

# **HAVING THEIR SAY**

**Some Young Men's Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man**

**BY**

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## Abstract

Western societies are increasingly becoming aware of the many problems facing boys and men. In Australia these problems include one of the highest youth suicide rates in the world, a high divorce rate, with most divorces being instigated by women, the breakdown of the family, and conflicting messages about what it is to be 'a man'. This study examines and describes how a group of 15-17 year old young men, who attend a private single sex school in Canberra, describe their beliefs and attitudes about becoming adult men. Participants were asked to respond to questions posed in a survey designed specifically for this research. These questions looked at relationships, gender roles, family, fatherhood, work and leisure and whether impending manhood appeared confusing. The context in which participants are situated is one of cultural and social flux; it was the current discourse and debate in Australia about how to be a man, men's issues, and the perception of men in crisis, which gave this study its broad contextual frame.

Contrary to the conventional wisdom about boys/young men who attend elite private schools, the participants in this study emerged as egalitarian and flexible in their attitudes with regard to relationships, gender roles, parenting and work. This study therefore in part refutes the stereotypes, which surround students at private boys' schools, including those that purport that these students will hold predominantly hegemonic, traditional views about masculinity and their role as men.

This thesis presents the voices of some three hundred young men, adding to an area of research, which is contested and vigorous in its development. By exploring the beliefs and attitudes of a group of Australians who are on the brink of manhood tentative insights have been offered, and, I believe, some illumination gained. The dilemmas posed for meaningful adulthood for young men in Australia are very real. We need to listen to what young men have to say.

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## Chapter 1:

## Introduction

### Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and provides a background to the motivation and aims, which underpin it. The last decade has seen relentless social, cultural, economic and technological change radically redefine the society in which we live. The existing categories by which we define ourselves and our way of life, family, work, our roles as men and women, have all been challenged. A major definition which has been fundamentally contested concerns the question of how to be a man, and this issue has spawned a vast body of literature (see August 1994, Buchbinder 1994, 1995, Edgar 1997, 1998, Mackay 1995). Research studies (see Connell 1995), popular literature (see Biddulph 1994, 1997) and the media have explored men's issues and masculinity with great intensity and from many different stances. This stream of research, popular writing and press attention on boys' and men's issues is reverberating in Australian society, tilting at established norms and values, and creating questions rather than answers.

### Contextual overview

Social analysts, such as Eckersley (1995, 1996, 1997) and Mackay (1993, 1995, 1997), describe the relentless pace of change in our society and how it impacts on people in general, but on youth in particular, creating a vacuum and instilling a pervading lack of certainty. The young men in this study are receiving information from all angles about what it means to be a man in the late 1990s and in the new millenium; technology and the mass media ensure this. Social changes brought about by feminism and affirmative action have further confounded the question of what it means to be a man. Therefore the ways in which boys/men are positioned by a historically given set of discourses is looked at within the context of the present state of flux. It is within this context that

the research presented in this thesis fits. Further illustration is contained in the literature review in chapters 2 and 3.

### **Research intentions**

This thesis examines the attitudes held by 15-17 year old young men at a private single sex school about what it means to be a man. Its central aim is to be descriptive. Using data from an extensive survey, the analysis presents the beliefs and attitudes expressed by participants about their future masculine identities. How did participants describe their desired future relationships, the importance to them of work, of family, what image of manhood did they evoke? How did the participants interpret what Buchbinder (1994) calls '...the baffling and often contradictory requirements made of them by the current cultural construction of masculinity...' (p. ix). These are the primary questions, which this study addresses and explores.

Students at private single sex boys schools are often regarded as automatically belonging to a hegemonic, chauvinistic and overtly macho model of manhood (Connell 1994, 1995, Kay 1994, Hulse 1997). In looking at how participants described impending manhood and their future roles, the current study was able in part to determine whether this attitude is predominant in the views expressed by the students. Given that private single sex boys schools are regarded as producing men who hold power in our society, this study sought to find out from the participants their attitudes towards egalitarianism in relationships and at work. By exploring the perceptions of these young men the study hoped also to gain some clarification into the general alienation and apparent lack of direction and hope expressed by Australian youth (Eckersley 1995, 1996, 1997 and Mackay 1993, 1995, 1997). The findings are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.



## Background

The underlying acknowledgment in this study is that social institutions, which include the family, peers and school, and social agencies, including the media, have influenced the understanding and self concept of the participants. People define themselves within the context of these institutions and social agencies. The school environment of the young men taking part in the survey was considered in some depth and is discussed in Chapter 4. Since this study attempted to uncover the fundamental features of masculine construction within the lives of the 15-17 old young men who were its participants, placing these students at the centre of the research was an imperative. Their perception, their voice, about how they envisage their life as men, is what is heard. Masculinity is seen as socially constructed, historically specific, and mediated by social class, race and ethnicity. Whether participants place the ethos of the institution in which they are being educated as an influence on their personal identity and construction of masculinity is looked at in the research findings.

