the term lower middle class to identify his socio-economic status. At school he is involved in drama, music, film, sports and radio club. He identifies as a ‘neo-bohemian’ who hangs out with the ‘Indigo-kids’, that is a term used to identify students who identify with their artistic sides. He asserts that he is an inherent procrastinator, with an apathetic attitude toward school, who is socially awkward. He also identified as someone who likes to read. After graduation, Paradise would also like to enter the music program at a local College. Sal’s choice of pseudonym is

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5 Although a discussion of race and whiteness is taken up further in chapter four, I assert that Paradise’s understanding of race and ethnicity are an attempt to be seen as more than ‘white’, to deny the homogeneity often attached to whiteness. I posit that this is a reaction to the way that the ‘white’ boys feel they are perceived within the demographics of the school; I have often heard ‘white’ males in my class assert that they occupy a minority role within the school.
influenced by the writings of Jack Kerouac. Sal Paradise the narrator of the Kerouac’s famous novel, *On The Road*, in which he chronicles his travels across America.

SL was the last participant to agree to participate in this study. He handed his permission form in long after the date that I had suggested; actually after I had begun the initial interviews with the other participants. He continually asked me in the halls about the form, and if it was too late to hand it in. I indicated, each time he asked, that he could still hand it in. It was not clear if he wanted to participate, or if he felt awkward and would ask each time to ease his discomfort. Then one day he dropped the form off on my desk. As his sister is involved in extra-curricular sports with me, she also talked to me about her brother’s participation. Unprompted, she told me that her brother wanted to participate in order to help me out because of the chances that I had given him the previous year. We arranged the initial interview, which was quite brief. Within the interview he echoed what his sister had told me, bringing up the extra help sessions that I had arranged for the students who were not successfully passing Social Studies 11. SL could not commit to a second time after school for our follow-up interview, and I did not want to push the issue in case he felt he had given enough of his time. As SL did not hand in a fact sheet, I can only represent him in my understanding. He, like the other participants, is a grade 12 student at Brookside. The family has lived in Vancouver throughout SL’s schooling. He identifies as Indo-Canadian. He is the only boy of four children, and lives in the family home with his three sisters and his parents. The family lives only blocks from the school in a house. As a result, I would identify the family as upper middle class. SL is athletic, and has been in trouble at school many times for fighting or being aggressive.

3.5 A Converse Process

Interviewing provides the opportunity for follow-up conversations with students
surrounding topics, interactions, and observed behavior within the class. Student involvement and student voice are essential to my understanding of research. Recognizing this, I assert that semi-structured interview allowed the students to be involved in the direction of the interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). The study consisted of initial interviews of approximately one hour in length, and an additional interview with each youth of the same duration. Each initial interview was conducted at Brookside, and was digitally audio taped. After each interview, I wrote extensive post-interview field notes in order to reflect upon the dynamics, pauses, body language and silences of the interview process. I used these notes to inform my follow-up interviews, and as a point of analysis. Additionally, I began transcribing the initial interviews before the follow-up interviews. As I was transcribing, I made notes on themes that I noticed, or comments I was struck by within the initial interviews. For example, in my interviews with Sal Paradise I first noticed the amount of times I complimented him, or brought up topics to nurture his ego. It was also within this interview that I noticed the length of time that I took before getting into the interview questions. This initial reaction to his interview, heightened my awareness of similar incidents in the following interviews. The initial themes were as follows:

3.5.1 Freddy Mercury: recognizing multiplicity

Freddy Mercury was an example used by one of the interviewees as someone who exemplifies masculinities. I am identifying this as a theme as it demonstrates student understanding of the multiplicity of masculinities. I recognize that Freddy Mercury represents a particular version of masculinity; yet, as he is a departure from the Clint Eastwood version of masculinities that is entrenched in much of the participants definitions of masculinities, I assert that Freddy Mercury is symbolic of a recognition of multiplicity. Further, it connects to the way in which the participants used media as a vehicle for their speech; media examples often
provided the language for recognizing and demonstrating multiple versions of masculinities. All participants acknowledged that there are masculinities rather than a singular fixed masculinity. However, the language that they used when defining masculinities was fixed and hinged to the normative discourse surrounding masculinities. Conversely, many of the examples that they used introduced intersections of identity, such as race and sexuality. Additionally, many of the participants spoke of how they used to be, which demonstrates recognition of fluidity of identity. Finally, in the follow-up interviews, participants all answered that there are multiple versions of masculinities.

3.5.2 Gaps

There were many places in the interviews that students could not find the words that they wanted or needed to use. This is due to the fact that much of the language surrounding masculinities is entrenched in hegemonic masculine ideals that do not reflect male students understandings of themselves. As will be discussed in far more detail in Chapter 4, there was a fear of aligning oneself with the feminine. This concept of gaps relates to ‘speaking media’ as many students found the use of parallel examples useful in their talk.

3.5.3 Speaking Media

I was struck by the frequency with which the participants and I relied on the use of media examples to communicate. Although my first question draws on media, these examples and others were revisited many times throughout the interview. This form of communication is significant as it relies on the normative discourse of media, yet extends beyond the limitations of words. However, using media often requires common understanding and cultural references. While participants, many who claimed not to watch a lot of television, stated that they think representations of masculinities in the media had little affect on their own understanding of self.
This initial theme became substantial to my analysis and is developed much further in chapter four. As stated above, I feel that this theme is meshed with the theme of Freddy Mercury, but also provides further elements for analysis. Additionally, participants’ fixed definitions of masculinity are contradicted by their use of media examples.

### 3.5.4 Contradictions

Within the interviews there were multiple instances of contradiction. Often the way the participants defined themselves, and the way that I have constructed them as a result of their observed behaviour in my class, was markedly different. Also, the often narrow version of identity that was represented in their definition of masculinity was contradicted by the stories and examples they used. While they recognized the multiplicity of masculinities in theory, the words they used constructed a universal, fixed representation of a masculinity. Moreover, when talking about females they attached stereotypically masculine descriptors without issue; yet, hesitated to do so for male examples. Many claimed to be naturists, those that believe that the propensity of boys and girls to act differently is based in science, however spoke of family, friends, school and media as having had an affect on their own identity. I think this theme also represents the points throughout the interview in which my own feelings contradicted that of the participants, although in many cases I did not vocalize these contradictions.

### 3.5.5 Speaking man

This theme explores the way that the construction of male was further entrenched within the interview. As introduced above, there were points of contradiction within the interview between the participants and myself. Although an interviewer withholding personal opinions can be seen as a ‘polite’ process within the interview, this can also be read as one that further constructs masculinities within the interview. This is problematic as it furthers the binaried idea
of gender, that of the dominant male and the submissive female. Often I found myself ego feeding, calling people by last names, considering 'how a boy' would like to sit, avoiding eye contact, starting interviews with sports based, or music based warm-up questions. At two different points, I thought that an interviewee was on the verge of crying and I chose to change the topic both times. I strongly assert that this avoidance is methodologically relevant, as it reveals the way that 'male' is constructed in the interview. On a larger scale, it demonstrates the way that certain emotions are relegated to either side of the gender binary (Boler, 1999).

3.5.6 Resistance

This theme seemed to recede in my interviews; however, its fade into the background might be read in two ways. First, it can be understood as participant opposition to certain discussions within the interviews; this is apparent in the places where the participants pass over questions, or change the topic in their response. In this instance, the theme of resistance is not taken up in conversation, rather it is exhibited by the participants to particular topics of discussion. Second, the seeming minimization of this theme could be as a result of the participants' curtness in labeling and linking forms of resistance. Some participants simply suggested that male students were more likely to resist overtly. Others presented male students as more likely to shut down. In some instances the participants introduced the gender of the instructor as a factor in student resistance. In either instance, students abruptly made statements about the ways that their peers resist. I assert that this may result from the discomfort in discussing peers, or in discussing peer reactions to me.

3.5.7 To follow

These initial reactions to the interviews informed my follow-up questions, choice of setting for the follow-up interviews, and manner of questioning for the follow-up interviews.
In an attempt to unsettle the power dynamics that are inherent in the structure of the school (Allen, 2005), I chose to conduct my follow-up interviews at a local coffee shop. Although I recognize that the teacher-student power dynamic exists outside of the confines of the school, I assert that a change of environment disrupts the formality of this relationship, but not the relationship itself. In this new environment, I also tried changing the way that we were sitting whenever seating in the coffee shop allowed. For example, with John Smith I sat beside him in bar style seating. This allowed us both to look at the questions together, and eye contact was not as awkward as we were both facing the same direction. Some may argue that these are superficial changes that cannot change the power inherent in a teacher-student relationship; yet, I challenge this response as the body language, depth of talk, and overall ease was apparent in these follow-up interviews.

For all of the follow-up interviews, participants were e-mailed the questions ahead of time, therefore they could peruse them and prepare responses if they chose to. Within the follow-up interviews, each participant was asked a series of four questions related to the dominant themes that I identified in the initial interviews. The questions dealt with nature/nurture discussions in Social Studies 11, language surrounding masculinities, multiple masculinities, and specifically the intersection of race and masculinities. Additionally, each participant was asked one question specific to their initial interviews. The follow-up interviews were a medium for sharing initial interpretations with the participants in order to engage them in the analysis process.

3.5.8 Coding

After all of the follow-up interviews were complete, and transcribed, I followed a process of *line by line coding* (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Although I had already identified a
number of major themes, I did not want these initial themes to limit my perspective. I posit that the line-by-line coding verified some of the themes that I initially considered relevant, and revealed additional themes. Employing this process of coding, the most prevalent codes that I revealed were:

R: Any point in the interview where race is discussed, or where culture is being discussed but it is more of a statement about race.

BU: Places where I have given ego boosts, validation, agreement, or compliments to the interviewees.

ME: Any place where interviewees use an example from media to make their point.

MT: Any point where I use stereotypical notions of male talk, such as the use of last names.

DM: The points in which interviewees are attempting to define masculinities.

MB: Places where participants have identified particular behaviour in the classroom as male.

N.A.: Places where interviewees are claiming to not be affected by media masculinities or societal expectations of masculinities.

F: Recognition of changes in identity, places where interviewees recognize a change in character in themselves or others.

I: Any discussion of intellect.

BI: Any discussion of size, muscles, height, or overall body image.

Fe: Places where the interviewee has discussed the feminine, words stereotypically attached to the feminine, expectations of females, or female behaviours.

GDS: Recognition of a gap between definitions of masculinities and understanding of self or others.

DS: Places where the participant is defining themselves, or their understanding of self.
C: Contradictions between understanding of others and their actions, contradictions between stereotypical definitions of masculinities and people’s actions, contradictions between interviewees statements and their own use of examples or actions.

Fee: Discussions of feelings and emotions, or control of feelings and emotions.

S: Any place where sexuality is discussed, although this is often only in relation to student understandings of sexuality as other, LGBTQ.

VMOCK: Discussions of verbal mocking of self or others.

BT: Places where my questions or their talk further entrench the male/female binary and the dominance of masculinities.

DBT: Places where binaried talk is disrupted.

MM: Recognition, discussions or examples of multiple masculinities.

PI: Discussions of peer interactions, talking in groups, bravado in groups.

DWQ: Difficulty with question, discomfort or trouble understanding the question.

Res: Discussions of resistance in the classroom (RC), or resistance in the interview (RI).

I+: Talk related to the intersection of teacher identity, curriculum and student responses.

NN: Places where nature or nurture is discussed using these terms, or places where it is exampled.

Fam: Discussions of family members or influence of family.

TO: Any point where the interviewees trail off in the middle of a sentence.

VIOL: Any discussion of physical violence or abuse.

INS: Insecurity about topic, or ability to answer a question.

CC: Peer understanding of the curriculum.

G: Participant understanding of gender as a concept.
CB: Classroom behaviour that is not identified as resistance.

After this initial coding process was complete, I organized codes according to those that were most prevalent. I then organized the codes into thematic categories, and set aside the codes that were less prevalent. A variety of codes were appropriate for the themes that I had identified after the initial interviews, yet completely new themes were also evident. Further, a few of the themes that I had considered striking after the initial interviews, were not as dominant within the interviews as I had remembered. Although a number of the themes that I had initially considered striking were not dominantly represented in the line by line analysis, they were maintained as I considered them relevant, unique and telling. Using these themes, I created a colour coding system, and then went through my first interview, which was with John Smith, using these themes. After I had colour coded his transcription, I created a chart in a word document, and cut and paste the relevant quotes under the thematic headings. In addition to the dominance of certain colours on the transcription, the creation of this document helped to identify the prevalence of certain themes and the relationship between the passages that I identified as falling under the same theme. I utilized this process of colour coding the transcriptions thematically, and then cutting and pasting the relevant passages into the thematic chart I had begun after coding Smith’s interview. This document provided an outline for my analysis chapters.

3.6 ‘Talking’ method

The method of interview that I employ involves one-on-one discussion with former students about the role of discourse in constructing individual identities. Additionally, it offers an opportunity to reflect on discussions and student responses within the classroom. As an educator, discussions with students are often confined to group environments, classrooms, and class content, but do not necessarily involve the dynamics of the classroom. As student involvement
and student understandings are essential to my view of research, I felt that semi-structured interview (Flick, 2006) was the most appropriate for my study. Interview is an interaction between researcher and participant, and recognizing the involvement of both people in the construction of knowledge is essential to the research process. This method provided a degree of direction to the interaction, but did not confine talk to a prescribed path. Within semi-structured interviews, the researcher can have questions that touch on the themes of their research, but can also change, add or delete questions based on the responses of the participant (Flick, 2006).

3.7 The ‘I’ looking at you from across the table

Researcher positionality is relevant as it is ever present in the context of an interview. I identify as a white, middle-class, able-bodied, female, educator. These identity factors are continually at play in all contexts, and are significant to any interview process. I assert that three key aspects of my identity have the most significant affect on the interview process within this study: my position as teacher, the construction of my gender, and the construction of my whiteness. As the participants are former students, the teacher/student binary, and power dynamic, are attached to the interview process.

3.8 Interviewing Power

Throughout the research process, including the recruitment of participants, the set-up of interviews, and the interviews themselves, there is persistent evidence of power. Most interesting are the multiple layers of power that existed within the interview. Much of the data can be read through the obvious lens of the teacher-student relationship, as all of the participants have previously been students in my class. This is an important element of the research process and cannot be ignored. Yet, simply using this power dynamic further entrenches the binaried understanding of the teacher-student relationship and fails to recognize the multiple elements of
power that exist within that relationship and therefore within the research process. Russell (2005) discusses the multiple layers of power that can exist within a study between the researcher and participants. The assumption of my own power as a teacher-researcher is appropriate; however, there are further complexities within this power dynamic which are also relevant to the data collected during the interview. Using power as a point of analysis, one also needs to consider multiple elements such as gender, age, and the motivations of the both the researcher and the participants. Owens (2006) considers the way that her own motivations as a researcher affected the way that she viewed her participants, and how this power dynamic can actually produce participant shame. Best (2003) discusses the way that race, specifically her whiteness, affected her research. These elements all impact the responses elicited within the interviews and must be considered. However, as in Loutzenheiser’s (2007) discussion of who ought to be doing research with whom, I agree with doing away with the false dichotomy of insider/outsider. Instead, as a teacher-researcher, the multiple factors of my own identity, and the multiple factors of the participants’ identities, must be considered in relation to the research. When context and multiplicity of identity are considered, power is a complex participant within the interviews themselves.

3.8.1 Teacher-student

Considering my previous relationship with the participants, as a teacher who was responsible for grading their work, who may provide references for future post-secondary applications, and who is a symbol of the larger educational institution, this dynamic is an essential point of analysis. In general this relationship will affect the responses given by the participants; however, this relationship is particularly relevant when discussing student resistance and the intersection of the identity of the instructor. Also, through the recruitment process, many
of the students suggested that they wanted to participate in the study as a way to "help me" with my own education. This was echoed as a direct response by one of the participants when asked about his motivation: "Just helping you out if you needed an extra person to do the interviews, might as well right" (SL, Initial, 517-518). This desire to assist me in furthering my own education, may reveal their positive associations with my class; it may also emanate from a sense of obligation to their teacher. Allen (2005), speaks about the difficulty of recruiting students from the school in which you teach, as 'voluntary' participation is problematic in an environment in which participants are expected to fulfill teacher expectations on a daily basis. She posits that this is a result of the way that authority operates in schools. This recognition of the ever-presence of authority regardless of the individual teacher’s attempts to challenge the teacher-student binary is important to this research project, as it recognizes that power is always present due to the construction of the teacher within the larger system.

Beyond their participation, our previous teacher-student relationship affected participant responses to my questions. Discussions of course content were most certainly effected by the fact that I used to teach these participants, and that power relationship preceded the interview context. Many of the participants spoke about enjoying my class (Bart, Initial, line 650), Social Studies as a subject (John Malkovich, Initial, line 408), or the discussions that we had in class (John Smith, Initial, line 824). The interviewee's responses were not without the influence of that previous context. The shadow of this previous framework is apparent in their continual discussion of the role of women in Social Studies 11, an answer many of them may have expected that I wanted to hear, as students in my class do identify me as a feminist. Although I invited participants to consider our discussions about gender, and the social construction of both male and female, most of the participants returned to discussions about a singular, fixed idea of woman that I actually
find to be a problematic, rather than a pleasing, association with my teaching. Sal Paradise’s response demonstrates this pattern of response, and outlines his own explanation as to why the term gender translates to woman:

Um, I remember you talking about the big 5, and then how they’re like the token like women’s studies that we do in Socials 11, and we don’t really do anything else. Besides the fact that they got the right to vote, which they [the famous 5] have to do with anyway. And that’s about it, really.

SM: Can I ask why when I said gender, you immediately went to the role of women?

SP: Because in history, what’s written down is generally about men. So, I discerned that as the difference. (Sal Paradise, Initial, Lines 785-791)

After answering a question about gender in a similar manner, John Smith echoes Paradise’s defense of his translation of the term gender.

I posit that the participants were attempting to give me the response that they thought I wanted to hear, which demonstrates the influence of my power upon their responses. Further, this consistent association of gender and the role of women for male students is an interesting point for further analysis. This intersection of teacher, female identity and understanding of curriculum is explored in much greater detail in Chapter 5.

3.8.2 Teacher-researcher

Teacher and researcher power, is also evident in the tactics used to make the participants more comfortable within the interview. Questions surrounding the comfort of the participant, including the space chosen for the interview, providing food and beverage, and easing into the interview with questions that would put the participants at ease, can be read as either politeness or manipulation. As each interview begins with a discussion of the students’ interests, this could be read as an abuse of researcher power. While this act could be seen as a way of creating a safe space for the participant, it could also be seen as an exploitation of my power and prior
relationship with them in order to “get more” from the participants within the interview. In a sense, it is a manipulation in which I flaunt my knowledge of their lives, express an interest in their past times, in order to establish a sense of comfort and familiarity within the interview, but also in order to achieve my own research goals. It is this attachment to my personal academic goals that entrenches all of my actions, regardless of their intent, in power and manipulation.

While attempting to establish safety through talk, the physical environment in which the interviews were conducted was steeped in power. The initial interviews were conducted within the school context, an environment that is symbolic of the power of the teacher and would serve as a constant reminder of teacher power within this dynamic, regardless of my individual attempts to disrupt this power.

One such subtle disruption was my decision to feed the participants during the interview. Choosing whether or not to provide sustenance for the participants, who are volunteering their time outside of school, might also be read as a subtle form of manipulation. Upon reflection, it became increasingly apparent that serving hot chocolate and cookies was most certainly an attempt to make the participants feel that their decision to be interviewed was worthwhile. Also, this act of serving food and beverages is not a regular occurrence within our teacher-student interactions. Environment, refreshments and small talk needed to be considered, as they could be viewed as an attempt to compel the participants to reveal more about their lives. In reviewing the transcriptions, the timing of some of my questions, ensuring that I used pop culture references (Arrested Development, Weeds, Simpson’s, Flight of the Conords) that they would appreciate, and repeatedly using the name of a teacher who is extremely popular in the school, I recognize that these actions served a dual purpose. In one respect, they made the participants more comfortable. This comfort helped to ensure a feeling of safety from the participants for whom I
I am genuinely concerned, but it also helped to serve my own agenda, a successful interview. My compliments, agreement, validation and ego boosts could be read as an abuse of the power relationship, as it could be seen as fake and self-fulfilling, considering the objective of the research.