Connell (1994, 1995) and others have focussed particularly on the construction of masculinity within educational settings. This study in part challenges the accepted wisdom that this type of school produces predominantly hegemonic masculinities (Connell 1994, 1995, Davies 1996, Kenway 1987) and puts forward the view that the philosophy and milieu of this type of school allows multiple masculinities to be accepted (Kay 1994, Hulse 1997). It is within this institution that the participants of the survey are based, it is therefore the setting for the survey but not the primary subject of the study. As such, the study does not seek to include a comprehensive review of the literature on gender and schooling. For a scholarly account of this important area in relation to boys and schooling see Lingard and Douglas (1999) and Gilbert and Gilbert (1998).

### Researcher's personal stance

The main aim of this study has been to listen and give voice to a group variously seen as minors with few rights (children), or privileged and therefore not relevant (private school students). A democratic society cannot afford to be dismissive of views held by any given group of young men, neither can we presume to know what this group of young men is thinking. We can instead listen to what they have to tell us. History is continually rewritten to fit current psychological and political ideologies; how do the participants in this survey group contribute towards the present rewriting of what it is to be a man today?

Since this researcher does not believe that the social world can be objectively studied, I acknowledge that my decision of what to study, the literature read and the data interpretations are based upon human assumptions and biases. The influence of the humanities, counselling, ethics, feminism and, indeed, civil rights have contributed to this view.

Imperative to my counselling integrity and personal stance was the ability to stay congruent with the belief that listening to, and presenting, what the participants had to say was a necessity. This was therefore the ethical concern for me during this research, the curiosity to hear what they had to say gave me the impetus. The constraints imposed on this study by the headmaster (the title headmaster rather than principal is used in private single sex schools) of the school in which the survey took place, and the University Ethics Committee, established boundaries within which I had to work. No personal intervention was permitted; a written survey method was encouraged and became the preferred choice of accessing the attitudes and perceptions of the participants. Minimal statistical manipulation was imposed on the data, averages and percentages being the method used, with extensive quotation from the participants written work illuminating the findings.

Given the absence of detailed understanding of this group of young men, this study helps to fill a significant gap. The broad aim of this study is therefore to add to the debate and literature about the changing nature of masculinity by asking young men on the threshold of adulthood how they perceive their future as men. Contained within this aim is the wish to contribute to the counselling knowledge of men's issues and to learn whether these young men do, or do not, share the role confusion and alienation generally perceived as endemic to our culture. The subtext has been to clarify how I, as a woman, mother of two adolescent sons and a counsellor, could better understand the issues and choices facing boys and men today.

### Thesis structure

In this chapter the context and outline for the present study was detailed. The subsequent chapters of the thesis are structured as follows. Chapter 2 contains the literature review, which begins by looking at the cultural climate that surrounds the young men in this study. This is followed by some historical background on perceptions of masculinity and how boys become men. The scope of the current debate about masculinity is then commented upon, including the impact this had on the present study. A wide range of perspectives on the nature of masculinity is outlined, followed by a critical discussion of the work of some prominent Australian theorists. Chapter 3 details studies that have influenced or been useful to the current research. These include studies of male students situated in schools, studies looking at young men in various life/work situations and studies presenting adult men's views and issues.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology chosen for this study. The two poles of quantitative and qualitative methodology are discussed and the rationale for making this a mainly qualitative study explained. In brief, the argument describes qualitative research as stressing meanings in context

(Anderson & Poole 1998, p.26). The challenge of adopting a survey method instead of interviews and focus groups is discussed. The school setting in which the survey was carried out is described and an outline of the school philosophy given. This is followed by an analysis of the dialogue between the researcher and the school and how the survey was implemented. Chapter 5 presents the data, following the format of the survey sections, and Chapter 6 discusses the findings concluding with some reflections on these. The implications and limitations of the findings are outlined and suggestions for further research are also given.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The literature review aims to frame the research question, which asks the participants for their understanding of what it means to be a man. This chapter begins by looking at the cultural climate that surrounds the young men in this study followed by some historical background on perceptions and theories of masculinity and how boys become men. The enormous output of popular literature is commented upon. The chapter concludes by looking at contemporary thinking which recognises the interaction between biological factors, psychological factors and social and cultural factors.

### **Analysis of the current social/cultural environment**

A brief social commentary aims to contextualise the current 'problem saturated' climate which surrounds the issue of emerging adult masculinities.

When reviewing the burgeoning literature on masculinity, and the near panic the volume instilled in me, I found it useful to be reflexive. If I was experiencing information overload about the question of what it is to be a man in Australian society at present, what of the young men participating in my study? Would they not also be receiving information from all angles about what it is to be a man in the late 1990s and the new millenium, that is contradictory and confusing? Never before has a teenage generation been exposed to such information overload via the mass media and technology, as well as dealing with the more traditional areas of influence such as family, peers, and school, confusing enough in themselves (Eckersley 1995, 1996, 1997 and Lingard and Douglas 1999). Confounding the question further are the social changes brought about by feminism.

The problems that face young men in Australia have been identified and made visible in recent years and from many angles. Debated at personal, social, educational and political levels, the issues of how a man should be are both descriptive and prescriptive. Macho sports heroes and soap and film stars are glorified and reported on by the media (see Buchbinder 1994, Lingard and Douglas 1999, and Gilbert and Gilbert 1998). Radically different is the message from the men's movement, which encourages men to be sensitive and family oriented (see Biddulph 1994, 1997). The age group to which the participants in this study belong also hears, perhaps daily, that girls are higher achievers at school and university entrance exams, and that boys are killing themselves in far greater numbers than girls through suicide and risk-taking behaviour (see Browne and Fletcher 1995). Fletcher (1995) comments: 'Boys excel, not just at suicides, but at drowning, low literacy, drug offences, serious assaults, expulsions from school, alcohol abuse, reading difficulties, work injuries, attention deficit disorder and head injuries' (p. 208).

Life in Australia, sometimes still lauded as being the 'lucky country', has the third highest suicide rate in the world for young men, and youth suicide prevention strategies have become policy at state and federal level (Keys Young Report, 1997, National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, 1998). Hassan (1995) suggests that over and above the fact that males use more lethal means to commit suicide and therefore don't survive as often as women, male suicide rates may have risen in the last 20 years because of men's loss of status in relation to women's gains (p. 45). Equity policies for schools now look at boys' needs as well as girls' (Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools 1997). Other issues frequently discussed in the media which could potentially undermine young men's confidence in regard to personal relationships are not only the divorce statistics, more than one in three marriages end in divorce (Department of Family and Community Services, Fact Sheet No.1, 1999), but the fact that two thirds of these divorces are instigated by women

(Australian Institute of Family Studies, Working Paper 20, Towards understanding the reasons for divorce, June 1999). Over ninety percent of domestic violence is perpetrated by men (Australian Family Profiles, Australian Institute of Family Studies 1997), a figure frequently and publicly debated, a counselling issue for this researcher but also, I would argue, a negative image of being a man which could impact on the participants in this study and how they formulate their masculinity.

Analysts of the construction of masculinity such as Connell (1994, 1995), Buchbinder (1994, 1995), Davies (1996) and Mclean (1995) have done much to illuminate this debate and their work is looked at in some detail later in this chapter. Researchers in many fields, including social analysis, are commenting on the unparalleled turmoil that confronts the youth of today. Both Eckersley (1997) and Mackay (1993, 1999) describe in their research the onslaught of unprecedented change, technological, social and global on society in general and youth in particular. They argue that never before has change been so rapid, and society had to redefine itself so radically. Eckersley (1997) looks at the outcome: 'Surveys of youth attitudes suggest that many young people are mistrustful, cynical and fatalistic; wary of commitment; outwardly confident but inwardly insecure and alienated and disconnected from society' (p.424). Mackay (1993) describes our society as living on the edge, as having a 'last straw syndrome' (p.11). He also observes that the society in which we live is a reflection of 'the increasing complexity of our lives and our identities' (1997, p.194) and that: 'One of the consequences of relentless social, cultural, economic and technological change, therefore, is that, in addition to the anxiety it provokes in many people, it challenges existing 'categories' we use for defining and interpreting our way of life' (1997, p.181). The question of what it is to be a man in our society is certainly complex and one of the 'categories' that is challenged. We need to know more about this area and the current study aims to add to this knowledge.

Although I agree with both Eckersley (1997) and Mackay (1993, 1999) in their commentary on society, it is interesting to reflect on comments made at the turn of the twentieth century by scientists such as Emile Durkheim (*Suicide: A study in sociology*, translated into English from the original French (1897) in 1952) who looked at the big picture in an attempt to understand the youth of the time. Richard Eckersley in some personal correspondence enclosed a page of one of his unpublished papers *Shifting paradigms: modern western culture and human well-being* (1993), where he describes similarities between his position now to that of Durkheim's in 1897. He quotes from Durkheim's sociological study *Suicide: A study in sociology*, which links suicide to a failure by society to integrate and regulate the individual, and argues that: 'The rising tide of suicide originates in a pathological state just now accompanying the march of civilisation' (no page numbers given for quotes from Durkheim). Durkheim linked suicide and what he called an 'alarming poverty of morality' to 'a profound change in our social structure'. He talked of the erosion of all the established forms of organisation, particularly religion and the family thus weakening the processes of socialisation and allowing 'too many persons to escape too completely from (society's) influence'. Could he not be describing our present society? Eckersley points out that clearly Durkheim is linking the increase in suicide to profound change. In Australia profound change is taking place through not only the speed of developing and changing technology transferring information and mass media messages to adolescents, but also the way in which feminism has radically changed the status quo (see Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998). The concept of family, always societies' major socialising agency, has changed to include many different configurations and value systems. The economic climate at present gives us unemployment as a major stress in many peoples lives, contrasted with the stress experienced by senior male managers of having to work in a system which demands excessively long hours, leaving little or no room for family relationships (see Edgar, 1998 and Russell, 1998). This research aims to find out more about



the impact of the current work ethos on families and young men. For middle class students it is most likely to have been the long hours of work their fathers have felt it necessary to put in, that will have influenced their beliefs and attitudes about the desired role work will play in their lives.