### 3.8.3 Student-teacher

Alternately, an analysis of the transcriptions reveals many instances that trouble my own power. While reviewing the transcriptions, I was struck by the fact that I used ego-boosts, validation and agreement more often with certain participants. Considering again my past relationship with these participants, I couldn't help but notice that I used a lot of these tactics with students I have felt most threatened or challenged by in the classroom context. With Sal Paradise, a participant who had been extremely vocal in my class, and who challenged my pedagogical decisions openly in front of the class, I spent a far greater time easing into the initial interview questions as there was a substantial amount of lead in time spent discussing participant's course work, plans for after graduation, a friend who had gone traveling, and his employment. It is not until line 150 that I ask permission to begin with the first question. The obvious assumption about power within an interview between teacher and student is that the teacher occupies a position of power; however, I assert that beyond the participants having the power to choose not to answer, there is also the question of male, female power within the interview through the presence of the construction of the hegemonic male ideal.

As is seen in the interview with Sal Paradise, my previous experiences with him challenging my teaching practice, and philosophical understandings of the world, made me more nervous in my interview with him. This lack of comfort is evidenced by the volume of questions
I asked him about his own life, the validation that I gave his responses, and my outright compliments surrounding his intellect:

That’s interesting. I’ve found it very interesting, I’ve actually been more interested, not more interested, uh, it’s definitely going to be a point of analysis, who, who agreed to do it.

SP: Is probably the more dominant males, because they’re the ones who want to talk.

SM: Partially, I, uh, partially, and I also would say, all of you share in common being rather intellectual. (Sal Paradise, Initial, lines 1223-1227)

Additionally, with participants who I have constructed as intellectual, I found far more instances where I was self-deprecating, complimented a participant’s talents, or did not challenge them when I strongly opposed their responses. I assert that these instances resulted from my relationship with them in class last year, and their behaviours within that environment. With students that I constructed as vocal, leaders, or resistant within the classroom context, there are multiple instances of such behaviour on my part. When John Smith doubted his ability to come up with questions at the end of the interview I responded: “That’s ok, neither am I” (SM, Initial, line 843). Regardless of the fact that I am a graduate student conducting an interview based research study, I still chose to insult my own capabilities in order to re-assure the participant. Of course this can be read as an attempt to put the participant at ease, but my initial field notes also indicate these are also the interviews in which I spoke about my own nervousness or discomfort.

In interviews with both John Malkovich and Sal Paradise, I made a point of complimenting and bringing in their musical capabilities, as this is a huge aspect of their own identities. When Paradise discussed the decreasing role of sports in his life, I turned the focus to his music:

Is he putting his investments in your music now instead, or?

SP: Kind of, ya, he tends to do that[laughs]. He tends to, he likes really to get on something, like bandwagon. (Sal Paradise, Initial, lines 703-705)
While with Malkovich it was both a form of flattery and a tool to generate a discussion about masculinities:

SM: How do you think that music and masculinities tie together? ‘Cus music’s a big influence in your life.
JM: Mhmm, I don’t know, cus I listen to a wide variety of genres. All the music I generally listen to, it’s so spread out, cus I, I’d say I listen to a lot of, prominently most of the bands I listen to, they have like male lead men, and they’re mostly male, but I listen to a lot of female artists too. Um, I don’t know, I don’t really see the relation. (John Malkovich, Initial, lines 127-132)

As both John and Sal our friends, I even found opportunity to compliment Sal’s intelligence while interviewing John. Even though my intention may have been to establish a sense of familiarity, it reads as an attempt to associate myself with his friend and to compliment their collective sense of ‘superior’ intellect:

I’m just thinking because I have had [Sal] in my class before, and I’ve had you in my class too…
JM: well you know what I am talking about then.
SM: and I know that [Sal] takes a lot of space, and I have had students tell me that it is intimidating to speak. I think they are intimidated by his intelligence. (John Malkovich, Initial, lines 245-249)

In some cases, I disagreed with the participants’ viewpoints, but did not speak up. This could have been a product of consequence, the participant’s refusal to continue the interview, but it may also have been my subconscious not wanting to challenge the male ego. This is a problematic comment as is restricts participants to a binaried understanding of male, but states more about my own construction, and how the participants were actively constructed throughout the interview. The construction of male and female through talk, is explored further in the analysis chapter, De(al)fining (Mask)ulinity.
Alternately, the student who I would label the biggest teacher pleaser in the group, I have the least amount of codes within his transcription surrounding compliments, validation and ego boosts. The teacher-student relationship, and the assumption of power was present in the interview in both contexts, but in different ways. One shook the notion that the teacher always maintains power within a teacher-student interview, and the other confirmed that the teacher-student relationship affords the teacher-interviewer power within the interview. This contradiction demonstrates the importance of considering multiple aspects of identity and the importance of context.

In the second interviews, there were far less codes surrounding ego-boosts, validation and agreement. This may have been a symptom of context, as the follow-up interviews were conducted at a community coffee shop, and this troubled the formalities of the teacher-student relationship that rest within the physical structure of the school; teachers and students rarely sit face to face and have coffee together. Alternately it may have been a symptom of necessity, as I no longer needed the participants and did not need to stay in good favour in order to get another interview. However, in the second interview with Sal Paradise he seems dejected by the fact that the interview is over, and I suggest that he can keep talking:

SM: ok, alright
SP: so the, ok, is that it?
SM: ya, but you can keep speaking. (Sal Paradise, Follow-Up, lines 396-398)

I am aware of his feelings and do not want him to feel used solely for my research needs. As a result, I invite him to continue to talk, which he does for quite some time. This highlights Sal’s vulnerability, a boy who I have also suggested disrupted my own power. This vulnerability is also evident in Mr. X’s pre-occupation with the tape recorder and concern that his transcriptions
remain private: "but no one sees this except you right?" (Line 651). Regardless of my own construction of these individuals as male, and sometimes resistant, they are exposing their thoughts and feelings to me, and as I am not reciprocating, that places the participants in a vulnerable position. Clearly power is layered, associated with context, and related to multiple factors of identity, all of which are present in the interviews (Ellsworth, 1989).

3.8.4 Whiteness worries

Additionally, whiteness is an important aspect of power, and construction, within the interviews (Best, 2003). First, whiteness and privilege, within my own classroom environment, stems from the space and attention that is granted to the white, male students within my classes; this is often a direct result of the behaviour I deem resistant. Giroux (1997) states that whiteness secures its own power in the very act of refusing to identify itself. Upon reflection, I recognize that many of the students that I perceive to be resistant are white and male. As a result, I am often pre-occupied by their reactions in gender discussions. Their resistance, or oppositional behaviour, may be a reaction resulting from their own inability to accept privilege, or the inability to recognize any alignment or compliance with systemic oppression. Cooks (2003) states that the recognition of race and privilege is a radical move for most people who are constructed as white, as it unravels the veil of normalcy. Often white students in the school have difficulty accepting their positions of privilege in Canadian society, as they use the demographics of the school, in which they are in the minority, as their frame of reference. Interestingly, white students in my classes still occupy more space and participate more often. My acknowledgement of overt forms of resistance, and pre-occupation with challenging students to consider their positions of privilege, provides even more space and attention to this identity group. Further, within the interviews themselves, I noticed the participants that I spent the most time ego
boosting, or that I noted discomfort or insecurity with, were those that are white, or who have cultural capital within the school (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990). Additionally, I further entrenched this sense of privilege when I chose white students as examples multiple times within the interviews:

    ok, Can you tell me about another situation from Social Studies 11 class, even just watching the way that people were, like you had [Name of white boy] in your class, and [white boy] in the class, and [white boy] was in the class. (SL, Initial, Lines 265-267)

Considering the demographic of the school, it is astounding that the three names that I chose to were all white boys. While this may have been a subconscious act of leading the participant to draw conclusions about patterns of participation, it still grants space to those identified as white. As both a researcher and a teacher, I need to constantly question the source of this pre-occupation, and the resulting space and privilege granted to white, male students, even as I attempt to disrupt their thinking.

3.9 Methodological conclusion

Sitting beside us in each interview, uninvited, was the construction of the teacher, student, and the construction of the hegemonic male ideal. Our talk, although attempting to challenge, is still filtered through this power dynamic. Even in attempting to disrupt, words often revealed instead the inability to escape binaries. While power is negotiated through multiple factors of identity, and the teacher-student relationship is only one, it is both revealing and extremely crucial when considering pedagogy that seeks to disrupt.
Throughout this section, I will explore the way that the participants understood gender as a concept, and reveal the importance of introducing gender alongside discussions of nature/nurture. Then I will discuss the rigid, essentialized definitions of masculinities produced throughout the initial interviews. These definitions are anchored to discussions of confidence, strength, and emotional control. Then, I will look at the way that the process of interviewing constructed the youths’ explications of ‘male’; I am suggesting that the manner of questioning, the choice of topics for discussion, and the participants’ responses impacted the interview outcomes. The interviews also became a site for introducing fluidity of identity and plurality within masculinities. Although participants often found it difficult to verbalize less traditional and concretized concepts of male and masculinities, especially in relation to their understanding of themselves, the gaps in their talk were revealing. Finally, I will discuss the way that media often filled in these gaps in understanding.

4.1 (In)Gender

Often when asked to discuss or define gender, students resorted to discussions of male and female, without considering social constructions. Instead, they took the prompt of gender as the opportunity to discuss binaried sex differences. Most read gender as a term intended to differentiate and isolate. For example, participants often used questions related to gender as a gateway to discussing differences or similarities between males and females. Despite my pedagogical desire to impact how male students explicitly understand and take up social construction, few of the participants spoke unprompted about gender as a construction. In fact, many interpreted the term gender as ‘the role of women’. Regardless of multiple classroom discussions about the way that masculinities and femininity are constructed, the participants
continually associate women with gender. Watney (1987, as cited in Mac an Ghaill, 1994) discusses the tendency of gender to be read as women, sexuality as lesbian, and race as black. I assert that this understanding of gender as woman, race as non-white, and sexuality as not-straight, are concepts that are heavily engrained in student thinking and allow the norm to remain invisible. Further, I posit that the youth’s reading of gender as women, is heightened due to the intersection of the term and my own gender identity. This concept of intersections is taken up further in Chapter 5.

The youth seemed to understand gender within the binary of male and female, without complicating the construction of either. Bart discusses gender differences as sex differences:

SM: um, what do you remember most about discussions of gender in social studies 11?
B: Um, the roles that a lot of the prime ministers and people played in society
SM: Can you expand on that?
B: Um, like for example, the first prime minister of Canada was John A. Macdonald, he was a male, and his cabinet was all like male people. And the things they did to improve society. Like, we basically talked about women’s rights and stuff. We basically talked about how society was at first patriarchal, and how society was basically run by males until WWI, ya
SM: ok. What about, for example, WWI propaganda posters and stuff like that. How did you see our analysis of gender when we looked at the posters? Do you remember that far back?
B: Ya, I can remember the soldiers in the pictures, they were all male, and people were described, men were described as being very strong and masculine, help our men. There wasn’t really anything about females, so it was kind of like shining the light on the male aspect of society. (Bart, Initial, Lines 276-289)  

6 In order to represent the context of the participants’ responses, in many cases throughout the analysis I have purposefully chosen to include my questions alongside the participant responses. Additionally, I have used ‘...’ to indicate the places where I have cut omitted pieces of transcription.
Although I have had multiple conversations with my classes about social constructions, and the pressures placed on both men and women to act within a set of regulated ways, gender was still understood as difference, opposites. The propaganda posters that Bart is referring to were used to demonstrate how ideals surrounding masculinities are perpetuated; yet, in his recollection he simply states that they were all male, and there was not any mention of females. Even in his discussion of the presentation of the males in the posters as 'strong and masculine' he does not connect this construction with the concept of gender. Instead, he reduces the discussion to the absence of women in the poster. Gender is simply understood as sex differences. His discussion of the lack of women, or the absence of women in the posters, is limited, as he does not correlate the presentation of men with the correlating construction of women. This understanding of gender is reiterated by many of the participants. Sal Paradise, takes up the question of gender in a similar manner:

SM: Away from masculinities for a second, how do you see gender in the schools? Gender in general.

SP: Um, the way I see it in the classroom I'd say is, I myself have always been kind of a, uh, I guess I'm going to say an orator, I talk... and um, I notice that people who do that are predominantly male. There's a few females I've met who've done it, but it's generally a male thing.

SM: Can I ask why you think that is?

SP: I don't really know for sure, it's just a stipulation I think. Um, I think males are taught that they have more authority than females are taught that way, so I think that we tend to assert that authority a little bit more. And there's exceptions to most cases, I mean most, most guys are classroom orators, and there is an odd girl who is a classroom orator, just speaking in completely general terms, its usually (SP, Initial, Lines 533-551).

Sal's commentary is more reflective of his propensity to participate in class, and is not reflective my experiences within educational settings. However, it also demonstrates his inclination to
apply his own experiences and understandings to all males. This is telling of a consistent issue that I have had with Sal, and his inability to recognize his own privilege as a result of his cultural capital. This understanding of gender is problematic; although Sal recognizes that these differences are taught, his representation of classroom participation reifies gender difference and a singular version of masculinity. His presentation of males as orators, ignores those male students in class who lack the capital and ease to openly contribute. He presents all males within positions of privilege, and all females in a passive position. The perpetuation of the dichotomy of male and female denotes patriarchal representations of this relationship by placing male as the authoritative speaker. Also gender, as a term, is presented by the participants as an unproblematic word to represent male and female. This is an essential point for my pedagogy, as within my classroom the term is taken up in relation to social construction; yet, the participants, who were all in my class for a full year, still understand the term as a fixed differentiation of opposites. This understanding is a result of the association of the term gender with female, minority. As is taken up further in Chapter 5, the understanding of the term is tied to my own gender identity.

Finally, and equally as problematic, gender is often understood by the participants to focus exclusively about the role of women. My initial interview with Sal Paradise exposes the inclination for the term to be read as Other:

It’s part of gender, I’m just thinking of when I think of the key word, gender…So, I mean in a technical sense, I should be thinking about everything. Ya, ’cus everything that has to do with humans has to do with gender. . . .But I assume gender as a difference, so I go with the minority…It would be the same things as like race, if you say race, I automatically think not white people. (Initial, Lines 792-809)

Although, I recognize Sal’s inclination to automatically consider the role of women may result
from the intersection of the question I asked and my own female identity, regardless it is an
important point of analysis and opportunity for pedagogical disruption. First, to explore why
certain terms such as gender, race, ability, and sexuality are often only thought to represent
minority identities, or those that lack privilege, within these groups. Additionally, to explore the
reasons that the term is only heard in particular ways. As feminism is often read as the other “f”
word (Bauer, 1990), it is interesting that gender is also read as a term that only serves, questions
and disrupts the role of women, and not the role of men. Feminist pedagogy is often resisted for
being too biased and only serving women. It is therefore not surprising that pedagogy with a
focus on gender elicits similar assumptions, as gender is understood to benefit, or be ‘for’
women.

Alternately, when the prompts were different, and the term gender was not used in isolation,
the youth were able to trouble fixed understandings of gender. In discussions of nature-nurture
this was particularly relevant. Participants associated these classroom discussions with social
constructions, and pushed beyond the presentation of gender as sex difference, or gender as
woman. However, in some instances this meant leading the students, or reminding them of
discussions we had in our class. By challenging participants’ presentation of gender, they were
often able to draw upon conversations from class that trouble the term, gender. This is evident in
my initial interview with John Smith:

SM: Um, when I say, when I say discussions of gender, do you immediately think of
women’s rights? Or, do you think of pressure on men as well?
JS: Pressure on men as well. Like, we talked about that last year. Um, it’s like how, that
we were talking about nature vs. nurture and how guys are raised to be manly, instead of
just growing up…I don’t know.
SM: Do you agree with that, or do you agree with nature?
JS: Um, I think it’s a bit of both. I don’t think you can say one thing is the judging factor.
SM: Mmhmm. Can you think of things in your life that may have influenced your masculinities?
JS: I guess school. Like, I was raised with only girls, and so, I was pretty like, pretty exposed to women when I was younger. . . I only grew up with women, so I guess I was more ‘feminine’ when I was younger, but when I was in school you’re supposed to act like a boy I guess, and so that changed me, but I don’t think that made me completely manly or something. Ya, it shaped me a little bit, but I was still living in a house with only women in it. So… (Initial, Lines 530-553)

Discussions of nature-nurture resonate with the students. John was able to recall specific discussions from our class and use them to discuss his own personal experiences. In relaying his personal experiences, John considered the role of the school on the formation of his gendered identity. His statement about the contradictory forces of influence on his life, school and family, reveals an understanding of the social construction of gendered identities. Yet, his discussion of his family, and their influence, demonstrates that identities are not pre-determined and completely formed by a single socialization process in society. His narrative expresses the concept of negotiation within gender. This also reveals a division, or multiplicity within masculinities, as he does not align himself with either side of the binary. In relation to pedagogy, discussions of nature-nurture, presented against the backdrop of the school and the family could be productive for disrupting the sex based understanding of the term, gender.

4.2 (Mask)ulinity

The definitions of masculinities given by the participants were heavily entrenched in dominant, hegemonic ideals. In many instances the words chosen by the participants were duplicates of one another. Connell (1996) explains that schools become vehicles for constructing definitions of masculinity to which students perpetuate, but feel little attachment to: “Such
definitions are impersonal, they exist as social facts” (214). The rote manner in which the participants uttered definitions expresses the way understandings of identity can become social ‘fact’. Confidence, strength, and emotional control were all ideas used in some variation by the participants. Many of the participants spoke unhesitatingly and concretely about the abstract concept of masculinities. Their responses often seemed robotic, rehearsed, and automatic; I assert that this is a consequence of the way that certain understandings do become social fact. The participants feel little connection to the definitions that they utter, yet they have been so engrained in their thinking about masculinity, that they are simply a mechanized response. These contradictions between common sense societal understandings and personal experiences provide productive places of contradiction for pedagogy that seeks to disrupt dominant, hegemonic discourse.

However, the youth also spoke of a disconnect between the terms associated with masculinities, and their understandings of self. Many participants, although quick to assert the appropriate words for masculinities, did not associate with these terms themselves. When defining themselves, participants were often at a loss for words, recognizing what they were not, but not being able to define what they are. While the participants repeatedly defined masculinities against femininities, when masculinities did not parallel their understandings of themselves, they avoided its counterpart.

Many stated that they were not affected by societal expectations of masculinities, recognized the fluidity of their own identity, and disrupted their own essentialist representations of masculinities when using examples from their own lives. Participants recalled classroom behaviour and peer interactions to demonstrate more complex understandings of masculinities. Further, the definitions assigned to the term masculinities were often incongruent with peer,
teacher and media examples. The words used to define masculinities were rigid and fixed, yet the participants' use of examples from multiple sources of media and personal narrative complicated this simple understanding of masculinities. As will be discussed more fully later in this chapter, in the section Speaking Media, media became a vehicle for complicating their fixed definition of masculinities.

4.3 De(a)fining masks

The definitions of masculinities offered by the participants were rigid, fixed, and constructed a singular vision of masculinity. Students spoke of an ideal that did not include plurality, or multiplicity of identity. Connell (1995/2005) asserts that very few men actually practice hegemonic masculinity; however, as benefits are still achieved from association with normative definitions, many men are complicit in subordination and marginalization of certain forms of masculinities through their assertion of this normative ideal. In some cases I may align the participants with a few aspects of their definitions of masculinities; although, overall I would use very few of the words offered by the participants to describe the participants themselves. Connell (1996) asserts that society, school and peer groups offer boys a place in the gender order to which they make decisions about how they are going to take up this offer. There is a constant negotiation of identity, in which individuals conform and resist hegemonic ideals. The participants in this study discussed a few of the main offers of hegemonic masculinity: confidence, strength and emotional control.

4.3.1 Confidence

When describing themselves, many of the participants spoke of confidence, ego, or arrogance; for example, John Malkovich noted that he was "confident, arrogant" (Initial, Line 261). Bart spoke of society's expectation for men to be" confident, masculine, ... strong, have
power, and women are not supposed to, like they don’t really expect them to shine that much” (Initial, Lines 314-318). Both participants are offering representations of hegemonic masculinity, and in Bart’s example patriarchy. They are also speaking of social constructions, through the use of terms like ‘they’ and ‘supposed to be’.

4.3.2 Strength

While confidence was discussed the most, strength was the second most discussed identifier of masculinities. Although participants spoke of strength in a variety of forms, strength was an integral element of their understanding of masculinities. Bart bridges the understanding of confidence with that of strength, speaking of a strength of character:

And, but a son is always expected to look after, so you have to be strong, and you know have that charisma to look after your parents. So you’re really expected to have confidence and be really strong, that’s really what masculinity is. (Bart, Initial, Lines 95-97)

SL speaks of a duality of strength associated with the physical and mental, he notes:

ya, in sports teams, everybody wants to be a leader, right. And that’s one of the things of masculinity, everybody wants to be a leader. They have to show that they are the stronger person by like trying to lead the team. They, in hockey, some guys just want to go out there and fight, and that’s just to show that they’re strong and that they’re masculine, and if you go out there and fight it really doesn’t prove much. ‘Cus you’re taking a pounding right. (Initial, Lines 117-122).