This overview of the social milieu, which surrounds the participants in the present study, highlights the relentless pace of change and lack of stability in society at large. The traditional certainties that helped to shape the identities of young men have been eroded. These included a stable, often extended, family network, less geographic mobility, the influence of the church, and accepted gender roles. Replacing these traditional certainties are a frantic pace of life, often little contact with parents who are both busy working, and frequent geographic mobility, all coupled with ever changing technological in-puts (Eckersley 1995, 1996, 1997, Edgar 1998 and Mackay 1993, 1995, 1997, West 1996). It is one of the aims of this research to see how the participants in this study fit with the scenario explored above.

#### Some historical perspectives on the formation of masculinity

Society has always constructed boys into men and throughout history, and in diverse cultures, adolescence has been seen as a time of passage often marked by ritual and celebration (Schoenberg, 1993). Adolescent boys in Western cultures are often perceived as going through a time of turbulence as they negotiate the transition into manhood. There are many theories of adolescent development. A look at Hall's (1904) benchmark work on adolescence serves to illustrate that societal angst for youth is not new. In no sense does this imply that as a society Australia should not put at the forefront of its social and political agenda ways of helping its youth see a future, and that we as a society should be striving to understand what adolescent young men are grappling with.

Hall in his preface wrote:

‘Never has youth been exposed to such dangers of both perversion and arrest as in our land and day. Increasing urban life with its temptations, prematurities, sedentary occupations, and passive stimuli just when an active, objective life is most needed, early emancipation and a lessening sense for both duty and discipline, the haste to know and do all befitting man's estate before its time, the mad rush for sudden wealth and the reckless fashions set by its gilded youth...’ (p.xv).

Adolescence then is sometimes characterised as a period of turmoil and stress but also as a time of social learning and identity formation. Erikson (1968, 1985) proposed a psychosocial stage theory. He felt that the social problems met during development were more important than the biological ones proposed by Freud. It is how the child deals with the social problems encountered with an ever wider range of relationships as he grows up, which determines how adequate or well balanced a person he becomes. Adolescents are at stage five in Erikson's eight-part theory. The psychosocial crises they encounter is termed ‘Identity and repudiation versus identity diffusion’. The significant others during this stage are peer groups and different models of leadership. The psychosocial modalities (dilemmas) are to be oneself or not to be, the desirable outcome is devotion and fidelity. Erikson's notion of adolescence as a time of identity formation offers a psychological explanation for the need to belong to a peer group and the influence of this. Erikson also described adolescence as a time when *individuation* occurs. An understanding of the viewpoint of others begins, adolescents are less self-centred than they were, and they are able to plan and look ahead. To look ahead is what this study asks of the participants, to conceptualise and think about their future as men.

Traditionally, and in diverse patriarchal cultures, it is men who have challenged boys to become men, and men who have set the code of behaviour for each other to follow in order to gain a sense of belonging (West 1996a, McLean 1996, Schoenberg 1993). Now women are also challenging boys to become men, the men they want them to be (McLean 1996, Segal 1990). Mackay (1999) says that 'In the past 30 years, the thing that has arguably had the most enduring, transforming effect on our culture has been the women's movement' (p. xxxi). How does our society recruit its boys and young men into manhood, what is ahead of them, do they know what is expected of them? In the foreword to *Men's Ways of Being*' (1996, editors McLean, Carey and White) the point is made that 'Only recently, in response to the contemporary feminist movement, have men begun to question what it is to be a man' (p.ix). Buchbinder (1994) adds: 'Masculinity has traditionally been seen as self-evident, natural, universal; above all as unitary and whole, not multiple or divided' (p.1).

Schoenberg (1993) describes how from the last decade of the 19th century to the present day, psychologists have, from their various theoretical stances, recognised that adolescence is an important developmental stage which has to be successfully negotiated for a healthy adult identity to be formed. Included in this identity is self-esteem, an ability to form satisfactory relationships with both sexes and a place in society. Anthropologists have described rites of passage in many primitive societies making a transition from boyhood to manhood clear-cut, unlike the role ambivalence faced by youth today (p.29). Primitive man, our ancestors, lived in a 'survival of the fittest' context, where strength was the most desired quality. Man was the hunter, provider and protector of those weaker than he, women and children. Schoenberg gives an analysis of how 'manliness' and 'masculinity' got their meaning through time:

'The word "manly" and its derivative, "manliness", came to be associated with all the virtues spelled out in the code of the winner. The words "masculine" and "masculinity" described the broader, more generic condition. To be masculine was to be male, being male could be good or it could be bad, for generally it was labelled as one or the other' (p.4).