In his discussion of his hockey team, SL argues that strength is a vehicle to obtain leadership and to reveal one’s physical power. MX also stresses the importance of strength, but relates his understanding of strength more to discussions of a physical, body size:

SM: …Um, so if this was a word association, like a web, and I said the word masculinities, what words would you throw out?

MX: …strength, power, I don’t know low voice, no, deep voice [pause] someone that
can, protection, someone that can provide (Initial, Lines 250-254).

Strength, in its many forms, was an integral notion of masculinities. For both MX and SL, associations of masculinities and physical strength have become important aspects for defining themselves. In this respect, the hegemonic definition of masculinity has manifested in the understanding of self, and has asserted pressure to be a particular way. Both SL and MX spend a fair amount of time in the gym and in sport. This connection to the participants’ understanding of masculinities and the way that it manifests itself in their actions, such as focusing on building muscle and body image, shows the impact that the construction of the masculine ideal has on particular individuals. Further, it reveals the process of negotiation involved in identity, as SL and MX are taking up hegemonic masculinity, or trying to meet the ideal, while John Malkovich and Bart resist the importance of physical strength and body image focusing instead on an alternate reading of strength. These negotiations demonstrate the multiplicity of masculinities, and how various norms are taken up within the school context. When discussing himself, Sal Paradise, who prides himself on his intellectual strength, also discussed the importance placed on physical:

Because I was the one who was weight training when I was 8, you know like, and, I was the one who signed up for football. My brother signed up for football too, but I was always the one who excelled in it, and my father would always come and coach me. Not that he favoured me over my brother or anything, its just that was his kind of thing and he liked to take me through that. And even in snowboarding, it happened the same way, like I, I was the one that he wanted to teach how to do the back flip, and that was always a big issue with me, because once I learned how to do it, I couldn’t do jumps anymore because it created so much fear in me, I actually used to throw up before I’d be going down the run, because I was just so afraid of doing that back flip, even though it’s not that hard. (SP, Initial, Lines 670-677)
In Sal’s negotiation process, he struggled with the expectations of his father. He resisted the version of masculinity in which physical strength is the ideal, and turned instead to the intellectual:

I think that’s a part of masculinity too, that I’ve never had. Because that’s something that came from my father, my father is extremely physically coordinated...and I am not, and I always felt kind of lesser because of that...

SM: Do you think that’s why you went the more intellectual route?

SP: [big breath in] I started on the intellectual route, and then I switched to the sports route, and now I decided to go back to the intellectual route, because, I at first, when you’re a kid, it’s kind of hard to be into sports...when you are in elementary school, but I was one of those, like I got identified as gifted when I was in like grade one...so I got to go to all the cool like workshops where I hung out with a bunch of really weird kids and did like obscure projects about planets and stuff...and medieval warfare actually was one of them...ya, but, um, ya, it’s interesting in those kind of settings, because a lot of those kids are kind of socially inept, and I was always socially inept and

SM: you were?

SP: ya, I’ve always been, and I still am a little bit, but when it came to high school, I made an effort to try and not be socially inept, and that’s when I kind of switched to the sports thing rather than the intelligence thing, but my heart was never really in it...like I always, in the hallway setting hanging out with the kind of more jock crowd, I would always be like really quiet because I couldn’t talk like them, so I wouldn’t bother trying...I couldn’t talk the same way. (SP, Initial, Lines 731-762)

In another section of the interview, Sal reveals how he has completely adopted intelligent masculinities as the ideal representation of strength:

Um ya for, I think, I think you can have masculinity without intelligence, but I think intelligent masculinity is how you get noticed, because I think people who are unintelligent and masculine just end up being the ones who fight for the ones who are intelligent and masculine. (SP, Initial, Lines 531)
Sal’s negotiation with masculinities demonstrates a fluidity and plurality of identity. He began conforming to intellectual understandings of his own identity, not understanding how to navigate the physical. The pressure to conform to physical strength from both his father and school was adopted and then rejected in favour of the intellectual. This negotiation reveals the manner in which ideals can construct through both duplication and rejection. Also this negotiation reveals that hegemonic masculinity is not the only ideal, as there are other normative discourses that influence individuals that are contextually dependent.

4.3.2 The ‘strength’ of peer groups

Ideals surrounding physical and intellectual strength can affect the understanding and construction of self, but can also affect the way that one interacts and constructs others. MX’s discussion of his relations with peers, and constraints he feels with those he identifies as physically strong exemplifies the ways in which masculinities are negotiated through peer interactions:

people I don’t really know well I don’t show who I really am, to people I don’t really feel comfortable with, or people who are like masculine people, ...like, like, can I say names? ...like, guys like [Scott Singh], ya so guys like that...Ya, like tall and he’s like wide, about masculinity, I guess I talk differently when I am around someone like him, or someone like [Ken]. (Initial, Lines 112-123)

MX reveals the way that his interactions with peers are influenced by a concept of strength and its connections to masculinities. In this case strength influenced the way that MX talked and revealed his feelings and emotions with peers who he felt symbolized physical strength. This notion of strength is salient as it represents a normative discourse of masculinities within the youth context. This parallels Connell’s (1995/2005) discussions of the importance of context, multiple discourses of masculinities, and the malleability of the hegemonic masculine ideal. As
MX and SL are taking up a stereotypical notion of masculine strength, the remaining participants are rejecting this notion of strength and turning instead to the intellectual. This represents the multiple discourses at play within a single context.

4.3.3 Emotional control

A number of the youth discussed feelings and emotions as an aspect that is regulated through masculinities. Participants positioned feelings as something that should be inhibited and controlled if one is to be considered masculine. For example, MX notes: “Basically when you are masculine you tend not to show as much emotion, you tend to control it, and when it’s necessary, or not at all, that’s how I see it” (Initial, Lines 357-359). The control of one’s emotions was also often associated with inner strength. In John Smith’s definition of masculinities, emotional control is a primary component:

Um, strong, I don’t know, stonefaced, emotionless, uh, distant, I don’t know. About all I can get. (John Smith, Initial, lines 349-354)

Sal Paradise echoed this in his representation of masculinities as composed and controlled:

I think if you’re masculine, you’re completely calm, and you make decisive decisions [self mockingly repeats] decisive decisions. . .you make decisions really like firm, and you go for it, and with me I don’t have that, I stop and I think, and it always like, usually messes me up, but at the same time there’s the odd scenario where it keeps me from doing something really bad, that if I was more of an alpha male I think I would just go and do that ( Initial, Lines 578-584).

These definitions, much like those associated with confidence and strength, are formulaic and do not seem to represent the picture of the participants that I built first as teacher and secondly as researcher. Further, they do not represent the participants’ understandings of themselves, as is seen in Sal’s discussion of his propensity to stop and think, rather than being decisive.

Interestingly, the participants discussed a particular type of masculinity, one that included
strength, stoicism, and self-confidence. All generally defined themselves as masculine; yet, who they are as masculine young men is not congruent with the very definitions they offered. The non-emotional attachment to masculinities is not balanced with my understanding of the participants. Many of the participants in this study were heavily involved in class discussions, and were often times those I labeled resistant; therefore emotionless is not a term I would assign to them. In this negotiation between self and the hegemonic definitions of masculinities, I assert that the participant’s recognize, regulate, and pronounce the non-emotional ideal, but it does not parallel their own identities. John Smith recognizes the way that he regulates his emotions to parallel the dominant definitions, so as not to seem as though he is losing control:

SM: . . . considering the examples you gave from school, how do you feel your behaviour compares to the examples or the definition you just gave? Like the strong, stone faced…
JS: I don’t know, I don’t think I am stone faced. I pretty much express what I am feeling when I am feeling it.
SM: Are there certain emotions you feel you don’t express in the classroom?
JS: I don’t know, if I am really, really pissed off, I don’t say anything, because I don’t want to be, end up screaming at people. . . . I usually only yell if I’m, if I feel strongly towards something, but I am not actually angry, because if I’m angry I don’t want to like freak out and have a hissy fit or something.
SM: ok, why do you, why do you think of that as so negative, like losing control. And I am using the word ‘losing control’ because I think that’s the way you’ve described it, but tell me if I am incorrect.
JS: Um, I don’t know, it makes people see you in a certain way, and then maybe they won’t listen to you anymore or something like that. Like, they won’t listen to your words, because they think, he’s going to freak out. He’s a very angry guy. (Initial, lines 389-412)

Within Smith’s narrative is evidence of social construction and hegemonic masculinity through his discussion of the need to regulate one’s emotions, or the expression of emotion. The use of
the term ‘hissy fit’ incites gendered categories of emotions, hissy commonly being associated with the female body. Also, through the attachment of a term like hissy fit, certain emotions or manners of expression are presented as more valid than others. Boler (1999) considers this the internalization of dominant discourse. She asserts that certain emotions are labelled ‘outlaw’ and belittled. In this sense emotion and power are intertwined. John is obviously conscious of the supposed need to regulate his own emotions in public; however, his own classroom behaviour does not match the emotionless description that he is attaching to masculinities. Further Bart demonstrates how this internalization of dominant ideals can also render ‘emotional’ topics untouchable:

B: well I’ve noticed that when Ms.[Saunders] ever talks about emotions no boy will volunteer. (Bart, Initial, Line 203).
SM: You think you don’t talk about feelings or emotions either?
B: No
SM: How come?
B: I don’t know, I just don’t. I don’t feel comfortable
SM: Like where does that line come for you?
B: Where does it come from? In my household, we don’t talk about feelings or emotions. I’ll talk about it with my mother, but never with my father, my grandfather, or my brother. It’s my culture, sort of like that, boys aren’t supposed to discuss feelings and emotions, that’s what girls do, so I’ve kind of been influenced by that.
SM: What would you consider a topic that a teacher starts talking about, and you’re like ok, I’m not participating, I’m done.
B: Well I don’t know, [Ms. Potter] talking about, like, relationships one day, and she was talking about feeling, and I was like, ok, I’m not responding to this. You’re not really supposed to talk about that in my culture. Those kind of things are not viewed as appropriate. So, I don’t and I kind of shied away. (Bart, Initial, Lines 259-273)
The narratives of both John and Bart recognize a norm, or an expectation of masculinities, that
makes the expression of particular emotions, or even the discussion of particular emotions off limits. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) discuss this idea of topics that are deemed acceptable within male talk. They assert that there is a “distinction made between what can be voiced and what must remain silent, which corresponds to a public advocacy of a heterosexual masculinity versus the suppression of a potentially effeminizing masculinity associated with the expression of grief and vulnerability” (p. 65). Both Bart and John Smith reveal the active construction of the self through the doctrinaire regimes associated with dominant understanding of masculinities, and the topics and manners of expression deemed acceptable. These regimes also affect their view of others:

MX: but he doesn’t come off as more masculine than [Rob] would. ‘Cus, I don’t know how to explain it though, he doesn’t come off as masculine. He physically is, but. Even though I said that being tall and big is masculine, I see [Rob] more masculine than [Bryan].
SM: ok. Can I push you on that one a little bit?
MX: ya
SM: Say why? What about [Bryan] makes him not masculine? Or as you saying he is not masculine, or not as
MX: Not as, as [Rob] [inaudible]. I’d say probably voice, what I’d say is voice, the deeper the voice the more masculine, I say. That’s my opinion. And then, uh, it seems like [Rob], I don’t talk to [Rob] emotionally wise, but I have with [Bryan]. So, maybe that’s why I see it differently. (MX, Initial, Lines 265-275).

MX’s discussion of acceptability of ‘emotional’ conversations with his peers establishes the constant formulation of masculinities. There are layers involved in the manufacture of masculinities, such as physical attributes, voice, and emotional control. Rob’s voice, or more likely his speech style, made MX believe him to be more masculine and therefore inaccessible emotionally. Yet, in declaring that, MX is reifying masculinity and constructing Rob within this
ideal. Although he feels Bryan is a safe person to have these conversations with, it is also this safety that also makes Bryan ‘not as masculine’.

Regardless of the narratives told by the participants, the pervasive definitions of masculinities affect their understanding of self and other. In one case, the manner in which one expresses themselves. In the other, the topics deemed acceptable for discussion. Although these very expressions may not represent the character or activity of these male participants, their telling reifies hegemonic understandings.

4.3.4 Mr. emotion

As noted, throughout the interviews there are contradictions between the narratives told by the participants, and the definitions of masculinities they provided. Often through personal stories, peer and teacher examples, the participants presented plural representations of masculinities that were far more comprehensive than the original definitions of masculinities offered. The participants use male teachers as exemplars that both reify and challenge normative masculine ideals. The student readings of the teachers’ masculinities demonstrates the capacity of male teachers to complicate hegemonic masculinities, and the impact that teacher narratives and behaviour can have on male students understandings of masculinities. Teachers are symbols of the larger institution, and can play a vital role in challenging the regulation of masculine norms and subordination of alternate versions of masculinity (Mac and Ghaill, 1994). Schools form gender, yet gender is also complicated within this context.

When asked which teacher fit his definition of masculinities, John Smith replied, “Mr. Smith” because:

He’s like, I don’t know, He’s like...he reminds me of Clint Eastwood from the Westerns. That’s about all I can describe it as. The only time he ever shows anything is when he
smiles because someone just did something stupid. That’s the only time he ever shows anything. (Initial, Lines 419-425)

Alternately, when asked, John Smith was able to provide Mr. Sampson as a teacher that complicates the previous notion of masculinities:

He, he’s really good with talking about how he’s feeling, like his emotions. Like in sociology he always talked about like how he was feeling at a certain time, and stuff like this, like when he was talking about how his wife died. He was practically crying.

SM: Were you surprised?
JS: No it didn’t seem like, it didn’t surprise me because Mr. [Sampson] is the kind of guy that looks like he would be able to do that. Like if Mr. [Smith] did that, I would be very surprised. I’d be like what the hell is going on here? (Initial, lines 429-442)

The fact that John presents Mr. Sampson as a male who can speak in emotional terms is representative of a particular version of masculinity. Although this version does not parallel Mr. Smith’s masculine ‘ideal’, Mr. Sampson’s masculinity, or identity is not challenged as a result of this incongruence. When rigidly masculine bodies exhibit sensitive characteristics, they are deemed unintelligible; this is the case with non-emotional reading of Mr. Smith. Whereas Mr. Sampson’s body, or representation of masculinities, is understood differently, and therefore certain emotions are accepted. John asserts that Mr. Sampson is ‘the kind of guy’ that can discuss emotions. John is not challenging Mr. Sampson’s masculinity as a result of the topic or the manner in which it was taken up in the class. He is a version of masculinity, just not the version seen in Mr. Smith. In fact, Mr. Sampson is the more popular teacher in the school. His popularity suggests the role that male teachers can play in challenging hegemonic male ideals.

The practice of Mr. Sampson sharing his emotions and personal stories is pedagogically relevant; it demonstrates the way that a teacher can actively disrupt normative understandings of identity. Yet, simply placing more male bodies within the education system does nothing to
complicate common sense notions surrounding gender. Martino (2007) challenges the dominant narratives surrounding increasing male teachers as a way of countering the feminization of education, and instead states that educational policy should engage with male teacher’s life experiences as men. Martino engages Wetherell and Edley’s (1999) assertion that investigations into how men negotiate hegemonic masculinities, their compliance, resistance and positioning of themselves as gendered beings, is pedagogically essential for disrupting the subordination achieved through the dominant discourse around hegemonic masculinities. John’s recollection of this classroom incident reveals the impact and influence that male teachers can play in disrupting masculine ideals. Connell (1995/2005) echoes this discussion of the role that males can play in the troubling of gender: “Men and their practices are part of the problem of gender inequalities in aid, education and empowerment, and should be part of the solution” (p. xvii). John had the wherewithal to read his teacher’s emotional capacity and also the propensity of his peers to be immature in reaction. This ‘literacy’, the ability to read people and be socially aware, demonstrates that students are attuned to far more than the curriculum in the classroom and can recognize and challenge the regulation of identities within this context.

4.3.5 Peer interactions

The everyday interactions and readings within peer groups are significant in the regulation of masculinities. As Connell (1989) and Mac and Ghaill (1994) discuss, the negotiation of masculinities is not simply an individual choice, peer group interactions are imperative to this process. Mac an Ghaill (1994) states that male-peer group interactions are a “key feature of the students microculture, providing a material and symbolic safe space within which to develop social and discursive practices that served to validate and amplify their masculine reputations” (p. 53). Peer interactions are a site of production and regulation, and
therefore a site for disruption.

The participants used the interactions with their peers to demonstrate the way being macho is established as a practice. John Smith highlights the patterns of conversations within male peer groups:

Ya sometimes, ya actually most of the time, most of the time its about being cool, oh, and I did this it was sweet. I jumped off a roof. It was awesome. Ya, most of our discussions have to do with being manly (Initial, lines 216-218).

Male bravado is heightened in group environments. Further, participants revealed the way that peer groups influence their own behaviour:

MX: Well ya, when I am hanging out with [Ken] and those guys, I restrict what I'm saying . . . say something like,
SM: because you're afraid of
MX: made fun of, like a girl
SM: oh ok, is that where they would go right away if they're on the attack
MX: ya, that's what they'd
SM: can you think of an example, something you’ve witnessed them do?
MX: What do you mean witnessed?
SM: Like you’ve seen them talk to another person that way, like you’ve said, I am afraid of talking, I’m afraid of them calling me a girl, can you think of a time where they’ve done that? To someone else maybe, or to you?
MX: No, well I can talk to them guys one on one, but not when we’re all in a group together, you can’t do it, you can’t do it, but when you are in a small group like two or three you can do it. You can’t do it when you are all together.
SM: What changes in a big group?
MX: I don’t know what changes, but it does change, the masculinity starts to rise up…like I have talked to [Ken] on an emotional level but then when he gets in the big group he gets all macho…I don’t know what changes that though. I never really think about it. I think maybe show off, I think he’s trying to show off, show off his
masculinity in front of a big group…but it doesn’t really matter as much in a small group, of friends.

SM: When you say his masculinity rises up, what does that look like?
MX: He starts like yelling, and starts like, I don’t know what he does [pause], voice rises, I don’t know how to explain it, but I know other people, like [Jessie] he does that too. He starts to change in a big group. And uh
SM: And are you saying you do the opposite?
MX: No, I do the same too, I notice it.

MX’s narrative reveals the weight of peer influence on the regulation of masculinities. He discusses inhibiting his own reactions and the macho behaviour of his peers rising up. Within his re-telling, it is also clear the way that hierarchies are constructed within these peer interactions, in which a feminine identity is the lowest rung. Masculinities are negotiated within social interactions that include the dominant, subordinate, insider, outsider, intimidation and exploitation (Connell, 1996).

4.3.6 Classroom behaviour

The deliberations of gender may be heightened by the coeducational setting of a classroom, as the construction of the masculine is dependent on the feminine, and is often defined simply as not-feminine (Connell, 1995/2005). The presence of the constructed masculine and feminine within the classroom environment, heightens fixed understandings of the gender binary. While men are complicit in the construction of the hegemonic masculine ideal, and the subordination of other masculinities, the female students in the class are also active agents in this construction. Further, the curriculum, the dominant discourse focusing male achievement and participation in the classroom environment, and the subsequent expectations of the teacher, all intensify the construction of masculinities.

Many of the participants spoke in generalized terms about the way that boys participated
within the classroom. Some, like Bart, understood the social expectations surrounding masculinities to be a factor that inhibited classroom participation:

You know what, I don't know, I don't know maybe it's a question of masculinity, but I have noticed that boys don't like to volunteer, most girls do so maybe it's a question of masculinity to volunteer -- are they a loser or something. So the girls they always volunteer. I just noticed that most participation in class is from girls, not boys. (Initial, Lines 151-154)

Conversely, SL asserted that male students tend to be more vocal than their female peers:

I think in general in class, guys are more chatty, I think. They are a lot louder in class than the girls are. If the girls are talking in class, it's usually in a lower voice, and the guys want everybody to hear...kind of like me [laughs] (Initial, Lines 108-126)

He asserts, in opposition to Bart, that male students want to be heard within the classroom environment. SL expands on this by stating that this may be an attempt to be comical or be noticed:

Uh, in classroom settings they are just really outspoken, it's ah, they want everybody to hear them, so they can maybe get a laugh, or maybe just get their point across a bit better. (Initial, Lines 108-126)

He later uses a personal example from class to demonstrate the way that he used his own voice to get a laugh from his classmates. This example is one that created a fair amount of discussion in our class surrounding the use of language, humour and gender:

Oh, ok, uh [still laughing a bit] I made an inappropriate comment last year in Socials 11 class, which I think wasn't well thought about and offended quite a few people. I did it just to get a little laugh and then it proved to offend quite a few people.