Having looked at adolescent young men's passage into manhood over time, and the social/cultural situation in which they were placed, some reactions to the current focus on masculinity by major exponents in the field are now detailed.

#### Overview of the current focus on masculinity

Describing research and writing up findings is an inherently difficult task, often assumed and uncommented upon. However, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the difficulty I encountered when faced with the burgeoning literature of both an academic and popular nature, does I feel bear comment. The stream of research, popular writing, and press attention on boys' and men's issues is reverberating in Australian society and impacting on researchers of both academic and popular works and the general public alike (Lingard and Douglas 1999). The job of organising the material into key themes was therefore at times overwhelming. It seems fair to make the comment therefore that a process of integration and assimilation of new ideas about how to be a man must be going on for the young men participating in this study.

It is evident from the amount of research being carried out that an increasing number of researchers and writers are aware of men's issues in general and the struggle men face in regard to their consciousness as gendered subjects in particular. This phenomenon gathered momentum in America and Britain over the last decade and in Australia over perhaps the last five years. August

(1994), author of an annotated bibliography of men's studies, comments on this occurrence in America: 'The most dramatic growth in men's studies can be seen primarily in the torrent of men's books that has been pouring forth from publishers since 1990'(p.xii). He attributes the confidence of publishers to produce these books to the success of Robert Bly's (1990) book *Iron John*, the first, and perhaps the spawning ground for, literature about the men's movement. Key scholars and writers who have illuminated the debate about masculinity for this researcher all testify to a flood of research and opinion in this area. Connell (1995) opens his preface to *Masculinities* by observing how popular the topic of masculinity has become over the last five years and comments: 'Those of us who had been trying for a longer time to call attention to this issue have watched, with some astonishment, as books on masculinity climbed the best-seller lists, television talk shows wrestled with the theme, and conferences, 'men's gatherings', magazine and newspaper articles on masculinity multiplied' (p.ix). He argues that the impressive growth in social science research lends weight to the genre of masculinity studies but warns against a 'sense of false unity in men's lives' (p.ix). He adds that there is a conflict between serious social science research and best selling 'pop' psychology.

Buchbinder (1994) adds: 'In the last few years a number of writers and scholars, as well as the media, have announced that masculinity is in crisis and that men are now less certain of themselves than ever before' (p.1), and: 'The notion of a crisis presupposes that change is occurring in such a way as to cause discomfort and/or anxiety in those caught up in the change' (p.8). West, in a recent review of three books on men, observes that the trickle of literature on men's issues is turning into a stream (*The Weekend Australian*, Feb.14 – 15, 1998).

Tacey (1997) also adds to this observation: 'Men and women reflecting on the nature of masculinity is one of the most popular subjects of recent years, and yet I believe there is still more to be said about this topic' (p.ix). He explores the widening gulf between more academic feminist or politically progressive stances which: '...seek to destabilise patriarchal masculinity', and 'popular' writing which argues for what Tacey describes as a 'new-old' masculinity. The main body of thought here being mythopoetics brought to the fore by Robert Bly (1990) and in Australia, Steve Biddulph (1994). Tacey (1997) argues for these factions to come together so that the often 'chronically pessimistic' and 'spiritually empty' discourses in the academic world, and the often 'escapist', 'reactionary', 'fanciful' and 'fatuous optimism about the inner world' of the popular men's movement can temper each other (p.ix). Tacey (1997) explored this further on ABC television where he talked about pro-feminist gender studies, of there being two sides, an academic and a popular, and said that both sides have their eye on the truth and could learn from each other. He argued that social change regarding masculinity needs unpacking, deconstructing, and that there are conflicting requirements in dry academic research and the popular, more emotive stance, which require tolerance and understanding (*Making Men*, Compass, ABC television 1. 3. 98).

Silverstein in *The Courage to Raise Good Men* (1994) examined the current focus of books and media attention on the masculinity debate and argues that this has come about because of the confusion men must feel given the complexities currently being placed upon them:

'...they are expected to be all that they once were and more... The 'new men' are to continue to be strong, silent types while also being emotionally available. They are to be aggressive and empathetic, tough and gentle, hardheaded and sensitive, John Wayne and Alan Alda...these emotional add-ons have our males in a terrible double bind. Hence the explosion

of books, movies, weekend workshops, and therapies to help men cope with the increasing uncertainty about what a real man is' (p.76).