SM: How come you think that particular comment demonstrates masculinity?

SL: Um, more of the stupid humour type of thing, guys have a different type of humour than girls do. Uh, they find things like that funny. (SL, Initial, Lines 127-142)

The situation that SL is referring to, is the time that he stated that “the Governor General’s time
would be better spent giving blow jobs” during a classroom discussion about the role of the Governor General and the Senate in Canadian politics. At the time, I perceived this comment to be an act of resistance to my teaching. I positioned this comment as a reaction to pedagogy that attempted to disrupt patriarchy, and constructions of gender in government. He viewed it as an attempt to get a laugh. Although, I still assert that his comment reinforced patriarchy, in listening to his explanation, I see that his intentions and the consequences of his language are two separate issues. I am not suggesting that the ramifications of such comments are lessened by the motivation of the speaker, but his viewpoint surrounding the incident troubled the way that I viewed that incident as an act of resistance. Moreover, it encourages me to consider the ways that this intersection of masculinities and student resistance may challenge what I perceive to be oppositional behaviour.

4.4 Binaried talk and the construction of masculinities

Throughout the interview process there is the undeniable process of mediating and reconstructing masculinities. Deborah Cameron (1996, as cited in Rodino, 1997) asserts that the idea of differences entrenched in much conversation about gender, serves to reinforce the male/female binary, and as a result is the “most profound buttress of sexism”. Bing and Bergvall (1996, as cited in Rodino, 1997), echo Cameron, stating that “attempts to prove difference are often attempts at gender polarization and [are] one way to rationalize limiting opportunities of women” (p. 17). This intersection of polarization and limitation is profoundly demonstrated in Sal Paradise’s response to a question about gender:

SM: Do you think, like you just said hostility, do you think gender has an effect on the way people resist?
SP: Um, I think men are trained to resist more, because they are trained to be more um, like I said before, controlling. And, women, I mean traditionally, are trained just to do as
they're told...And if they don't they're burned as witches. (Initial, Lines 1007-1013)

Although his harsh comment is intended to illustrate male domination, his understanding of

gender behaviour serves the uphold presentation of male and female as pre-determined

opposites. Sal quite frequently asserts his understanding of gender as a scientific or natural

distinction, yet his discussion of training, tradition and punishment for misbehaviour is

recognition of the socialization of gender; therefore, his use of example directly contrasts his

earlier explanation of gender. Regardless of the root of difference, this talk perpetuates the

opposition of male and female. Not to mention the fact, that Sal, like many of the participants,
takes a question about gender and uses it to discuss male and female division and relationality.
This is also evident in John Smith’s discussion of gender in the school building:

in class, the guys all tend to group together, and the girls all tend to group together. And
like in the halls, I guess there are guy groups and girl groups, that do hang out in separate
parts. But the groups that I hang out in tend to be like mixed. (lines 274-279)
SM: What about just like in the class? You spoke about your friend groups. You’re
sitting in psychology, or sociology, what makes you notice gender?
JS: The guys tend to act like jackasses a lot of the time, that includes myself. (John
Smith, Initial, lines 290-293)

In both of the responses above the question was intended to initiate a conversation about the

concept of gender, yet the response positioned gender as the opposition of male and female. This

fails to accurately describe the “multiple un/gendered traits that individuals exhibit” (Rodino,
1997). John’s response was typical of many of the responses from participants. Gender became a

prompt for discussions about the role of women, or as a venue for discussing difference.

When discussing individuals that did not parallel the rigid, fixed understandings of

masculinities, participants were often limited by the gender binaries of language. This is

particularly relevant when considering the term effeminante, which was used multiple times by
the participants. Connell (1995/2005) states that effeminate men are often placed alongside gay men in the hierarchy of masculinities. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli (2003) further this by stating that effeminacy is often equated to being gay. When attempting to disrupt the binary by demonstrating those that did not emulate dominant masculine norms, participants were forced by language to position those people as feminine:

JS: He graduated last year. And he’s got to be the most feminine guy I have ever met in my life.
SM: What’s the characteristics of a feminine guy?
JS: I don’t know, just the way that he laughed and like the way that he spoke. He acted more like most girls do than most guys do. (John Smith, Initial, lines 149-155)

John’s presentation both asserts the binary and challenges its very existence. In having to use the term feminine to describe a friend, his description upholds the binary and relationality to masculine; in other words, all identities are relegated to either side of the binary. Yet, his alignment of a peer to the feminine, disrupts the notion that biology determines gender identity.

4.5 Disrupting binaried talk

Although much of the talk in the interviews was confined to dominant discourse and rigid binaried understandings of gender, there were points where the youth disrupted binaried understandings. Many participants used examples of people that challenged the fixed relegation of males to roles of masculinity and females to roles of femininity. The first example involves SL challenging my portrayal of the girls in his class as non-vocal:

Um, no that’s not completely true because there were a few girls in our class who were pretty social. [Samantha] was in our class last year, and I recall she was in class discussion quite a bit. And, I think that’s probably, and [Kristine] was in class discussion quite a bit when she was there. Um, the reason guys just want their voices to be heard out loud, is just the, to show their intelligence, or some of them would just say the right
answer, some would say a stupid answer, just to get a joke in, and that’s what it is.
(Initial, Lines 336-343)
My positioning of the girls as silent observers was resisted, and instead SL challenged the
behavioural binary, that places females in the passive role and male students in the dominant
role. Similarly, John Smith disrupted the idea that masculinities can only be assigned to male
bodies in his description of his mother:

I would say my mom’s pretty masculine…she, she’s like tough, she doesn’t get easily
swayed by things, she like doesn’t show her emotions all that much, she’s like a big
sports fan, she loves hockey that kind of thing, I don’t know, I guess, that’s about it. She
does a job that’s all physical labour. (Initial, lines 790-796)
In his follow-up interview, John expanded on this notion causing further fissures in rigid gender
categories. He resisted the notion that his mom can only be understood through one-side of the
binary. John and I use the narrative of his mother as a gateway for discussing the gender binary,
and how people are often understood through these dual lenses. Yet, he resists these categories
and states that people more likely fit all along the spectrum:

we have these words, that’s all we can think of. I guess, I’d say my mom is masculine,
but I wouldn’t say she’s manly
SM: ok, what’s the difference you see there
JS: I don’t she still retains her womanly aspects without like, still having masculine
characteristics, how I described there, with the hockey, and that kind of stuff, but she
John laughs as he trails off and is at a loss for words for describing his understanding. The
humour in this comes from our earlier discussion of my observation that many of the participants
trailed off when attempting to define themselves, as appropriate language is often lacking. We
use this discussion of the absence of language, or the resistance to align with the ‘opposite’, as a
venue for discussing his understanding of the gender binary. He notes that as people, bodies,
more often fit somewhere in-between, or along the supposed gender binary. Yet, he is confused by the lack of language for this space. Our narrative about the lack of language, the resistance to inciting either side of the binary, and the very structure of the gender binary, offer curricular possibilities; as discussions about the Butlerian concept of assigning words to bodies, and how these words often do not represent the bodies that they label, proved to be productive. Discussions of the limitations of language were paralleled by his fellow participants; these limitations were taken up in the follow-up interviews.

Although definitions of masculinities were confined to dominant discourse, discussions about our talk and use of language revealed discontent and disruption. Dominant discourse often lacked a place for the participants’ understanding of themselves, which was revealed by the gaps in their speech. Discussions about language equated to resistance of the ideals held in hegemonic masculinity. Instead, media became a venue for representing plural understandings of masculinities and a new form of expression where traditional language failed.

4.6 Multiple masculinities, lacking language & meaning making in media

Regardless of the unified definitions of masculinities elicited at the beginning of the interviews, participants asserted that there is more than one way to be masculine. While some of these multiple representations were still anchored to an aspect of the hegemonic definition of masculinity, such as strength or confidence, they still revealed a variety of ways to be masculine.

4.6.1 Making me masculine

Throughout the interviews the participants’ definitions, or understandings of masculinities, revealed an attempt to fit their own identities with masculinities. When asked to jot a list of ten words to describe masculinity, Bart responded:

For masculinity, I don’t know, being proud of who you are basically. Because there’s no
exact thing that defines masculinity, not physical strength, or confidence, it’s being who
you are and being proud of who are, that’s what I think…If you are able to walk in public
and be who you are, and be proud of who you are, then I think you are exuding
masculinity, you’re showing that who you are is who you are. (Initial, Lines 166-175)

As Bart reveals, there is no singular way of being masculine. Yet, Bart’s discussion of
multiplicity is still bound to the understanding of masculinities as confident. In Bart’s case, I
assert that his focus on confidence in masculinities, is due to the incongruities between his own
identity and the dominant narratives of masculinities. Bart is a confident, intellectual, strong
individual, but aspects of his identity would be described with words often associated with the
feminine side of the binary. As a result, his focus on confidence as an essential element in
masculinities validates his own identity as masculine. Like Bart, other participants challenged the
existence of a singular ideal; however, the various representations of masculinities were still
hinged in words associated with hegemonic masculinity. Malkovich denies the concept of a
masculine ideal and asserts that there are many ways to be masculine:

Certainly. I mean there’s, I guess there’s, there’s, masculinity is attributed to ego, I
personally believe, and you can be egotistical in many ways. There’s like intelligence,
physically, which is most obvious, um, like, like even self-confidence and competition.
Being competitive is part of being masculine. And you don’t have to be competitive in
sports and what not, you can be competitive in all kinds of like, what, school and
competence in speech and what not, I don’t know. (Initial, Lines 159-168)

Malkovich, like Bart, is adapting his definition of masculinities to make his own identity
intelligible within masculinities. As Malkovich is physically very small, and excels in music and
writing rather than sport, he focuses his definition of masculinities within ego. Smith’s notion of
masculinities echoes Malkovich and Bart:

cus all these things don’t have to apply to you to be masculine, you don’t have to be, you
don’t have to have all these things, you can have like a few of them and you are still a
masculine guy. (Follow-up, Lines 133-135)
The departure from a singular, rote definition of masculinity to a definition that may only contain
a few of the elements represents the way that John understands his own masculinity. Had he not
softened his definition of masculinity, that may have meant that he was not masculine according
to his own definition. The question that remains, is if an individual only meets a few of the
characteristics associated with masculinity, where within gender does that place the
characteristics that rest outside of masculinities?

4.6.2 His story of masculinities

Through the use of personal narratives, participants were able to challenge the fixed
version of masculinities through narratives about their peer group:

Like, mostly its what there interests are, like [Tony] on some topics, he would be, if he
was interested in the topic he would be in the discussion, like really well into it.
[Sundeep] [laughs] wasn’t really involved in too much class discussion…[Tony’s] just
trying to be more the intelligent type and [Sundeep’s] just trying to be the one where, I
think it’s just like, I really don’t care what you think about me, I’m going to say what I
want and think it’s cool just to not do anything and like any of this type of stuff you
know. (SL, Initial, Lines 265-285)
The presentation of masculinities entrenched in intellect and masculinities that rejects intellect,
demonstrates the way that masculinities are taken up in different forms. Tony represents
intellectualized masculine identity, evident in his consistent participation, while Sundeep’s
silence and indifferent attitude are a result of his inability to navigate intellectual masculinities.
Sundeep’s rejection of intellectual expression is similar to the resistance exhibited by the lads in
Paul Willis’ (1977) research.

Similarly, Sal’s discussion of his father’s strength, and his own attraction to the
intellectual, reveals the participants’ recognition of more than one version of masculinity, and the
constant rejection and acceptance involved in gender formation:

See the things is, that’s where the thing, I’m not going to insult my father here, I mean he’s intelligent, but he’s not, he’s not a genius. And that’s where the, that’s the difference between him and all my other heroes I notice... .it’s that, with him I respect him in a lot of the, the very innate, like what I would call the masculine things...well like the alpha male, like that whole bit, but I mean that has really not as much to do with intelligence in that sense, but with all my heroes I notice that I’m really attracted to more of the really like intelligent ones..and not just intelligent in a linear sense, but more of an abstract part. Um, I don’t know, I find that in part because I feel like I’m kind of in-between. (Initial, Lines 353-365)

Sal’s narrative also illustrates that there are a variety of contextual influences on gender, family and school to name but a few. Sal feels that his masculinity is not one or the other, physical or intellectual, and spoke many times throughout his interviews about the variability of his own masculinity. The influences of sport, strength, intellect, and confidence are constant concepts that have been placed upon, or taken up by Sal.

The contrast of the definitions of masculinity, and the masculinities that were exampled by the participants, is essential to pedagogy focused on gender. First, it reveals the way that language often asserts a dominant ideal; often students dictate these definitions like a piece of literature that they have been forced to memorize. Yet peer, family, and media examples provide a venue for disrupting these oppressive fixed, taken for granted, understandings. Connell (1996) states that gender inclusive curriculum involves taking the standpoints of other masculinities and femininities. Gender inclusive curriculum does not simply mean the inclusion of male and female; rather, it offers opportunities to trouble these concepts.

4.6.3 Gap[possibilities]

As gender inclusive curriculum involves disruption of norms, and recognition of the
subordination and marginalization through the norm, this involves an analysis of the dominant discourse. Within this disruption is the recognition that the language that is used to form identities, does not represent the people who use the very words. Gendered language forms, regulate and reify; yet, the spaces where language fails reveals sites for disruption. A striking theme within the interviews were the places where the interviewees lack language or avoid using particular words to describe themselves. These gaps manifested in participants’ definitions of themselves, recognition that words did not suit their understandings of identities, fear of aligning with the feminine and contradictions between definitions of masculinities and their own lived experiences. This vacant space is essential to curriculum focused in disrupting dominant gender ideals. Within this space there is potential for revealing the ways that dominant discourse does not serve us, and for re-imagining identities.

4.6.4 Who am I?

Participants often abandoned their attempts to define themselves, trailing off in the middle of a thought. Definitions of their own identities were often reduced to what they were not. Sal Paradise teeters back and forth in his definition of himself, as he is unable to commit to an understanding of himself:

It would have been, um, strong, dominant male, um brave, basically, compassionate, but when he gets angry, very aggressive, alpha-male, that was my concept of it. And I mean that’s always been an issue for me, struggling to kind of, because I’m not, I am in some ways, but really I’m not, like

SM: You are in some ways like your father you mean?

SP: In some ways that, that essential, what I would call the archetype of masculinities, I am that, in some ways, but at the same time, um, I’m not, I’m not like to the fullest extent [fades]. I also got that a little bit from, like, my heroes too, historical heroes. (Initial, Lines 304-311)
Sal, who is extraordinarily eloquent in his discussions of history, curriculum, and philosophy, is rendered speechless in his attempts to define himself. He fades away, repeatedly states what he feels he is not, and then abandons the conversation turning instead to a discussion of historical heroes.

As these gaps were a prevalent theme in the initial interviews, I made it a point of discussion in the follow-up interviews. I asked each of them:

Another common theme that I noticed is that all of you listed these words automatically when I said masculinities, you said a lot of the stereotypical words, like macho, you said size, you said low voice, you said all of these things, but then it was at odds to how you think about yourself. And that it was difficult to define yourself in relation to masculinity using the above words, like a lot of you said those are the stereotypical words, but I don’t feel that they necessarily match me, maybe one or two of them do, but I don’t feel that they necessarily match me. So with this in mind, can you think of words or images, or examples, that do help you define yourself in relation to masculinity? (Follow-Up)

MX, is a student that works out frequently, but is not on any of the senior athletic teams at the school. He played community hockey, and is now heavily involved student government. In response to my question about defining himself, he said:

I don’t know, I guess, uh, I don’t know if I’d consider myself macho, but I don’t consider myself like, uh, kind of like, I don’t want to say sissy, but like I don’t know whatever that is, say like, I do see myself as someone who is stronger I guess. I don’t see myself like one of those jock guys just walking around macho, [inaudible], I’ve got pictures of what I can see myself as an athlete, or

SM: an athlete?

MX: ya, I guess so, but like, not so like, not so much [inaudible], I sort of see myself like, have some of the, kind of emotional side, maybe like half and half ish.

SM: So someone sort of on the emotional side.

MX: ya, so like basically, one of this side, I can go both sides. I don’t see myself as like
MX is extremely challenged by the task of defining himself. He seems nervous to label himself macho, but then does not want to be presented as unmasculine. Like the participants in my study, Edley & Wetherell (1997), indicate that participants would often trail off in their attempts to represent their own understandings of masculinities and self. In both cases, the participants would recant if they feared that their definitions were beginning to sound somewhat feminine. Attempts to repel masculine norms resulted in the fear that this meant an alignment with the feminine.

4.6.5 Fearing the feminine

Often when the participants would trail off, abandon their statements, or teeter back and forth between words, it was when they came in ‘danger’ of aligning themselves with the feminine. This is evident in MX’s discussion above, in which he does not see himself as sissy, but does not fully recognize himself as macho. This theme of fearing the feminine was taken up in the follow-up interviews, and the participants often validated that this was a concern. I asked John Smith, “Why do you think there is that gap in words to define yourself and understand yourself?” He responded:

I don’t know maybe it’s the fact that um, words we would like to use to describe ourselves could be considered too feminine and we don’t want to come across as being feminine, we need to stay with the macho, the manliness, but, then that doesn’t really apply to us. . . . so we just don’t say anything. (Follow-Up, Lines 67-70)

Beyond fearing an alignment of one’s own identity with the feminine, there also seems to be a fear of labeling some of their male peers as feminine. Associations with the feminine are reserved solely as insults, and seem to be perceived as a betrayal otherwise. This is evident in John Smith’s hesitation to label two of his peers as feminine, as he considers them cool:
SM: Are they a version of masculinities?
JS: [long pause] ya, I guess?
SM: How come you say I guess?
JS: Because I don’t know, at the same time, they’re like, I want to say metrosexual, but then that’s not the right word that I’m looking for, it’s the only thing I can think of. Like, like [Gordy’s] not feminine, like at all, he’s actually really masculine, like I’d say that’s a form of masculinity, ya...still act, like pretty manly, you would say, but in a different way. (Follow-Up, Lines 187-195)

This passage reveals the hesitation to attach feminine terms to his peers, as John backtracks and presents his peers as ‘really masculine’ instead. This also asserts a multiplicity of masculinities and troubles the hegemonic masculine idea by declaring an individual that he had deemed metrosexual also as really masculine.

4.6.6 TV Talk

Within many of the interviews media became a venue for gender disruption, and provided new discourse for disrupting gender ideals. The interviews began with discussions of masculinities in media in order to ease the participants into the conversation with a comfortable medium. Further, using media grants the participants tangible examples to aid expressing their understanding of the abstract concept of masculinities. The opening series of questions within the initial interviews was as follows:

What are your favourite television shows, video games or movies? How do you think masculinity is presented in this show/movie/game? How do you think that this form of media affects your understanding of masculinity? How do you think that this form of media affects your understanding of yourself? (Initial)

Unlike their discussions of self, participants were able to speak effortlessly about how they viewed masculinities in the media. Media provided an entry into the topic of defining masculinities; without which, eliciting those definitions outside of the media context may have
proven difficult. Even the pseudonyms chosen by the participants, Sal Paradise, John Malkovich, and Bart, represent the influence and connection to media as a venue for expression. Media provided a gateway for relaying their understandings of masculinities, for pushing beyond discussions of strength, confidence, and emotional control. I was even able to say Hollywood version of masculinities (MX, Initial, Lines 309-310), and the participants understood the version of masculinities of which I was speaking. Certainly, the same responses would not have been elicited had I said hegemonic masculine ideal. With media, there are new capacities, even if bounded by discourse, for expression.

Media provided the opportunity to move outside one type of discourse into another and challenge hegemonic masculinity. Through media the participants could interact with hegemonic representations of masculinity, and declare the ways that these examples did not fit their understanding of masculinities. In our discussion of Clint Eastwood, an example John Smith used for a stereotypical representation of masculinity, John is able to challenge the hegemonic male: “Um, I guess so, he’s, I guess he doesn’t really express his feelings and that’s supposed to be manly” (Initial, Lines 98-102). John’s challenge came in his use of the terminology supposed to. Through this media example, John is able to represent the ideal of masculinities that is perpetuated in society, but also challenge the existence of a Clint Eastwood male in society. Further, his use of supposed to positions his own resistance to such expectations.

Through media, participants were able to trace the way that hegemonic ideals change. This is evident in Sal’s discussion of Homer Simpson and Al Bundy. Through these two characters, Sal demonstrates the way that the representation of the father has changed:

Because [Homer] he’s a father figure and yet he’s completely ill equipped for it really. But then in the end, he kind of does it. Like, he doesn’t, I don’t know if he accomplishes
what you would consider the proper father figure, but he, you know Bart and Lisa are ok, and he sticks with it, they’re a dysfunctional family, but not dysfunctional in a way that it completely, you know, goes to shit, um ya

SM: Do you feel like fathers are represented like that in other media, or no?
SP: Well um, what was the one before the Simpson’s, the sitcom?
SM: Married with Children?
SP: Married with Children, ya. See that would have been one of the first ones, before that you would have only ever saw the strong kind of like father figure. Nowadays they tend to, I find they tend to um, in a lot of movies, show the dysfunctional father, the deadbeat father, that’s the more commonly, whereas in the 70s and 80s you wouldn’t have seen that as much, as nowadays (SP, Initial, Lines 244-256)

Only through the use of media, was Sal Paradise able to present an extremely challenging notion surrounding context and changing masculinities. Connell (1995/2005) describes this as the ebb and flow, and states that new hegemony and versions of masculinities can be constructed. This is a difficult concept, that Connell himself has been challenged on many times, yet Sal was able to encapsulate the changing understandings of masculinities through the simple use of Homer and Al.

Michael Cera’s character on Arrested Development, similar to his character in Juno, is a very interesting challenge to the stereotypical representations of masculinities. His character encapsulates a new cool, or dominant version of masculinity, that is in stark contrast to the confident, strong, emotionless representations held within definitions of hegemonic masculinity. John Malkovich’s discussion of Michael Cera’s character demonstrates his appeal:

I think it’s because the characters are so brutally honest, you know…They don’t really sort of fit into the general role of like a superhero, or your standard tough guy…It’s sort of a, I’d say it’s sort of a realistic portrayal of a boy who struggles with his own personal masculinity…but I mean he doesn’t necessarily let it get to him…Michael Cera’s character, is very, very, well as I said, awkward, and, but I mean its, its, it all happens for
him in a very positive manner, like, like things always seem to go right for him, and then as a contrast, there are characters like Gob, who is an older guy, and he, he’s constantly working towards being overtly masculine, but it never sort of goes his way, like, like he’s always sort of trying to save the day and its like, it kind of backfires on him every time. So I mean it brings to light, maybe, overtly masculine people don’t generally get the point across as well.

The Michael Cera version of masculinity is one the participant feels more of a connection with. It also works to disrupt former versions of hegemonic masculinity, that of the overtly macho.

This disruption not only challenges the singular version of masculinity, it also reveals the malleability of hegemonic masculinity. Malkovich is a popular student, who parallels many of the characteristics of Michael Cera. His popularity, and the changing dominance of masculinities within the school context, illustrates the role of context in relation to normative discourses of masculinities. Further, as Michael Cera is a new version of ‘cool’, this reveals how varying contexts and versions of masculinities can influence hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995/2005).

Although not a fictional character, the stage persona of Freddy Mercury was used to represent the multiplicity of masculinities. John Malkovich employs Freddy Mercury to capture his understanding of plurality and masculinities:

I think that one is a big one, I was over at [Paul’s] house last week and we were watching Queen 1981, their live DVD, performing at Montreal, and 1981 was huge, that was when Queen was at their prime, right...and we’re watching it, and we’re like this is the most amazing live DVD we’ve ever seen, you know, Freddy Mercury in his prime, you know...strutting his stuff in front of thousands and thousands of people, and back then before people found out he was gay, he was seen as you know masculine, even though he was all about glam and hair metal and stuff like that...and it sort of said something, you know, you can be as flamboyant as you want as long as you are confident about it, and
that sort of puts out a masculine kind of view right. (Follow-Up, Lines 62-74).
Moreover, the use of Mercury as a representation of masculinity placed a gay identifying male
within understandings of masculinities. This is a refreshing change, as gay men are often
relegated to subordinate or marginalized roles.

Media spoke when the participants were at a loss for words, as it filled in the spaces of
 unintelligibility that everyday discourse could not fill. Pedagogically media is not only
 extraordinarily relevant to the context of the students, but it provides a vehicle for complicating
the hegemonic male ideal. It begins discussions of plurality, and the intersections of race, class,
sexuality and ability in relation to masculinities. Within discussions of masculinities, is the
opportunity to consider how particular versions of masculinities are considered valid while
others are subordinated. Further, the changing context of media can demonstrate the fluidity of
normative discourses surrounding masculinities, and their influence on hegemonic masculinity.
As Media is a dominant discourse in society, it can also expose the way that hegemonic
masculinity is perpetuated and reified in society. Places where language is still relegated to
binaried, fixed representations of the Clint Eastwood version of masculinity, media provides an
alternate discourse for representing the multiple, fluid, intersecting versions of masculinities.
METHODOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 1: TSK TALK

In many places my questions were clear examples of binaried talk, that positioned masculinities in opposition to femininities, and asserted the dominance of masculinities. Many times within the interviews I encouraged the participants to distinguish between male and female behaviour, suggesting that these identities were concrete opposites. Furthermore, the topics that I chose to discuss with them often presented an essentialized, singular representation of masculinity.

In coding the interview transcriptions, I was struck by the choice of topics for many of our pre-interview questions. For many of the participants, I chose to begin the interviews by talking about events from their own lives. There were many problematic elements related to these ‘warm-up’ questions. First, the topics that I chose to discuss were often heavily entrenched in masculine ideals. In my first conversation with John Smith, we discussed track and field, his sister’s boyfriend’s car, and his sister going to clubs. These were topics that I deemed safe because of my previous knowledge of the participant, but they are also strikingly stereotypically masculine. Such topic choices actively constructed masculinities within the interviews themselves. Further, they set the tone for subject matter that is ‘acceptable’ for discussion.

My questioning often reinforced the binary of masculine and feminine. In Rodino’s (1997) discussion of gender and language, she points to the work done by feminist linguists Bing and Bergvall (1996), who ask “‘the question of questions’: why do we ask questions that strengthen the male-female dichotomy?” (para. 3). Many of my questioning techniques led the participants to position masculine behaviour in opposition to feminine behaviour and vice-versa:

   can I just push you a little bit further on that, you said that they participate more, is there a way that boys or girls participate differently, or act differently in the hallways, or?
These examples are abundant within the interviews, and elicited responses that pushed the participants to understand gender as relational. This is particularly evident in my interview with John Smith, in which I forcibly position emotions within the feminine:

Do you think that within your friend group, talking about feelings would be associated with femininity?

JS: Um, I guess so ya. (John Smith, Initial, lines 204–207)

John’s response is more of a compliance than a genuine reaction. My question was an answer, in which his only option was to disagree with me. Considering my discussion of power within the methodology section, and John’s consciousness of the ‘supposed to be’ in masculinities, the likelihood of choosing to disagree with my positioning of emotion was slim. My questioning made a discussion of feelings risky, or what Owens (2006) would consider shameful.

My acts of helplessness within the interviews served to uphold the idea of the dominant male, submissive female. In my interview with John Malkovich and Sal Paradise, I positioned them as experts at the very start of each interview. With John Malkovich it was the simple act of ‘requiring’ assistance spelling his pseudonym:

SM: [discussion of pseudonym]
JM: Ok, I will be John Malkovich
SM: [laughs] Ok….Malk
JM: [spells for me]

Although this interaction may seem innocent, it positions the assertive, knowing male against the helpless, ignorant female. Although this was not a conscious action on my part, the benefit or deficit exists nonetheless. A similar positioning is evident in my pre-interview discussions with Sal Paradise. In this context, it is not spelling, rather the technology of my digital recording device about which I express insecurity.
5 INTERVIEWING INTERSECTIONS

This chapter explores intersections of identity. First, it considers the intersection of race and masculinities. Discussions of race introduced the relevance of the multiple contextual influences, as it was through race that participants considered the impact of cultural influences on masculinities. Also, through discussions of race and sexuality, participants were able to challenge the myth of a singular, hegemonic masculinity. Next, the intersection of sexuality and masculinities is explored. This section explores the pervasiveness of heteronormative talk, student readings of the term sexuality, and the intersection of masculinities, race and sexuality. In both the race and sexuality sections, participant understanding of race and sexuality are revealed, analyzed in relation to participant identities, and considered in relation to pedagogical possibilities. A discussion of intersections is salient to discussions of masculinities, as it introduces plurality, but it also warns of the tendency to over-simplify and read masculinities through a singular intersection, such as Vietnamese-male, or gay-male (Connell, 1995/2005). Finally, I observe the intersection of my own identity and participant understandings and responses. This notion of the intersection of my gender identity and the reading of the curriculum reveals the propensity of male students to associate gendered teaching as feminist teaching. Therefore, the discussions that I believed that I was having with my students about gender and social constructions were inhibited and misconstrued as a result of their reading of my body.

5.1 The ‘r’ word

Race is a prevalent theme in all of the interviews. Either through the omission of discussions of race, the propensity to read certain bodies in relation to race, or the statements made by participants about race or culture. The use of the term culture, in lieu of race, is just one way the racialized other is constructed, as discussions of race are often deemed impolite;
therefore, particular identities are validated over others (Best, 2003). In this context, I assert that race is a social construction. Within this analysis of race, I am particularly focusing on the construction of whiteness as the invisible norm, a norm that is further entrenched as it is often left out of discussions of race. Both Frankenberg (1993a, 1993b) and Morrison (1992), to name but a few, began to look at the social construction of whiteness and called for a turn away from the individual focus of racism to a systemic analysis of the invisibility and normalcy of white privilege. Frankenberg furthers this discussion by considering whiteness to be a process, not a thing. In other words, race is not something one possesses, rather, people “are actively raced as they are drawn into the complex processes of economic, cultural and political realization” (Guillamine, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1996, as cited in Best, 2003). Much like my assertion that masculinities be made visible in order to challenge its position as the norm, and reveal how the privileged and the Other are constructed by such norms, I make the same assertion about whiteness. Frankenberg (1993a) states that “any system of differentiation shapes those upon whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses” (p.51). The interviews became a venue in which participants and myself were actively raced, by talk, or by the absence of talk.

Throughout the interviews, discussions of race were initiated by those participants constructed as white. I assert that the white participants felt a false sense of insider status (Loutzenheiser, 2007) with me as we share the same racial construction; in turn, the ‘non-white’ participants may have felt a sense dissimilarity. Best (2003) discusses the role that perceived differences can have within an interview, this perception may explain the why the ‘non-white’ participants did not enter into discussions of race with me. The fact that the two white participants also felt comfortable speaking about race is a manifestation of the power, or capital that they possess within the school. Regardless of their minority status within the demographic of
the school, they still occupy an authoritarian role that is evident through the space they take up within the classroom and the confidence and ease they have in making statements about race. Finally, the lack of initiation surrounding discussions of race from ‘non-white’ participants extends beyond the false notion of insider/outsider, it is evidence of the relegation of racial discussions to the status impolite within the Canadian context. Moreover, the absence of discussions of race may have also been an attempt to call less attention to one’s position as the racial Other.

One South Asian participant, Bart, spoke often about culture, but did not use the term race. The three other ‘non-white’ participants did not prompt discussions of race. At times, participants were comfortable entering into discussions of difference, if the term culture was used instead of race, or if the participants initiated the topic. The notion that I was more keen, or felt it more relevant, to discuss race with the ‘non-white’ participants in my group is an important point of analysis, and an act of the racial construction of the Other that occurred within the interviews. This, along with the heteronormativity of my talk, will be taken up in the methodological interlude following this chapter. Finally, when discussions of race were tackled, students revealed their understandings of the intersections of race and masculinities.

5.1.1 (Race)ing to talk

The concept of whiteness, as the dominant yet invisible ideal, was captured and revealed by Sal Paradise within the initial round of interviews. When entering into a discussion of gender, and the propensity of many people to hear the term gender as women, Sal Paradise used the analogy of how terms like gender and race are heard in relation to the minority. He stated:

Because you assume everything else is white people because that’s what we learn for the most part... So, as soon as you say race, I think minority. Racial tension. (Initial, Lines
His statement is frighteningly accurate of the propensity to read terms like race, gender and sexuality as that of Other, and reveals the importance of exposing the silent privilege obtained through such assumptions.

As evidenced in Sal’s candid statement about race, the two white participants in my study more often initiated overt discussions involving race. While most of the participants discussed race or culture in some way, the two white participants were the only to use the term *white*. Although these discussions rarely involved a recognition of privilege and whiteness, there were moments, like the one above, in which whiteness was made visible. For example, when asked what he would like his pseudonym to be, John Smith replied: “I don’t know, I really don’t care. Actually give me something that seems really white, like, John Smith or something” (Initial, Lines 805-806). While his comment is meant to be comical, his attachment to a ‘white’ name ‘exposes’ his otherwise invisible race. Further, it speaks to social constructions of race through such acts as naming.

An incident that occurred in my Humanities 8 class encapsulates the way that understanding is sought and believed to be acquired through labels or names. When reading a Maya Angelou poem, the students inquired about the race of the poet. The instant I informed the students that she is black, they shook their heads knowingly, as though her racial identification as a black woman translated the poem for them. Further, as she is black, they proceeded to make the poem about race. This act of naming bodies serves to construct identities, as people understand the individual and all of their actions through that label.

While the white participants are unique in their labeling of their own race, participants unknowingly, spoke to the privilege associated with whiteness. This is evident in discussions of classroom interactions. Sal Paradise, names himself and two other white, male students as those
that have a tendency to speak in class. Considering the demographics of the classroom, where there are very few white males, it is interesting that this participant only named white boys. While I assert that this reveals the power and privilege of the white students, it does not overtly discuss whiteness in relation to privilege. Although Paradise uses this example, he has often denied his own privilege, and instead speaks to his minority status in the school. Regardless of his claim, the white boys are taking up space in the classroom, regardless of the demographics of the school. Privilege is maintained by those that are minimally represented within the demographics of the school, yet consistently represented in the curriculum, the favoured communication style of the classroom, and the overall system of Canadian society.

5.1.2 E(race)ing the Other

Participants were more often comfortable mentioning a racial other, rather than mentioning their own racial identification. In particular, those participants that did venture into the topic of race, spoke most frequently about bodies identified as Asian. This is most likely a product of the demographics of the school. John Smith uses a boy in his class to discuss the way that some students silently resist:

I don’t know, you just don’t really notice them. So…like do you know, [Vincent]? This little Asian guy, he’s in my grade. He doesn’t speak ever. Half the time in psychology he’s sleeping because it is first block. But when he’s not sleeping he’s still just sitting there quietly. (lines 304-309)

John’s use of ‘little Asian guy’ is another statement that demonstrates how ‘knowing’ is achieved through naming, in this case the common understanding or knowing that is attached to the ‘little Asian’ body. Participants remained more comfortable identifying the racial Other, than reflecting on their own positionality. Throughout the interviews, a white participant expresses his understanding of South Asian males, and Vietnamese culture in particular; an Indo-Canadian
participant expresses his understanding of Chinese Culture; a Sino-Vietnamese participant
discusses his understanding of White culture; and a Chinese participant their understanding of
‘Middle Eastern’ culture. Only one of the participants overtly discussed his own culture, and its
relationship to masculinities.

Using the term *culture*, Bart spoke openly about the relationship between culture and
masculinities:

Somewhat, ya, my culture too, it’s like that, the male is supposed to be sure, have the
confidence, have a leading role, you’re never supposed to doubt yourself, you’re
supposed to be sure, you’re supposed to know, so ya...Ok, well in the Indian culture what
you’re supposed to do, well the male is basically in charge, they have the leading role,
supposed to make the decisions, they’re the influence of the wife and like the daughters
and everything, they’re supposed to take charge, have all the confidence, be strong, look
out for their family, because that’s what they expect from a male son too, your parents
expect that you’ll look out for them afterwards. Not so much for the daughter, because
the daughter is going to get married, and is eventually going to leave...because we have
this philosophy that a daughter is only a guest in the father’s home, that’s the philosophy.
And, but a son is always expected to look after, so you have to be strong, and you know
have that charisma to look after your parents. So you’re really expected to have
confidence and be really strong, that’s really what masculinity is. (Initial, Lines 80-97)
Bart’s representation of masculinities is based on the understandings presented through his
family. He speaks about these practices without troubling their implications, neither the
heteronormative nor patriarchal elements. In our earlier conversation he spoke about the public
perception of the relationship between his mother and his father, and the private ‘reality’. He
spoke of the power that his mother has within the family home. Also, within this uncomplicated
presentation of his culture he does not reflect on its impact on his own gender identity. Within
the classroom context, Bart does speak often about the influence of his family and his culture;
however, the narrative he speaks does not parallel his own identity.

As Bart is the only participant that presented himself as a ‘cultural Other’ with in the interview, I took this discrepancy up within the follow-up interviews. I asked the participants about their reasons for not initiating conversations about race. After being asked if not discussing race was a conscious choice, John Malkovich stated:

Probably...probably subconsciously because I’m a minority. But I don’t know, I don’t know why I didn’t speak about race, that’s interesting....but it could have something to do with that (Follow-Up, Lines 235-238).

John Malkovich confirms the discomfort, the covering, that may have taken place in relation to race. As he and the other Chinese participant who did not discuss race were both born in Canada, and possess a great deal of cultural capital, the issue of race may be a topic of difference that they downplay. This may be an attempt to assert their Canadian identity, and resist the reading of their bodies as Other. Or, it can be viewed as a betrayal of their own cultural practices in order to be identified as Canadian. In either scenario, the adoption of Canadian culture is associated with capital in society.

As is seen in the interview with Bart, at times, participants were comfortable entering into discussions of difference, if the term culture was used instead of race, or if the participants initiated the topic. The reading of the term culture is important, as culture is more often discussed in relation to ‘non-white’ bodies; this tendency allows whiteness to claim a lack of culture, while it is in fact the pervasive dominant culture to which all others are compared. In general, participants shied away from any discussion of race. When asked if race plays into masculinities at all, John Smith becomes obviously uncomfortable and defensive: “Um, maybe, I don’t know what the households of other people’s races act like, but it could...I guess so” (Initial, Lines 814-
819). Here I stopped my inquiries about race, as did John Smith. John places conversations of race behind closed doors, a private household matter. The same was true for my discussions of race and culture with Bart, a participant who freely and willingly spoke about cultural difference, but was unwilling to make observations when the term race was attached:

SM: Do you notice, when you look at a boy that you identify as either racially different or culturally different, do you have different expectations of masculinity, and can you speak to that at all, or?
B: I'm not really sure…
SM: Like, do you have different, like if you were looking at a Chinese boy in your class would you read them differently than you would a white boy in your class in relation to masculinity? Do you have different standards or expectations
B: No, no not at all.
SM: Um, would you be able to identify, you spoke to Western masculinity vs. your own cultural masculinity, what would you identify as the differences other than physical strength and
B: I think that those are the big differences, ya. (Follow, Lines 142-149)

As is seen in the progression of the conversation, Bart is resistant to put forth his opinion about race, or racial differences. Yet, when the conversation turns to culture, he is comfortable making a strong assertion about difference. While I posit that Bart's ease in assertively declaring 'big differences' is a result of the use of the term culture, it also results from his comfort to speak of the Western masculinity within which he is immersed in the Canadian context, and his affinity to his own sense of cultural masculinity. Yet, as is also discussed in my methodological interlude, my framing of Bart within a culture other than Western constructs the very difference that he asserts; I recognize the problems inherent in the way I asked the question, my positioning of Bart as culturally different, and the notion that he and his culture sit outside of Western culture.

The hesitancy to speak about race is not exclusive to my conversations with Bart. As seen above,
John too is unwilling to speak about race and masculinities; however, when the term culture was used, John, although hesitant, did venture into discussions of diversity. Further, his statements revealed not only multiple masculinities, but also corrupted essentialised notions of monocultures. He presents two Indian boys as differing versions of masculinities. When asked about the rigidity of definitions of masculinities within certain cultures, John Smith responds:

Well, I don’t know, maybe, like [Farhad] is acting the way he did because he’s Persian. Because I’ve met a few Persian guys who act like that, but I couldn’t say for sure because I don’t know a large number of Persian guys. And, I don’t know, I, like [Sam Chodha] I don’t know if it had anything to do with him being, with him being Indian. I don’t know if it did. Because everybody’s like different. Like [Scott Singh] acts pretty macho, but he doesn’t act like [Sam Chodha]. (Initial, Lines 463-475)

The progression of this conversation is crucial to the way the Other is constructed and maintained in talk. The fact that John reads my question about culture, as a question about the cultural ‘Other’ is evident in his use of a Persian peer, and two South Asian peers; he does not speak about his own culture, or the relationship between masculinities and culture within the Canadian context. Once John navigated the term culture, his comments yielded multiple masculinities, and challenged the essentialized notion of South Asian males. Further, John’s multiple usages of ‘I don’t know’ are an attempt to disassociate with his statements about culture, and demonstrate the fear surrounding overt discussions of race, particularly in ‘outsider’ conversations. There is a comfort created in the use of the term culture instead of race. Culture, and the safety imbedded in it, can provide both a gateway to conversations about race, and through these conversations also the capacity to trouble the ease of the use of some language.