Silverstein (1994) also writes about the importance of mothers in raising sons, not to counter the current popular focus on the importance of fathers (in Australia Biddulph and West are leaders in this argument) but as a central belief in her practice as a therapist at the forefront of family therapy in America for several decades:

'Despite the illusions that both men and women continue to maintain, men are not 'self-sufficient' or 'self-made'; no man is 'his own man': and men can't simply decide to 'redefine,' 'remake,' or 're-create' themselves. Mothers have a great deal to do with the making of men- and so do fathers, grandparents, siblings, teachers, mentors, and peers, as well as the man himself. All are part of the system, be it the larger system of society, the more intimate one of the family, or the intrapsychic one of the individual. And because all such systems are interactive, while it is true that mothers do much to make men, they are also made by them' (p.232).

The issue of mothering is also put forward by Australian researchers Gilbert and Gilbert (1998). They argue:

'Until mothers make it their business to learn about and understand masculinity, they will sell their sons short. Women need to use their knowledge of gender to work sensitively and emotionally with their sons as they struggle to insert themselves into social and cultural practices; they need to support and encourage their sons to interrogate and explore masculinity and its effects upon their lives; and they need to insist on equality and justice in family work and responsibility' (p.93).

The present study will explore the influence and importance of mothers, and fathers, as envisaged by the participants.

British trends and research on masculinity are commented on by Edley (1997):

‘In recent years it has become increasingly difficult for men to ignore the issue of their gendered status. Gone, it seems, are the days when men sat comfortably as the unmarked sex. Instead the ‘masculine condition’ has been put under the spotlight in a multitude of television and radio programs, newspaper and magazine articles’.

He also discusses the work of Michael Kimmel (1987) a theorist at the forefront of American studies on masculinity. Kimmel points out that the idea of American men being confused about what it means to be a ‘real man’ has become a cultural commonplace evident on television talk shows and in magazine articles: ‘Men, it seems, are in a position where it is increasingly difficult for them to ignore the issue of their gendered status, for they are faced with a growing barrage of advice on how to become better fathers, more sensitive lovers, and more compassionate friends’ (p.4).

The interest in masculinity is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in popular writing. Many of these books are written by academics but aimed at a wide readership. Titles that have appeared recently include: *Altered Mates; Real Men; Men/ Love/ Sex; Fathers and Sons; Fathers, Sons and Lovers; Mothers and Son; Rites of Passage; Raising Boys; Men talk; The Courage to raise good men; Remaking Men; Junk males; Men, mateship, marriage; Secret Men’s Business: manhood the big gig; Stiffed: the betrayal of the modern man; Fathers who dare win; Father Time; The Men’s*



*Room: A thinking man's guide for surviving women of the next millennium.* These are just a small sample which have been prominently reviewed and debated in the press and media. These books are mostly written by, and often about, 'baby boomer' men and women whose children fit into the age group of the participants in this study, and whom one can perhaps assume, are surrounded by, if not issues raised in the books, then attitudes that are influenced or reflected by them.

The opening of the floodgates on this subject has had an enormous impact on how this research has developed. The sheer number of books, articles and research presently available has required a rigorous honing of what has ultimately been included in this research. Australian studies are highlighted but overseas research is also included. Conventional wisdom dictates the use of more advanced or scholarly works, and these were given preference in the selection process. However as argued above, many books aimed at a more general audience have been included to indicate trends which may be influencing young men's attitudes about how they see themselves as men. Popular writers such as Biddulph (1994, 1997), West (1996a), Browne and Fletcher (1995), have done much to open up debate about new ways of being a man, and issues facing boys, and are at the forefront of the overwhelming deluge of popular literature which has poured into the bookshops.

Kenway (1997a) describes and furthers this:

'Dominating the education literature, the press and the in-service and public lecture circuit in Australia, is a men's rights perspective (for example, Biddulph 1995; and certain papers in Browne and Fletcher 1995). According to this perspective, a number of boys' and men's emotional and social problems are connected to the issues of masculinity. Dominant versions of masculinity are seen to lock boys into narrow and restrictive ways of being human which

have negative effects on their health, their relationships and their perceptions of the value of different forms of knowledge and work, and therefore their achievements. Further, certain masculine ways of being are said to limit boys' and men's emotional horizons and to tilt them towards aggression, repression, conflict and violence, and towards damaging forms of competition and control' (p.57).

Kenway contends that this is a valuable line of argument in that it draws our attention to several issues, which surround boys as they learn to be men. However she warns that there are limitations to be aware of 'emanating from some of the prominent figures of the men's' movement in Australia' adding that there appears to be a certain anti-intellectualism in their stance (p. 57-58).

Connell (1995) corroborates this argument:

'There has been some consternation at the claims that have captured media attention. For the most popular books about men are packed with muddled thinking which either ignores or distorts the results of the growing research on the issues. The burst of publicity has brought back obsolete ideas about natural difference and true masculinity' ( p.ix).

McLean (1995,1996) avoids the boys-as-victims-of-feminism line, contrary to some of the men's movement literature, and argues that:

'If we want to understand gender relations, we have to look at the dominant and competing stories that a particular society tells itself about men and women, the meanings and values

that are given to these concepts, and how these meanings are embedded in the network of power-relations within that society' (p.13).

McLean (1996) describes what he calls the 'discovery' and articulation of men's pain as one of the central, motivating forces of the men's movement since the 1970s. He is influenced by recent feminist scholarship, in particular socialist feminism which argues against biological and psychological determinism, holding rather that we are social products, able to change, albeit through hard work and re-storying our lives (p.11).

The viewpoint of academics such as Connell (1995), Kenway (1997) and McLean (1995,1996) is important, not only in highlighting their own stance but in emphasising the debate about masculinity which surrounds the participants of this study. The present study looks at the perception participants have about their adult manhood and at what appears to be impacting on their beliefs and attitudes. Whether these young men envisage several masculinities or still have one preferred masculinity to which they aspire is a central facet of exploration.

Segal (1990) notes that until the 1980s men were not written about in any searching way aimed at understanding them, but that since then an enormous amount of literature has emerged looking at the dilemmas facing today's men, their behaviour, experiences and attitudes. She says: 'From the sex-role theories of the fifties to the studies of gender and power of the eighties, the psychology of men has increasingly come to be seen as one fraught with strain and crisis. An emphasis on the divergent, inconsistent and contradictory meanings of masculinity now accompanies most research on men' (p.x). She adds: 'Even the critics of the virtues of masculinity seem to agree that men today are generally nervous and insecure about their own masculinity' (p.130).

Schoenberg (1993) makes the point that not many years ago books about men were not written, men just were, they didn't have role confusion, problems of identity, they made decisions and were patriarchal. But society has grown more complex and traditional role modelling is not uniformly available to young men, a confusing array of different masculinities is now available. Adolescents today are in the midst of a sexual, political and social revolution (p.1). He further comments that there is a serious risk that boys/men will not be able to understand and interpret the mixed signals that society in various ways is sending them about masculinity and asks: 'How does one behave like a man if the definition is unclear?...How does a man wear his maleness? Or act out his masculinity?...The young adult male who is not presented with a healthy concept of personality cannot build his own construct, either of self or role' (p.5). Schoenberg (1993) continues this line of argument saying that the popular soaps portray men either as macho heroes or weak laughing stocks. Where is same sex identification available to boys? The family unit is breaking down, fathers are typically absent for long periods of time, the least of which is being at work all day, the most gone altogether (p.5). When talking about feminism and women's progress towards equality he continues: 'It was right to unburden women, but it is difficult to believe that men have to be emasculated in the process' (p.5). He makes a plea: 'A man who is taught that he should neither feel nor respond to the impulse of his manliness will never become the individual he is capable of becoming, without regard to either rightness or wrongness, goodness, wisdom, or strength. It is important that we know this. It is important that we ensure that our sons know it as well' (p.6).

Whether the participants in the present study feel emasculated or present an assuredness about the future and being men is included in the exploratory nature of this research.

## Key theoretical perspectives.

In reading psychology, sociology, feminism, history, poststructuralist analysis and men's movement material, some academic and some fitting into the 'pop psychology' genre as described, it became evident that a wide range of theories describing masculinity are still current. Whilst taking an interdisciplinary stance in this field study, as I do in my professional life as a counsellor, the constraints of the project size and aims must be kept in mind. Therefore, when looking at the following theoretical perspectives, this researcher wishes to assert that she does not believe that there is any single correct theory on masculinity, rather that the many frames described add up to an integrative view from which to gain insight in a clearly contested academic area. That is not to say they make a whole, as Edley and Wetherall (1997) describe: 'Clearly there is no way in which these different perspectives can be simply tacked on to one another, although this in no way means, of course, that they are all mutually exclusive' (p.209). My interest is in the social (public) and private narratives of self and the part that discourse and culture plays in shaping masculinity. To look at the participants in this study without their context, their social/cultural position, is incomplete. The culture in which these young men are situated includes a range of understanding, from feminist influence to the biological debate about inherent traits. However, the scope of this field study does not allow detailed discussion of all the frames through which masculinity has been looked. It is not my aim therefore to give a critical review of all the main theories which include essentialist beliefs, biological analysis, deterministic perspectives, socialisation and role theory, social and cultural analysis, gender construction, and feminist poststructuralism. My aim is rather to touch on them in a sense of acknowledging that they are still current in the debate.

### Essentialist theory

Essentialists argue from a biological stance which believes men and women are chromosomally and hormonally different, possibly even determined by a single gene. In this argument masculinity is innate in men, it is not learned. This researcher does not agree that we are, to the greatest extent, biologically determined, but does argue that aspects of biology will always make males and females different (Buchbinder, 1994, pp. 2-7, Edley and Wetherell, 1995, p.206, Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, p.30-31).