5.1.3 The mask(ulinities) of race

In the follow-up interviews, all of the participants were asked about their understandings
of race, culture and masculinities. In one question, I asked specifically about race: “In what ways is masculinity understood or read differently if we are talking about masculinities in relation to those who are not white?” As mentioned earlier, this question inspired less response, as participants remained uncomfortable in speaking about race, or responding to a question that re-inscribed the white, ‘non-white’ binary. However, when students were asked: “In what ways is masculinity understood/read differently within South Asian, Chinese, Anglo, Korean, First Nations, or Vietnamese cultures?”, the responses were more productive, and generated further discussion. Like my above discussion of John’s comfort with the term culture, I assert that the use of cultural terms, like South Asian or Korean, provide a safe space for students to make generalizations without feeling as though they are being racist. The pedagogical relevance comes in this very false sense of safety and righteousness. While it is important to recognize difference, it is also important to recognize who is more often assumed different, as this perpetuates generalizations about the racialized Other.

The interviews themselves did not become a venue for troubling the term culture or discussing its relationship to race, yet revealed participant understandings of culture and masculinities. In response to the culture question, Sal Paradise revealed his understanding of the intersections of culture, sexuality and masculinities.

I think it’s pretty much the same across the board. Um, well for instance what we talked about earlier, the whole homosexual thing, pretty much bad across the board. There’s really no culture that’s accepting of it. In fact, I’d say Caucasian right now, it’s probably the most. Like if you look at any of those other cultures, it’s very, not accepted. Um, trying to think, um. (Follow-Up, Lines 161-168)

While his understanding may be a way of patting his own ‘culture’ on the back, for their accepting attitudes, it exposes his attachment of rigid, conservative values to Other cultures.
Within his response, is also evidence of the interchangeability of the terms culture and race, as he uses Caucasian to represent culture. Further, these understandings of other cultures are interesting, as my post-interview discussions with Bart revealed that many Indian men hold hands, put their arms around one another, and sit with their legs touching. This directly contrasts Sal’s understanding of culture, sexuality and masculinities. Yet, his understanding is important as it demonstrates the common understanding that Other cultures are not as progressive as Western cultures.

Sal Paradise and John Smith, both white, speak about Vietnamese boys within the school. Although Vietnamese students do not make up a significant portion of the school demographics, the ‘tougher’ versions of masculinities exhibited by some high profile Vietnamese students may account for the fact that they are singled out by the two white participants. John Smith speaks to the version of masculinity that he feels Vietnamese male students exhibit:

I wouldn’t necessarily expect anything out of him normal, but if a Vietnamese guy acts macho, usually acts like a particular way of being macho...I don’t want to use any terms because people get mad...but the term ‘nammer’ is like usually applied to the Vietnamese guys who acts all masculine. (Follow-Up, Lines 227-235)

The attachment of a racial term, and the tone of ridicule associated with the term, are important in understanding the intersections of race and masculinities, and the divisions that result from these understandings. Through the mocking attached to John’s tone, and reading of the Vietnamese boys’ performance of masculinities, there is evidence of Connell’s (1995/2005) discussion of the subordination of alternate forms of masculinities in relation to dominant, hegemonic masculinity. While John has admitted himself, acting macho in his own group of friends, it is a factor that he mocks when exhibited by Vietnamese males. We also see this similar perpetuation of ‘good’ masculine and ‘bad’ masculine in John’s discussion of the
similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese boys:

They’re often the same. I think like lots of times if a Chinese boy is masculine, they express it the same way as like Vietnamese guys, there kind of like, we call them posers, but that’s just the way they act. I don’t know why they do that. (Follow-up, Lines 253-255)

In this statement he is reading Chinese and Vietnamese boys as similar, yet not similar to the norm. Rather, he is inciting the dominant norm by declaring these bodies as posers; as though they are trying to reach the dominant version of masculinity, but even in their exhibition of dominant masculine behaviours, they are still understood as outside of the masculine ideal.

The Vietnamese boys at the school do not make up a particularly large element of the demographic, yet both John and Sal single them out as a group for discussion. Sal speaks to the way that Vietnamese boys group themselves:

And like for Vietnamese, they’ll group together, but like in a different way.... Well I can’t identify it more than their, you know, Vietnamese. I guess what we’re talking about essentially is kind of gang mentality. Um, and usually you’d see it all kind of in different ways. But I mean essentially it’s the same thing really. (Follow-Up, Lines 184-189)

While he identifies difference, and attaches gang mentality to the Vietnamese groupings, he also asserts that grouping together by race is a common occurrence. Yet, both he and John choose to speak about the Vietnamese boys. Within the school, some Vietnamese boys do group together, and have an element of power within the school. Both John and Sal, may have singled out the Vietnamese boys because they feel threatened by the position of power they occupy, and as a result ridicule and question the authenticity of the version of masculinity the boys exhibit.

Further, as the Vietnamese boys are associated with toughness and gang mentality, John and Sal use their intellect to distinguish themselves from them. The intersection of Vietnamese culture and masculinities is important, as it identifies the way that racial difference is perpetuated; the
representation of the Vietnamese boys revealed by John and Sal only speaks to a specific group within the school yet is applied to all Vietnamese bodies. This exhibits the way that identities, such as that of the tough, gang-member, are often constructed and attached to certain bodies, regardless of the propensity of many identities to demonstrate similar behaviours.

Most participants, except for Bart, spoke of culture as something outside of themselves, or their own experiences. Like my earlier discussion of the unwillingness to discuss race, this identification of the Other, or the lack of self-reflection or identification, may have been an attempt to once again deflect difference. Like Bart, SL also identifies as Indo-Canadian, yet he possesses much more cultural capital within the school; he is athletic, popular, and is recognized for the multiple physical altercations he has had within the school and community. While SL does not initiate discussion of his own culture or race, when asked about his understandings of Chinese culture and masculinities, he asserts that intellect is held as more important than physical strength or athleticism:

Mmm, that’s a tough one, uh, well I think their priorities are more set on doing well in school, um, like if you look in the professional leagues, NHL, NFL, there’s not too many people from like, Asian people in there. It’s mostly like, Caucasian, black, right. So, I think that they’re mind set is doing well in school and getting the good jobs and going to universities. While for other people, just want to try their best at sports and give that a shot, that’s their main priority. (Initial, Lines 184-189)

This response recognizes plurality within masculinities, as he is declaring intellectual, school-oriented behaviour in relation to masculinities; however, it also serves to essentialize a singular version of ‘Asian’ masculinities. Within this response he does not identify his own race or culture, instead aligns with the dominant culture. He takes on a very stereotypical version of Canadian masculinities that includes physical prowess and athleticism. Even within the above
response, he references hockey and football. The way SL takes on the dominant version of masculinity, may be an attempt to disassociate with the cultural Other that would often be attached to his body.

MX, a Chinese-Canadian male, asserts his Canadian ‘insider’ status through the vilification of Middle Eastern, Islamic males. His responses produce an us/them binary between Middle Eastern identities and all other versions of masculinities. Within this binary, MX occupies the position of ‘us’. In his understanding Middle Eastern masculinity is unique in its practice of patriarchy:

...some races are more male dominated I guess in the Middle East...like some not races, but nationalities in the Middle East, like maybe uh, I don’t know exactly, some countries in the Middle East where the males are actually more dominant than the women because of how their government is set-up, like in the, for Afghanistan in the Taliban, the Taliban they shun down on the women, they create more power in the males. (Follow-Up, Lines 126-130)

As the conversation continues, MX continues to disassociate patriarchy and dominant versions of masculinities with Canadian society, by declaring masculinities as a factor that is more important in Asian countries:

I think it’s more important in Asian countries... I don’t know it’s, more, more, the um, more first hand, what is the word, like not like born in Canada...first generation, they’re more reliant on the male dominated force I guess...I’m third generation, so I don’t really think about it that much. (Follow-Up, Lines 143-148).

This disassociation continues, as he resists the reading of his own body as Asian. Instead he asserts his belonging, his insider status, through his nationality. MX does possess cultural capital, which is heavily evident in his popularity, position in student government, and identification with athletics and music. Important in his talk is the construction of the Other, his perpetuation of
dominant, glowing understandings of Canadian society, and an anti-immigrant, anti-FOB sentiment.

5.2 Sexuality: “You almost said boyfriend!”

The theme of sexuality surfaced within many of the interviews. The term *sexuality* is taken up throughout many of the interviews as that of Other. The word is read by both the participants and myself in relation to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) identities, and is not explored in relation to dominant or (hetero)normative readings of sexuality. This reading of sexuality highlights a common interpretation of the term sexuality as Other, a reading that reifies ‘straight’ identity as the norm. Understanding that sexuality was read as such, there are three major narratives surrounding this term within the interviews: heteronormative talk, participant understandings of sexuality, and the intersection of masculinities, race and sexuality.

5.2.1 Heteronormative talk

The inability to openly discuss sexuality, or the assertion by the participants that sexuality is a difficult topic, reveals the way that heteronormativity is achieved through everyday talk. Through the methodological interlude that follows this chapter, I explore the way that I asked questions perpetuated heteronormativity. Although I am complicit in the acts of heteronormativity that I outline below, I have included them in the analysis as they speak more to the way that the participants and I negotiated particular topics. The untouchability and discomfort around LGBTQ sexuality was revealed in my first interview through a slip of my words:

Does that affect the way that you and your friends, your boy, your guy friends speak to each other?
JS: Oh, you just about said boyfriends. (John Smith, Initial, lines 209-212)
The mere suggestion of a male participant and a 'boyfriend', is deemed unsafe, and farcical. The participant made certain that he correct, call out, my 'mistake'. In fact, the way that John Smith responded, paralleled the delight that you might hear from a youth who catches an adult swearing. Reinforcement of heteronormative regimes are achieved in what we chose to talk about, and those topics that we avoid. In this particular example, not only was the topic avoided, but it was positioned as unthinkable (Owens, 2006).

Not surprisingly, the topics that were deemed safe, often privileged dominant ideals. An obvious example would be my choice to inquire about Sal's girlfriend, who is also a student in my class, several times throughout his interviews. The space granted his relationship, and the ease with which we both wove this talk into our discussions, reveals the normative achievement of such talk. Heteronormative talk was achieved through discussions of family, mother and father, with only a few of the participants. With those participants that I knew lived with both their mother and father, the discussion of family was deemed a safe topic. This is particularly relevant in my interviews with Sal Paradise. Throughout both of his interviews, he and I openly discuss his relationship with his father. My impromptu final question in his follow-up interview demonstrates the recurrence and prevalence of this topic:

The only other question I was considering asking you is about your father. You spoke a lot about your relationship with your father in the last interview. Is there anything you'd like to say about your relationship with your dad? (SP, Follow-Up, Lines 400-402)

Whereas with John Smith, who I know does not have a father figure in his life, the topic of his Dad was consciously avoided on my part. This avoidance, reveals the way that norms are perpetuated through both what is discussed and what is deemed unsafe as a topic of conversation.
My avoidance of the topic of John Smith's father and family structure, although a possible act of politeness, also positioned the non nuclear family as Other. The dominant reading of the nuclear family reifies traditional definitions of marriage, and hetero relationships. Kitzinger (2005) points to the fact that the topic does not even need to be of sexuality, heteronormativity is inscribed through mundane talk. As I know that John Smith does not live with both his mother and father, I do not bring up his family until he uses his mother as an example of someone who disrupts stereotypical notions of gender. I am not asserting that his mother would identify as LGBTQ, and so that is why I avoided the topic, rather I am highlighting the fact that the normative, heterosexual relationship demonstrated by Sal Paradise's family received more talk time, and was deemed a safe topic. This demonstrates how, even when the topic is not necessarily sexuality, instead the topic of a single-parent household, heteronormative regimes are reified through our talk.

In addition to the subtle ways that we negotiated heteronormative talk, the participants also overtly revealed discomfort about discussing LGBTQ issues. In some cases this came in the form of their own discomfort within the interview, as was seen by Mr. X in our conversation about Will and Grace:

Maybe Will and Grace, but I don’t really care ‘cus, I don’t have anything against gay people, just I don’t consider that very masculine though, but I don’t have anything against, ya. (Initial, Lines 153-155)

Mr. X's discomfort is evident in his rush to assert that he does not 'have anything against gay people', his repetition of this phrase, and then his inability to complete his thought. Additionally, other youth also asserted that they felt that sexuality was a topic that students were fearful or uncomfortable talking about. John Smith states:

I don’t know, they seem pretty scared about talking about, it’s kind of about
homosexuality right? Seem pretty scared about talking about it. I don’t know some people don’t feel comfortable talking about it, especially guys. Guys are way more likely to be homophobic, it seems...I guess it’s because they’re scared of being deemed like gay if they talk about people who are gay, or, I don’t know, it just seems really strange. I guess its like gay guys don’t fit their idea of what a man is. (Initial, Lines 760-768)

In the above excerpt, John Smith not only points to his perception that people are afraid of talking about ‘homosexuality’, but he also suggests that this is a topic that is more difficult for male students. His assertion is not only that male students are more likely to be homophobic, but that this is a result of their fear of being deemed gay. A few other participants echoed John’s explanation of discomfort resulting from a fear of association, while others added that they felt uncomfortable sharing their opinions in relation to sexuality due to a fear of peer reaction.

Mr. X discusses this fear of mockery from peers:

That they feel uncomfortable and maybe they don’t want to say what they think because they are afraid that somebody will make fun of them. And then uh, that’s why they didn’t want to discuss what they think because it just makes them uncomfortable because it’s a delicate topic. Just, it’s hard for some people to talk about these type of things with other people. I guess, ya. (Initial, Lines 640-644).

Mr. X is unable to label or name the topic of sexuality, instead choosing to say ‘these type of things’. The participants’ own discomfort with ‘the topic’ and their suggestion that it is an area of conversation that people avoid due to fear of perception and ridicule, reveals the way that the Other is constructed in talk. As LGBTQ sexualities are even deemed unsafe for discussion, they are not presented as valid. Further, the assumption of peer ridicule parallels the very identity as laughable within this youth context.

5.2.2 Participant understandings of sexuality

Within the interviews some of the participants complicate the binaried understanding that
gay men are effeminate, while others entrench these understandings. This reveals that not all high school boys understand LGBTQ identities in the same way, which serves to deconstruct the universalized or essentialized understanding of male students themselves. A number of the participants presented their understanding of sexuality within the nature-nurture debate. Finally, all of the participants speak of LGBTQ identities as ‘they’. Although I am aware that this often happens when individuals are referring to a group of which they are not a part, I found it interesting that within the participant’s use of ‘they’ language is the idea that they think the high school context is void of LGBTQ sexualities. The lack of discussions of LGBTQ identities serves to invalidate such identities, deny them space in the school context. As students are often understandably fearful of identifying within the hostile environment of the school, this leaves much of the student body with the perception that nobody within their context is LGBTQ.

5.2.3 It’s complicated

In response to a question that I had asked that was intended to challenge John Smith about the singular, fixed representation of masculinities he has constructed in his responses, he pointed to the misconceptions surrounding gay masculinities. In doing so, he introduced the multiplicity of masculinities, and the plurality within gay masculinities. His discussion of Will from the television show Will and Grace complicates the notion of a singular gay masculinities. John states:

I guess, because they show the men as feminine because they are gay, but I don’t think you need to be gay to act like that. Like, ya, Jack is a stereotypical gay guy, like that’s what gay guys are supposed to be like, but Will not so much. He’s just a normal guy.
SM: What’s a normal guy.
JS: I don’t know, the average Joe, the average Joe, I don’t know how to describe it. He doesn’t fit into the stereotype of gay or straight, how they are supposed to be. (Initial,
In this quote, John Smith disrupts stereotypical representations of gay males, representations of males as masculine, and representations of people through gender binaries. Most unique in John Smith’s representation is the notion that Will is neither stereotypically gay or straight. This refusal to attach Will’s identity to either side of the binary, serves to challenge this forced dichotomy. John Malkovich also troubles the fixed representation of masculinities in his discussion of gay masculinities:

Mmm, sexuality and masculinities, well I would say some would seem as effeminate, but I know a lot of gay guys who are really masculine, and a lot of gay guys who are super feminine... uh, there’s a stereotype I guess, based on media too, like if you watch Will and Grace, and whatnot... I guess it’s just all an image that the media portrays, but I mean you can be whatever orientation and be all kinds of masculine, so. (Initial, Lines 604-614)

Malkovich is unknowingly speaking to Connell’s (1995/2005) warnings about oversimplification, or the risk of understanding a particular type of masculinities, like gay-masculinities, as singular. Instead, Malkovich recognizes that there are multiple versions of masculinities that intersect with gay identifying males. Also, his use of ‘all kinds of masculine’ unsettles the fixed understanding of any singular masculine identity. Both Smith and Malkovich acknowledged the normative discourse surrounding gender and sexuality, and contradicted these ideas. As emphasized in the previous chapter, both also used media as a negotiator of their thinking.

On the other hand, Sal Paradise reinforced gender binaries in his discussion of effeminate-masculine, gay-straight, dominant and subordinate. Further his talk paralleled dominant ideas surrounding sex gender attachments and stereotypical representations of LGBTQ
Um, I know like, I knew two guys that are, open, about it, um, and in both cases, one of them, he’s very effeminate, and the other one he’s, I wouldn’t say he’s effeminate, but he’s not exactly masculine either. Like he’s not, you know. And other men that I’ve seen, I don’t know them, but I’ve seen men that are openly homosexual and they are usually very, more on the feminine side I’d say. Um, I don’t know if I’d exactly say that’s because, I wouldn’t go as far as to say most gay men are effeminate; however, I think I’d definitely say, there’s a higher tendency of effeminate men being gay...And that maybe if that isn’t true because I have no statistics to support that, um that’s something that’s so engrained into my thought process, that when you see a guy with a lisp, that has more feminine characteristics, you almost just assume that he’s gay, probably the first thing that comes to mind. Um, I think this is, I have quite a theory about this one, I think it’s because um, well I think in every relationship there’s a dominant kind of figure, and a more feminine kind of figure and with men and women, heterosexual relationships, you do get the odd one where the woman is more dominant role and the male is the less dominant role. For the most part, the roles are kind of set for them by their biology, in that the men are going to be the more dominant ones in the relationship, and the women are going to be the less. Um, but then, with homosexuality, because that’s outside of that, and because both males, it’s almost like the hermaphrodites, you know. I mean not necessarily that they battle, but it has to be, one of them has to have the dominant role and one of them has to have the more subordinate role...And for that reason, I think you get a higher percentage of men being effeminate in homosexuality because they assume that female role. And then I would say that, also you see those men coming out more because it’s harder for them to hide it...Whereas men who are aggressive, and homosexual, who are the dominators, they’re just like a heterosexual dominator, and they don’t have to come out of the closet because they can hide it easily. . . They could even marry a woman. They might not be sexually attracted to her, but they can pull it off...Whereas guys that have that feminine thing, I mean they’re not fooling anyone when they’re not, when they’re still, you know, closet homosexuals, and then they just come out because it’s like, why bother hiding something that you, everyone knows
anyway. So, I think that’s why you see that.(SP, Initial, Lines 1164-1202)
In Sal’s discussion of one of his friends, he resists attaching either masculine or feminine to his friend’s identity. Nevertheless, he hesitates to label his friend masculine: “I wouldn’t say he’s effeminate, but he’s not exactly masculine either”. It seems as though Sal is hesitant to attach the word masculine to an openly gay male. Understandings of sexuality are enmeshed in understandings of what it is to be appropriately female, passive, and what is appropriately male, dominant. Sal will call a ‘non-effeminate’ male, dominant, but never uses the term masculine to describe a gay identifying male. This is in direct contrast to John Malkovich who has no hesitation in saying you can be any ‘orientation and all kinds of masculine’.

Sal claims that effeminate men, those that he describes with a lisp and feminine characteristics, are presumed gay. I think this assumption, while obviously problematic, is important. As it is a common understanding, this pervasive thinking about gender and sexuality is important to overtly discuss in order to trouble. Within this statement is opportunity. Sal did not say what I wanted to hear, but what he thinks; all effeminate men are gay and they can’t hide it, so they shouldn’t bother trying. I think these statements are important to reveal, especially in the classroom, so they can be used to deconstruct these entrenched ideas about gender and sexuality. Further, these statements can be used to explore the way that multiplicity, such as gay masculinities is beginning to be recognized, but only in essentialized terms.

Sal repeatedly uses the term ‘they’ to describe gay males. This use of ‘they’ language was often used by the participants and serves to further entrench this notion of Other. Also, within Sal’s statements about hiding and fooling is the assumption that LGBTQ sexualities are something that should be covered. Kenji Yoshino (2006) discusses the extent to which laws have been set out to protect civil rights, yet people of Othered identities are still expected to cover who
they are in order to make it more palatable for public consumption. In this vane, sexuality is an interesting identity category as it can be hidden, unlike race, gender, ability, and often class. Yet, people always seek knowledge about sexuality when it is that of Other. While we have seen that the topic of sexuality is avoided, and everyday topics entrench heteronormativity, the topic is always sexuality once a person is read as LGBTQ.

Like many of the participants, Sal recognizes the affects of societal expectations in his thinking, speaking to ideas that are engrained in his thought process. He, like other participants, speaks about the ‘supposed to be’ of gender, the influence of his father on his own masculinities, and the influence of media on his understanding of masculinities. Alternately, throughout his interview, he speaks quite adamantly about his belief that gender is biological. He does not consider the nurture involved in all of his own narratives, and remains entrenched in the notion that gender is a scientific fact. This theme of claiming to be naturists, while speaking multiple examples of nurture is not isolated to Sal’s interview. The pedagogical relevance is within this disparity, what students automatically state about gender verses the narratives from their lives that recognize the role of nurture and social construction. Why are some students, in my experience more often male, so adamant that gender is biological? Who is served by this understanding of gender?

5.2.4 Intersections: sexuality and masculinities

Understandings of masculinities were often entrenched in hegemonic ideals (Connell, 1995/2005). While many of these ideals were contradicted through student examples, media, and personal feelings, there were still aspects of masculinities that remained a rather rigid theme throughout the interviews. First, that gay masculinities ‘goes against’ what a man is supposed to be. This sentiment is evident in Bart’s timid discussion of sexuality:
Um, like, like homosexuality, and stuff like that. It something in society we have to deal with and you have to know about it. There's people in society who [inaudible/possibly said homosexual], and we have to accept that, right. They are people too, so you can't go against them. People don't want to deal with that, because it sort of goes against what a man is expected to be...So they just don't want to deal with it, and they just shut it out. (Initial, Lines 633-639)

There remains a hesitation on the part of some of the participants to include gay masculinities as an element of masculinities. Understandings of masculinities, even in discussions of plurality, did not involve gay masculinities. While some of the participants may be troubling their understanding of sexuality, and their understandings of masculinities as singular and fixed, gay masculinities has still not been adopted. Instead, many of the participants still present gay masculinities as an oxymoron.

Although John Malkovich's discussion of Freddy Mercury disrupts some of the rigid, hegemonic understanding of what is masculine, Mercury is only presented as masculine as he demonstrates confidence, a factor of dominant masculinities. Malkovich stresses the importance of confidence in order for Mercury to be intelligible as masculine:

and we're watching it, and we're like this is the most amazing live DVD we've ever seen, you know, Freddy Mercury in his prime, you know...strutting his stuff in front of thousands and thousands of people, and back then before people found out he was gay, he was seen as you know masculine, even though he was all about glam and hair metal and stuff like that...and it sort of said something, you know, you can be as flamboyant as you want as long as you are confident about it, and that sort of puts out a masculine kind of view right. (Initial, Lines 66-74)

While Malkovich's example of Mercury dismantles rigid understandings of masculinities, it is only as a result of his confidence that Mercury is understood as masculine. Sexuality has been challenged by the participants for its narrow understanding as effeminate, masculinities has not
been troubled for its narrow understanding as straight.

5.2.5 That talk will turn you gay!

This limited understanding of masculinities, may explain male students hesitance to discuss LGBTQ sexualities. Although I have already discussed the hetonormative practice of not including LGBTQ topics in everyday talk, within this section I use the regulation of talk as an aspect specific to the formation of masculinities. In particular, a major aspect of masculinities is that male students are less inclined and willing to discuss sexuality. This was often explained to be the result of fear, mockery of association. John Smith states that it is this fear of association that causes male students to avoid conversations of sexuality:

I don’t know, they seem pretty scared about talking about, it’s kind of about homosexuality right? Seem pretty scared about talking about it. I don’t know some people don’t feel comfortable talking about it, especially guys. Guys are way more likely to be homophobic, it seems...I don’t know, I guess it’s because they’re scared of being deemed like gay if they talk about people who are gay, or, I don’t know, it just seems really strange. I guess its like gay guys don’t fit their idea of what a man is. (Initial, Lines 760-768)

John’s understanding, common within the youth in this context, reifies the hegemonic representation of masculinity as ‘straight’. Sexuality and the formulation of masculinities are wed, and this compulsory heterosexuality (Rich, 1981) is regulated through talk (Epstein, 1997).

When male students do speak about sexuality, it is only as a way of ridiculing or putting down their peers. Bart asserts that male students are more likely to use sexuality as a way of insulting:

More than female students, female students are more understanding, a little more caring than male students. Male students, you can go in the hallways and you’ll hear you’re a fag, you’re a this, I’ve never heard a female student say that, unless it’s a joke or
something to their female friends, but male students actually say it and mean it, like they’ll mean it. (Initial, Lines 633-644)

Sexuality then becomes a tool of mockery which further Others LGBTQ identities, often through the use of violent, abusive language. Connell (1996) discusses the way that the peer talk of adolescent boys consistently utilizes sexuality, such as homophobic slurs, to establish hierarchies. The intersection of masculinities and sexuality, in this sense, reveals that male students are more likely to use sexuality as a tool to de-masculinize someone. This talk is the site of the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. This is echoed by John Smith in his discussion of a peer that he deemed effeminate:

He graduated last year. And he’s got to be the most feminine guy I have ever met in my life... I don’t know, just the way that he laughed and like the way that he spoke. He acted more like most girls do than most guys do.

SM: Ok. Ok, Did you and your friend group judge him as a result?
JS: Um, I didn’t like him because he’s a jerk... He had a tendency to, uh, I don’t know, we, we, one time in Whistler for band, we, my room and Charles’ room were pranking each other... like back and forth, and so, they got us with water balloons, and we got them with silly string, and then he ratted on us about it. And we were like, what the hell? We didn’t get you, it was just Charles. And so, I don’t know, he always mouthed off to us and stuff. I guess he thought he was better than us, or something like that... But then, it had nothing to do with the way he acted. But then, because of the way he acted, because of the attitude he took towards us, we started, I guess making fun of his traits... his masculinities. It wasn’t why we made fun of him, but it was just how we made fun of him. (Initial, Lines 149-191)

In this particular case, the boy, who they did not like, was deemed effeminate, and so that became the aspect of his identity that was ridiculed. Yet, as is seen in Bart’s explanation, male students will use homophobic language as a way of insulting regardless of the ‘characteristics’ of the individual; an attack on a male student’s sexual identity is understood as the most severe way
of putting them down. Connell (1996) posits that a ‘romance pattern’ defined by the masculine/feminine dichotomy reifies the definitions of masculinities, and feeds a hierarchy of masculinities in which heterosexual triumphs equate to peer group prestige. While discussions of LGBTQ sexuality are relegated to tools of mockery, discussions of heterosexual conquests are trophy conversations that increase masculine esteem. The relationship between the formation of masculinities, femininities, patriarchy, and the Othering of LGBTQ sexualities are inseparable.

This intersection of sexuality and masculinities reveals an important way in which both masculinities and heterosexuality are regulated by male students. As male students are both victim and perpetrator of these regulations, this demonstrates the important role that male students can play in challenging these acts. As Epstein (1997) argues, conversations about sexism cannot, and should not, be separated from conversations of heterosexism.

5.2.6 Race and masculinities

Finally, the intersection of sexuality, masculinities, and race is discussed by a few of the participants. Their understandings often further perpetuates the Other, and glorifies Western understanding. This is relevant to the discussion, as it demonstrates the way that within the context of Canadian schools topics such as multi-culturalism, sexism and homophobia are presented as complete and cured. Often these discussions have become part of the glorified narrative of Canada, the multi-cultural myth. For example, many of the participants positioned non-Western cultures as more rigid in their acceptance of LGBTQ people. This falsely constructs both Western culture as ‘progressive’ and non-Western cultures as therefore ‘regressive’. John Malkovich states:

Well I guess cultures come so far now, maybe back then, maybe there would be ideals
back then. There are certainly cultures nowadays that would prefer heterosexual relationships... you know like in cases where there are cultures that have arranged marriages and such... Uh, North American culture is more adapted to the, uh, homosexuality than I'd say other cultures. And I guess that's just from diversity and exposure. (Initial, Lines 604-627)

The suggestion here is that Western culture is more adapted, and the elusion is made to the backwardness of cultures that practice arranged marriage. Race can be read into this statement, as arranged marriages are often attached to many South Asian cultures. In contrast, the post-interview discussion with Bart regarding the practice of male's touching and holding hands in India challenges the notion that Western culture is more accepting. In fact it reveals the way that normative regimes of masculinities are constructed within different contexts. The touching and affection that is an element of heterosexual male relationships in India, would only be understood in relation to sexuality in Western, or North American culture. The significant piece for educators here is that of context and the construction of ideals. This example challenges the notion of nature and gender identity and reveals instead the role of social construction within the norm. The norm in North American culture is a version of straight masculinities that does not encompass overt male affection, whereas these practices are a norm of masculinities within the Indian context. Examples of cultural differences of masculinities are ideal pedagogical tools for countering 'natural' understandings of gender and sexuality.

5.3 Intersections: it's just me, myself, and eyes

In this section, I explore the intersection of my identity and anti-oppressive curriculum that focuses on gender. In order to do so, I use the interactions within the interviews as a point of analysis for considering the way curriculum is read as a result of my gender identity. I assert that this is extremely important to understand, as teaching that focuses on disrupting common sense
notions of gender, can potentially further entrench gender roles if the relationship between the instructor’s identity and the curriculum is not understood. Within my own classroom experiences, students have often been resistant to discussions of gender, charging that I have my own personal agenda that is not part of the ‘official’ curriculum. In her study of hegemonic masculinity in primary schools Skelton (2001), argues that the misbehavior of boys toward female teachers in the classroom is a vehicle for them to exercise and rehearse patriarchy. Luke and Gore (1992) discuss the difficulty that female practitioners face in challenging sexism in the classroom. Luke and Gore attribute this resistance to the conservative positions that many male and female students arrive with. Many students support the notion of an official curriculum as Truth and align feminist pedagogy with indoctrination. Lewis (1992) reveals that resistance is not just a reaction of male students toward feminist teachings; in fact, often the female students are sooner to defend the men than the men themselves. She describes the female students’ reactions as a psychological hold that the patriarchal system can achieve. These suspicions reveal the mistaken perception that gender education is about and for women; they reveal the fear and villainization of feminism; and they reveal the way that gender roles are played out in the classroom in response to pedagogy that is perceived to be feminist.

As I have spent the past three years reflecting on anti-oppressive pedagogy, and on student resistance, I believed that I had come to terms with such acts of resistance. In fact, I believe that resistance is a necessary aspect of anti-oppressive pedagogy as it can be used to expose places of gender construction and patriarchy. Further, such acts of resistance prevent anti-oppressive pedagogy from becoming a new fixed, dominant discourse. Influenced by post-structural theorists (Ellsworth 1989; Gore 1992; Kumashiro 2004; Orner 1992), I had become wary, even critical, of feminist pedagogy as a result of its fixed understandings of gender and
pedagogy and more comfortable with the fluid, messy pedagogy in which space is made for acts of student resistance. However, after completing these interviews, I was struck by a simple notion, regardless of my changed understanding, students are still reading my teaching as an oppressive act of feminist pedagogy due to the way they hear the word gender. Further, my own gender identity, as that of what Sal Paradise terms the ‘minority’, heavily influences what my students hear. Regardless of the fact that I understand gender in the Butlerian sense, my students still hear gender as feminism, gender as male oppressor, gender as female victim.

5.3.1 Aren’t you listening, I said gender?

Within the interviews, it is interesting to hear the way that the participants, also my former students, interpreted my teaching. Regardless of how I feel that I troubled the term gender in my classroom, an overwhelming number of the participants interpreted the term gender as a term only associated with women. As discussed in the last chapter, there are many instances in which a question of gender is heard as question about women. John Malkovich’s response to a question about gender is typical to the responses elicited from the participants:

Um, probably the roles of women...different roles of women throughout the years, in the wars and such. But, I mean to me, it all seemed relevant, it didn’t seem like it was out of place or like someone threw that in there for good measure. (Initial, Lines 302-305)

Malkovich’s response not only reveals the common reading of the term gender, it also introduces the relevance of my identity. His statement about relevance or the ‘someone’ that may have thrown in these discussions places me inside his understanding of gender and reading of the curriculum. Suspicion, even though denied, is attached to the reading of my gendered body. My question about gender did not generate responses about our classroom discussions surrounding the social constructions of men and women, the role that war propaganda played in constructing
an image of the ideal male and the ‘good’ female, or the dominant image of masculinities that is perpetuated in the textbooks; instead, the responses yielded were of an essentialized female from a course that represents the token role of women in each chapter. I was left to wonder where was the disconnect between what I believed I was teaching, and what the students were leaving my course with. How was my teaching achieving the opposite of its intended purpose?

5.3.2 Stop looking at me, and just listen, I said gender!

As the interviews went on, I began simply asking about how the term gender was heard by the participants. Each participant was asked about the intersection of my gender identity and their reading of the term gender. This exploration invited conversations about the intersections of my own gender and the intended curriculum. There is a pattern that develops surrounding the students reading of the term gender, and its relationship to my gender identity. In his response MX ‘credits’ feminism for his association of gender and female:

I don’t know, because feminism I guess. Female, the first impression is a female more, present feminism. (Initial, Lines 583-589).

While the participants had varied reasons, feminism, difference, or course appropriateness, all agreed that my identity interfered with their understanding of the term. These assumptions, the common reading of the term gender, and the intersection of my identity and the curriculum are salient to anti-oppressive pedagogy and discussions of gender. I cannot access these spaces with my students if they remain entrenched in the notion that I am a critical, feminist educator and these teachings are simply part of an agenda for my own benefit. I am not intending to vilify feminism; however, I prefer to consider myself a gender educator. Discussions of masculinities clearly do not resonate with the students, as they assume the motive of gender discussions to be strictly feminist, due to their reading of the term gender and their reading of my body. This
reading of the term, and the assumptions placed upon the term as a result of my own identity, will now be the starting point for my pedagogy.

5.3.3 I’m suspicious of everything that comes from YOUR mouth

Suspicions, or attachment of certain pedagogy to an agenda, is a considerable factor in what allows dominant discourse to maintain its position as the norm. I assert that these suspicions are a factor of the intersection of my identity, and a regulatory practice of the norm. Resistance, or what Giroux (1983) labels oppositional behaviour, often serves to reify dominance. Resistance in this case is an “expression of power that is fueled by and reproduces the most powerful grammar of domination” (p. 285). Distrust, as a result of my identity, is a key factor in student resistance to discussions of gender. In John Smith’s discussion of student resistance to discussions of gender he states:

Maybe like [Ashok] was kind of resistant to, the, I don’t know, talking about women, I guess…He seemed, like he didn’t really think what you were saying was like, I don’t know correct or something like that. I don’t know, I don’t know, he just didn’t really respond to the classes as well as other people did. Like, and he was like super, super um pro male domination in those classes. This is how things are supposed to be. And it just seemed like, ya…When you’d be talking about like women’s rights and stuff, he wouldn’t really do anything with the conversation, he’d just be kind of sitting there not paying attention, that kind of thing. (Initial, lines 572-585)

John states that Ashok was distrustful about the validity of my teaching as a result of my female identity. The intersections of my identity and reading of the curriculum, and subsequent resistance, further entrenches Ashok’s patriarchal understandings rather than troubling his common sense understandings (Kumashiro, 2004). In this case, my teaching achieves the opposite of its intent. Even within his criticism of Ashok’s reading and reaction to my teaching, John’s reading compartmentalizes my teaching as feminist, about women’s rights. Luke and
Gore (1992) discuss similar difficulties: When women teach about gender issues, students
dismiss them in course evaluations by accusing them of “putting in too much of her own
opinion”, of being “too subjective” (p. 199). The reading of my body, and the term gender are
important elements of an anti-oppressive pedagogy that focuses on gender. Resistance to
pedagogy as a result of the intersection of my identity and the curriculum provide pedagogical
spaces for inquiry.

5.3.4 All for one, one for all

Beyond the reading of my own body, is the expectations attached to the singular ‘female’
identity in the room. Within the interviews, it became clear that there was an assumption of
solidarity from the females in the classroom, that ignores intersections of race, sexuality, ability
or socio-economic status. Many of the participants implied that they thought the females in the
class should be supportive of a ‘critical feminist pedagogy’. John Smith seems surprised by a
female classmates statement about women in society:

When [Akime] said that she thinks that women complain too much. And you were like,
but do you think that’s maybe because of the way our culture is. The, women are seen as
complaining, or something like that. I can’t really remember exactly what you said, I just
remember that, it was like, [Akime] says I think women complain too much, they, they
want more. I remember I brought up the thing about the women freaking out because they
wanted to be let in the gold club, the men’s club...we were just talking about, how
equality is, women are striving for equality...[And then [Akime] said] I think women
whine too much, or something like that.
SM: Why do you think that incident was memorable?
JS: Because it was really strange that, a girl would think that women whine too much,
like it was really weird, like I would think like stand together, strong. (Initial, Lines 482-
520)

This response is productive, as it outlines three key elements: the assumption that my teaching
benefits females, that all females are expected to rally behind discussions of injustice and gender equality, and that female students are oppositional to teaching in which they may be associated with feminism. Lewis (1992) describes responses similar to those of Akime as a patriarchal hold on female consciousness. These commonly held assumptions and expected responses are potential for troubling essentialist readings of the body, and challenging students to consider the way that identity is read against curriculum.

5.3.5 Well if HE says so, it must be true

In addition to Lewis (1992), the intersection of the gender of the instructor and pedagogy that is dedicated to troubling gender, has also been explored by Moore (1997). In her own experience, Moore also experienced resistance, and accusations of furthering her own personal agenda. In order to challenge this resistance she invited a male instructor, who in his lesson overtly challenged gender bias in society. She asserts that her class was less suspicious, and responded more favorably to the male instructor. John Smith supports Moore’s assertion in his discussion of a male teachers and discussions of gender:

Ya, I think if it comes from a guy, guys tend to listen. I don’t know, because he’s a guy... The way that [Mr. Saunders] taught it, talked about that kind of stuff, was different than the way you talked about it. He talked about it more from a man’s point of view, looking sympathetically at how women, like have the glass ceiling and stuff. And you talked about more a woman’s point of view about how things aren’t always equal and stuff...I think they were less suspicious with [Mr. Saunders], because if somebody’s talking from the other side of the fence, and they’re supporting them, then obviously they’re telling the truth, because nobody wants to go against...I think guys are much more inclined to listen to men. If somebody has a masculine way of speaking, they tend to pay more attention. John’s response presents the notion of the universal male, as he declares Mr. Saunders voice a representation of a man’s point of view. He feeds the patriarchal notion of authoritarian male
voice in his suggestion that men are more likely to listen to men. Or, if not men, someone that asserts male qualities, such as voice. He also validates the notion that the intersection of teacher identity does interfere with the way students read the curriculum. In the example outlined by Moore (1997), she was able to turn the mirror back upon the students, and challenge their reading of the curriculum through her body. The suspicion attached to certain bodies is an extremely crucial element of all anti-oppressive pedagogy, as it challenges students to consider the roots of their suspicions, and whom these suspicions continue to serve. Further, it troubles essentialist understandings of identity as it disrupts the notion that a female teacher represents and speaks for all females.
METHODOLOGICAL INTERLUDE 2: TSK TSK TALK

This section is difficult to write, as it challenges me, the researcher, the teacher, to expose all of the instances in which I place white and straight as the norm. Further, it exposes the ways in which my research, these interviews, reified racial constructions, privileged whiteness and further engrained heteronormativity. Throughout the interviews I was more eager to make race an issue with 'non-white' participants. Regardless of my reading of Best's (2003) discussion of constructing a racial Other within her research, I paralleled her mistakes within my own research. More embarrassing is the notion that I was aware of the risk of constructing race through the avoidance of particular topics, or the reading of particular bodies, and I conducted my research in this manner. Similarly, the way that I presented sexuality, the topics that I framed within sexuality, and the topics associated with LGBTQ identities that I avoided, reified dominant norms surrounding sexuality and relationships.

By positioning the topic of race as sensitive, I produced what Owens (2006) terms participant shame. In an attempt to be 'polite' in the first interview, or to avoid reading certain bodies as raced, I did not legitimize the topic of race. In order to challenge whiteness, race should have been a topic of discussion in all interviews, not just for non-white participants. While I wove discussions of race into all of my follow-up interviews as a result of this reflection, I avoided the topic in the majority of the initial interviews, and therefore made the topic itself sensitive, or unspeakable.