### Psychoanalytical theory

Psychoanalytical theory argues that psychological structures within the mind of the individual male are organised in such a way as to determine his masculinity. The subconscious and the interplay of emotions, desires and fantasy all have a part to play in the making of man (Edley and Wetherell, p.207). There are several schools within psychoanalytic theory with differing inputs and emphasis, however they all agree that the relationship with one's parents is central to one's self-concept and sense of identity and functioning as an individual. Research identifies this theme as the key to the study of human behaviour in general, and adolescence in particular. Both Erikson (1968) whose work was referred to earlier, and the psychoanalytic schools, developed theories of self-concept within their deterministic framework.

### Socialisation theory and sex role theory

Socialisation theory and sex-role theory are still major frames influencing much sociological and psychological research. Early sociological views were introduced by Cooley (1902) who spoke of the 'looking-glass self' and a social theory, saying that the individual's self-concept is largely determined by other people's reactions to them. We see ourselves through the eyes of others and

learn our roles and place in society through learned attitudes. Mead (1934) also believed that interaction with a social group is the only way self-concept can develop. By seeing ourselves as objects, we imagine how others see us.

By looking at socialisation and sex-role theory more closely, it becomes apparent how the theory holding great currency today, gender construction, has evolved. These theories have therefore been looked at in some detail. Berger (1967), one of the early exponents of socialisation and role theory, builds the foundations from which social constructionist theory has developed: 'Identity is formed by social processes. Once crystallised, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations. The social processes involved in both the formation and maintenance of identity are determined by social structure' (p.194). Berger describes an individual as undergoing primary socialisation during childhood thereby becoming a member of society, and secondary socialisation as any subsequent process:

'... that inducts an already socialised individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society...The child takes on the significant others' roles and attitudes, that is, internalises them and makes them his own. And by this identification with significant others the child becomes capable of identifying himself, of acquiring a subjectively coherent and plausible identity. In other words, the self is a reflected entity, reflecting the attitudes first taken by significant others towards it; the individual becomes what he is addressed as by his significant others. .... both self and other can be apprehended as performers of objective, generally known actions, which are recurrent and repeatable by any actor of the appropriate type' (pp.150-151) and 'In the common stock of knowledge there are standards of role performance that are

accessible to all members of a society, or at least to those who are potential performers of the roles in question' ( p.91).

In other words, society prescribes roles for men and women to which they are expected to conform in order to fit in and belong to that society. Writers such as Connell (1995) and Segal (1990) argue this further.

Connell (1995) describes sex-role as being a man or woman enacting a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex- the 'sex role'. He argues: 'In this approach there are always two sex roles in any cultural context, a male one and a female one. Masculinity and femininity are quite easily interpreted as internalised sex roles, the products of social learning or 'socialisation'. Most often, sex roles are seen as the cultural elaboration of biological sex differences' (p.22). Connell outlines Talcott Parsons' (1995) sex role theory, which makes the distinction between 'instrumental' and 'expressive' roles in the family considered as a small group. Talcott Parsons outlines a different focus in personal interactions between men and women. Women 'interact' and men 'do', they are primarily goal and action oriented. Erikson (1968) also differentiates between the quiet, inner orientation of the feminine sex role and the outer, active orientation of the male sex role. Erikson talks of the feminine quality of caring and Parsons of the expressiveness of femininity, which describes the need to communicate with those around her (p.21). Writers today such as Connell (1995), West (1996a, 1998), Biddulph (1994,1997) and others describe, without necessarily agreeing with, the same basic differences. Traditionally, masculinity finds its centre not at home but in the world. It is the male image, not a man's personality that is transmitted.



Connell (1995) argues: 'The idea that masculinity is the internalised male sex role allows for social change, and that was sometimes seen as role theory's advantage over psychoanalysis. Since the role norms are social facts, they can be changed by social processes. This will happen whenever the agencies of socialisation - family, school, mass media, etc. - transmit new expectations ' (p.23) and further: 'Strict sex role theory treats masculinity precisely as a social norm for the behaviour of men' (p.70). Segal (1990) on outlining criticism of sex-role theory contends:

'The whole notion of 'sex roles' and 'sex role stereotyping' although superficially appealing, has been the object of convincing criticism. It assumes a consistent and uniform set of social expectations about men and women universally shared within any society, positing a non-existent homogeneity to social life. It supposes a conformity to social expectations, of 'nurturing' mother, and the 'responsible' father, positing a non-existent uniformity of individual behaviour' (p.69).

As we have seen, the theories concerning gender relations have traditionally been characterised by a 'biological/cultural' debate. Sociological thought has been concerned with the construction of gender differences and is intolerant of the early proponents of biological determinism. The roles of mother and father are seen as functional for the socialisation of children. Parker (1996) states: 'Centred