The notion that I felt it more applicable, to discuss race in relation to those individuals that are non-white is evident in my use of language. Within the interview excerpt below, I use the word *diverse* in response to the peer examples that the participant has chosen to share.

[Sundip] was in the class. Those are really good diverse examples of people, um that
demonstrates your understanding of masculinities. Like anything in the way they participated in class, or the way they didn’t participate in class, or attendance, or that makes you understand masculinities. (SL, Initial, Lines 269-272)

In declaring ‘good diverse examples of people’, I am reading in racial difference. The participant suggested a white boy and an Indian boy, and I labeled difference. The ‘um’ following my use of this term demonstrates awareness, shame, surrounding my speech and assumptions embedded in my use of this term. I am certain I would not have declared diversity, had the participant suggested two white boys. As a result, I am reading certain bodies, those that are ‘non-white’, as raced, and therefore constructing the Other.

This concept of reading race, or writing race on the body, is prevalent in my conversations with Bart. I remained curious about Bart’s understandings of culture, and often read many of his statements through this lens. As result there are a multitude of references to culture within his interviews. He consistently used the term my culture and distinguishes his culture from Western culture in his talk:

Well as I said, I explained before in my first interview, how masculinity is defined in my culture, how we are supposed to lead the family, make all of the important decisions, and that’s how we kind of define masculinities, to have control. Where I think in like this Western culture here it’s more about like having, being physically strong, personally, that’s what I think.

However in reading difference, I may have actually created the illusion of its existence. Within his interview, I made the topic safe, even legitimate, but at the expense of further entrenching racial constructions and the concept of Other.

Beyond reading certain bodies as raced, my talk also privileged whiteness. One of my observations in teaching is that white males often take up a lot of space, talk time, in the classroom. As a result of these observations, there is a tendency in my questioning to suggest
white male students as examples to be taken up for discussion. This is glaringly apparent in my interview with SL:

   ok, Can you tell me about another situation from Social Studies 11 class, even just watching the way that people were, like you had [white male] in your class, and [white male] in the class, and [white male] was in the class. (SL, Initial, Lines 265-267)

However, I not only led participants to my thinking in this matter, but in consistently suggesting white male student examples within my questions I granted them more territory.

Throughout the interviews, the talk between the participants and myself also further reified norms of sexuality. My questions about sexuality, directed the participants toward a discussion of Othered sexuality as it positioned the term in relation to LGBTQ identities. The privileging of particular identities, and the subordination of others, is often achieved through ‘everyday’ talk, even when identity is not the topic of conversation. Kitzinger (2005) asserts that privileging is often achieved through mundane conversations. The topic does not need to be sexuality for heteronormative regimes to be reified. Much like masculinities and whiteness should be explored in relation to privilege, so should the regulation and privilege of heterosexuality. Cameron and Kulick (2003, as cited in Kitzinger, 2005) highlight the void in research surrounding dominant groups, noting: “One of the privileges enjoyed by dominant groups in general is that their identities and modes of behaviour are rarely scrutinized in the same way as the identities and behaviours of subordinated groups” (p. 222). A key way in which normative sexuality is privileged and reproduced is through talk.

Although I challenged the participants’ understanding of the term gender, and the assumption that discussions of gender were automatically discussions about the role of women, I failed to do the same when sexuality was narrowly read. On the contrary, my introduction of the
term often led students to discussions of LGBTQ identities. Normative regimes were regulated through the use of the term sexuality, through the personal relationships that I deemed safe for discussion, and through the participant’s discomfort, or statements surrounding discomfort, related to discussions of sexuality.

As the interviewer, I also relied on the idea of sexuality as Other, and in some cases presented gay masculinities outside of the parameters of masculinities, as a result of the wording of my questions. Within my interview with MX I steer him to placing LGBTQ identities outside of masculinities:

Um, are there any presentations of masculinities in the media, like somebody in the last interview brought up, like um, like Jack Bauer, or you can go to anything like, Will and Grace, or you can go, um House . . . do any of those contradict your personal feelings of what masculinity is? (Initial, Lines 148-151)

Although Will and Grace was an example used in an earlier interview as a form of media that challenged stereotypical notions of masculinities, my placement of it within a question intended to complicate notions of masculinities further entrenched the Other. As an interviewer, I perpetuated a binaried understanding of sexuality through my presentation of questions.

Throughout the interviews, participant understandings of norm and Other in relation to sexuality were left in tact. Within a discussion of nature and nurture in relation to gender, John Malkovich offers the example of friend who had ‘come out of the closet’ to explain how his understandings of nature and nurture had been challenged:

SM: Is there a person that you think has really shaken your understanding of nature/nurture?
JM: Ya, mmm, a friend of mine, close friend
SM: Can you tell me something about the close friend?
JM: Mmm, he recently came out of the closet, so
SM: Oh, ok. And so, how do you, how do you think that relates to nature/nurture?
JM: I don’t know, like I always knew, but like it’s the way that it affected other people that kind of changed my view.
SM: How, how did other people react?
JM: hm?
SM: How did other people react?
JM: Negatively. (JM, Initial, Lines 344-355)

In retrospect, I wish that I had pushed further on this question, as his answer could suggest that being gay somehow goes against nature or nurture. If masculinities are understood through Butler (1990), as a forcible repetition, then a gay male could be seen as someone who resists, through negotiation, those forces of hegemonic masculinity. In other words, gay males resist the dominant discourse of gender, which creates binaried opposites that are supposed to be attracted to one another. However, I assert that the participant was not speaking to nurture, instead he was suggesting that LGBTQ identities go against his own understandings of nature. Beyond that, I missed the opportunity to explore why he thinks that his peer group reacted negatively. The comfort and confidence that I felt in questioning students about their understandings of gender were not paralleled in discussions of sexuality. I believe that this further entrenched LGBTQ identities as Other, as the topic was positioned as untouchable.
CONCLUSION

When simply asked to define gender, or masculinities specifically, male youth understandings of masculinities are often entrenched in hegemonic language. Talk often reified binaried understanding of gender, as participants used the term gender to speak of sex differences between male and female. The common terms associated with masculinities do not parallel the experiences and observations of these youth. Yet, many of the participants in my study voiced rhetoric that further entrenched dominant ideals of masculinities and did not represent or benefit their own identities. There remains a significant gap between the rote definitions of masculinities that many males speak of, and their interactions with masculinities. Beyond the 'supposed to be' elements of masculinities that a lot of the participants repeated in their talk, were narratives, peer and media examples that produced a very different vision of masculinities. Media provided a venue outside of everyday talk for male youth to verbalize more complex understandings of masculinities. Through media, the participants in this study, spoke of norms of masculinities that did not align with hegemonic representations of masculinity, but were more relevant in their context. Also media revealed male understandings of multiple versions of masculinities.

Within these multiple versions, two dominant themes occurred in student representations of masculinities, that of race and sexuality. Often male participant understanding of the intersection of race and masculinities, were framed within the language of culture. The overt topic of was often avoided. However, discussions of the intersection of race and masculinities produced essentialist representations that spoke to singular race based masculinity, like Vietnamese masculinity. Similarly discussions of sexuality and masculinities generated similarly problematic notions of a gay masculinity. Also, like the definitions of masculinities
themselves, talk surrounding sexuality reified dominant understandings and perpetuated an us
verses them notion of sexuality. This is evident in the common reading of sexuality, as that of
Other. While there were moments of disruption within this heteronormative talk, like the
presentation of gay identity as a version of masculinity, student discussions of sexuality often
falsely glorified the Western understandings of sexuality and failed to further challenge their
own understandings. As in the discussions of masculinities, race and sexuality, participants often
congratulated Canada for its acceptance surrounding LGBTQ identities, and further entrenched
the notion of the ‘cultural’ Other in their presentations of South Asian beliefs surrounding
sexuality. However, a South Asian participant’s explanation of male interaction in India,
shattered these common perceptions of Western tolerance. Instead, his narrative revealed the
opportunity available in exploring versions of masculinities within multiple cultures as a way of
demonstrating how masculinities is a social construct. His statements surrounding male intimacy
within his understanding of Indian culture, also demonstrates how conversations of masculinities
and sexuality are inseparable.

As student readings of the term gender and sexuality, as that of woman or LGBTQ, are
significant, so is their reading of my body in relation to anti-oppressive curriculum. Throughout
the interviews a major theme that developed was student readings of terms in relation to my
gender identity. This intersection often produced assumptions about a feminist agenda. Further,
it limited our conversations about gender and social constructions, as the term was only read in
relation to women. Within the interviews, it became evident that the multiple conversations that I
had shared with my classes about gender and masculinities had not resonated or impacted the
participants view of gender. The intersection of my identity and the intended curriculum had
produced readings of the term partial to women, and as a result my teaching was only understood
within this framework. This revelation reveals the significance of discussions about teacher identity and the reading of bodies before conversations of gender and social construction can prove productive.

Multiple methodological considerations surfaced throughout these conversations of masculinities, race, sexuality and curriculum. First, as the choice of interview is obviously dependent on everyday talk, my own talk motivated students to speak in gender binaries. Further, I often read certain bodies as raced, and therefore more often expected or prompted conversations of race and culture with non-white participants. Finally, the talk generated in the interviews failed to challenge heteronormative ideals. Instead, many of the topics that I deemed safe, or my presentation of the term sexuality as a platform for discussions of LGBTQ identities, further entrenched heteronormative ideals.

6.1 Implications for the Classroom

As many of the theorists who have informed my theoretical framework speak to a messiness in the classroom that does not prescribe a 'how to approach' to teaching, but instead considers the individuals and relationships in the classroom as an important factor in determining response, I am immediately tentative in writing this section. I hesitate to suggest that this research has produced answers for resistance to anti-oppressive pedagogy. Further, I do not want to re-produce essentialist understandings of a singular masculinity, by making claims about teaching boys. However, this research has informed my own practice, and will influence changes in my pedagogical approach. There were six major themes that emerged that will alter my practice: the assumptions inherent in language, the reading of language and curriculum through the teacher's identity, the inseparability of discussions of gender and heteronormativity, the relevance of discussions of culture, the introduction of media as a discourse, and the
productivity of resistance.

6.1.1 Learning language

Much of the theory on social constructions has pushed me to look at gender, heteronormativity and race in a different way within my own classroom. Although I have re-considered my pedagogy in relation to these theoretical influences, these considerations have not always translated to the students. I am not suggesting that we can ever prescribe what students obtain from our teaching; however, anti-oppressive pedagogy needs to begin with conversations surrounding the common sense ideas of identity and language that we carry into the classroom. Otherwise, my starting point in anti-oppressive pedagogy with a focus on gender, is misunderstood and misinterpreted as a result of the students reading of the term gender.

Language is a site for productive reflections about identity. As students hear words such as gender, race and sexuality as Other, it is important to take up this discourse in the classroom in order to challenge the way that normative discourse regulates identities and maintains privilege.

Discussions of language, of contradictions between rote definitions and the understanding of the self are a crucial place to begin. For example, as a result of the contradictions that were present between student understandings of the term masculinity and their own narratives, exposing such contradictions can produce discussion that challenges the way that certain understandings of gender become common sense in society. Within these spaces of contradiction, students can begin to question how their ideas about gender were formed, through what vehicles these ideas were formed, how their own talk perpetuates these understandings, how it affects the construction of their own identity and their construction of others, and who benefits from the preservation of these ideals. In this sense, we can begin to dismantle the notion that words are simply spoken and heard, but instead carry with them identities and historical
weight.

As a result of this research, I will approach discussions of gender within the anti-oppressive framework as gender literacy. First, considering the way the term itself is read. Then using this as a starting place to consider how people are read through these words, and how their words are read through their identities.

### 6.1.2 Pedagog(me)

In relation to gender literacy, I will consider with the students the way the term gender is read through my own identity, and the assumptions, expectations and suspicions that are attached as a result. Through the interviews, it became clear that the students in my class are not hearing, what I think that I am saying. More accurately, much of what they are hearing more deeply entrenches traditional notions of gender, and reifies the essentialist representation of ‘the female’. Within these spaces between what it spoken, and what is heard, is space and potential for troubling gender, and for troubling the assumption of an agenda with particular pedagogies, while others remain positioned as neutral. Overt discussions about student readings of my own identity and motivations need to be carried out alongside these common sense discussions. An integral element of gender literacy is the reading of bodies. If not, often the reading of the instructor’s body, through gender, race, sexuality, or ability, can hinder the productive possibilities of anti-oppressive pedagogy.

### 6.1.3 Talk it ‘out’

The subtle, mundane ways that heteronormativity is achieved in talk, and the more overt choices made surrounding the topics that are deemed acceptable expose the way that pedagogical choices surrounding discussions of sexuality can construct LGBTQ identities as Other. Within my understanding, gender discussions have become commonplace in many classrooms, yet
heteronormativity is not approached equally.

Discussions of sexuality are entrenched in conversations around the construction of masculinities and femininities and should not be dealt with separately within the classroom; doing so, ignores the inter-dependence of the construction of gender and sexuality. Connecting these constructions will help students and teachers recognize heteronormativity within the framework of social constructions, and recognize the prevalence of heteronormative practices.

6.1.4 Get off that high horse

Culture provides a framework for revealing the way that gender ideals are constructed differently within different contexts. While I found that many of the male participants claimed to be naturists in relation to gender, I also found that their use of narrative recognized nurture. Considering this contradiction, I think that discussions of cultural difference can be productive starting places for revealing the way that gender norms are constructed and perpetuated in societies. Using culture as a lens, students can explore the different gender ideals within various cultures, such as Bart’s discussion of masculinity and sexuality within his understanding of Indian culture. Within this frame there is the danger of simplifying culture into essentialist representations, such as Chinese masculinity or Indian masculinity. However, the class can use culture as a starting place for considering the role of nurture and social construction, and then work backwards to consider the way that this discussion perpetuates essentialist understandings of cultures.

Also, it is essential to disrupt the way that students perceive Western culture as progressive. Within my conversations with the participants, it was suggested that Western culture is more open-minded in its acceptance and understanding of LGBTQ identities, yet a discussion of multiple cultures would challenge this perception. This is often the case in relation
to race as well, as students who have been indoctrinated by the multi-cultural myth prevalent in
the Canadian education system, often assert that racism is no longer an issue in Canada. These
narratives need to be challenged, and can only be done when students examine where these ideas
are constructed, perpetuated and solidified in our society. For example, within the context of the
research site, conversations surrounding the construction of a Vietnamese masculinity reveals the
way that assumptions can produce beings, or how certain bodies are only understood in relation
to these constructs regardless of their behaviours.

6.1.5 Talk(in) media

Of extraordinary pedagogical significance within this research is the discussion of
language, media and gender. As participants within the interviews were often chained to
hegemonic descriptors of masculinity, this revealed the limitations of using everyday discourse
to express participant understandings of masculinities and themselves. While the inability to find
words that express unique understandings of masculinities limits the potential of an interview-
based study to complicate hegemonic understandings of masculinities, interview also became the
venue to highlight these spaces in unintelligibility and the lack of accessible language. It is
within these spaces that I assert there is possibility for complicating hegemonic masculinity. In
order to communicate their understandings, participants accessed the discourse of media; I
believe that media can become a talking point for exploring multiple masculinities. Michael
Cera's commonly played character represents a new normative ideal of masculinities within the
youth context that contrasts many elements of the hegemonic male ideal. Within the classroom,
discussions surrounding the formation of changing norms in media can generate more complex
deliberations of social construction. Also, teachers and students can begin to consider the way
that multiple versions of masculinities actually influence hegemonic masculinity.
6.1.6 Resisting resistance

Finally, my discussions with former students revealed that behaviour that I often labelled resistant was often no more than an attempt to get a laugh or the attention of their classmates, not an intentional challenge to ‘feminist’ teaching. Recognizing that there are multiple motivations for ‘resistance’, I also acknowledge my own propensity to be defensive and read certain behaviours as resistant. On a personal level, acknowledging this will challenge me to consider the identities and forms of communication that I continue to privilege within my classroom. Heeding the warnings of Boler (1999), my propensity to label certain students resistant may be a consequence of my privileging of assertive, vocal students at the expense of those who choose to participate and resist in silence. Further, I posit that the motivations behind vocal acts of resistance are irrelevant; it is not about the person who speaks, rather about what is spoken and how those words can form, harm, and shame regardless of the intentions of the speaker.

Using a Foucauldian understanding, resistance is always present and unavoidable and cannot therefore be overcome. In attempting to isolate and eliminate unacceptable forms of resistance you are deciding what forms of communication and emotion are acceptable. I am unwilling to encourage acts of resistance that challenge dominance while censoring those that support dominance. Instead of shutting down the discourse, teachers need to create an environment of disruption within their classroom, so that challenging binaries, societal norms and ways of knowing are constant within their pedagogy. Teachers can use acts of student resistance to disrupt. Further, I believe that students, not just teachers, should be making decisions surrounding what is acceptable in the classroom. Having such a conversation, will allow students to disrupt the teacher/student binary, as well as trouble the impact of speech. One cannot make the distinction between resistance that upholds hegemony and resistance that
challenges hegemony when you shut down the conversation. If this distinction is somehow predetermined, we are once again faced with a single dominant viewpoint. Therefore, the normalizing viewpoints that currently exist would simply be replaced with new normalizing ideals. I recognize that some people may claim that there are certain resistant behaviors that should simply not be allowed in the classroom. However, if teaching within an anti-oppressive environment involves recognizing and disrupting, for example, gender bias, who decides what constitutes an offense? Although, I personally find it unacceptable that a student would challenge a teacher’s bias simply because she is trying to decenter gender, as is seen by Jennifer Gore (1992), I feel that this act of resistance is useable. These comments, and far worse, are spoken in society. If we simply ban such speech, we are creating a false environment in our classroom. Further, by recognizing the existence of such comments, we are provided with the opportunity to disrupt. If not in the classroom, then where? At least the classroom environment allows students to see alternate viewpoints. Curriculum is not just evident in the classroom. Students often learn more within the hidden curriculum of the halls, locker rooms and cafeteria. Approaching such speech in the classroom may be the only place in the school that such speech is challenged. Banning such speech dismisses an opportunity for a safe, moderated discussion. Further, it upholds the dominance of speech, as banning such speech acts, does not regulate student thought. Resistance goes far beyond such comments, and lives inside student thinking. What the student manifests verbally is coming from somewhere in their head.

6.2 Implications for research

The methodological interludes within this research provide further insight into Best (2003) and Owens (2006) warnings about the method of interviewing. Beyond Best’s conversation of the difficult of discussing race, I have contributed to the discussion of reading
particular bodies as raced and therefore producing difference, and to the false sense of righteousness that is associated with speaking through the term culture. In addition to race, these interviews contributed to discussions of heteronormativity, and revealed the way that topic choice, word choice and avoidance can reify norms of sexuality. Finally, the interviews only complicated normative ideals when we actually overtly talked about our talk.

6.3 Limitations

Within an interview, student responses are restricted to everyday talk, which does not reveal the contradictions and multiple understandings of masculinities. Language is a limited venue of expression that often mimics normative discourse. Students, within interview, are anchored to particular terms associated with masculinities. The inability to find words that express their unique understandings of masculinities limit the potential of an interview based study to complicate hegemonic understandings of masculinities. Often to define masculinities, or oneself, one can only do so by stating the relationship to normative masculine discourse.

6.4 Future directions

The contradiction between talk and performance is a limit of my study, and an opportunity for future research. Within my doctoral research, I would like to explore performances of masculinities within the classroom. I would like to employ Butler’s theories of performativity within an observation based study of the classroom context in order to further complicate the hegemonic masculine ideal. Using observation, the actions of the students will not be bound by normative language. Within my study, I would like to explore the performance of resistance and its relationship to gender constructs. My own research will provide a further understanding of the relationship between gender constructions and the performativity of
resistance. As a result, practitioners may find a way to use such acts of resistance to help reveal the ever-presence of discourse in shaping identities.

Additionally, there are multiple possibilities inherent in the discourse of media. I assert that there is very little research that speaks to the discussion of student resistance, masculinities and media as a discourse of disruption. While Edley and Wetherell’s (1997) demonstrate the affect of the lack of everyday discourse and understandings of masculinities are related, I posit that more work needs to be done in this area. I further assert that media can become the vehicle for complicating hegemonic representations of masculinities and providing new discourse for representing student understandings of the multiplicity of masculinities.
7 REFERENCES


*Understanding masculinities: Social relations and cultural arenas* (pp. 50-60).

Buckingham: Open University Press.


CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL - FULL BOARD

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The application for ethical review and the document(s) listed above have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board and signed electronically by one of the following:

Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair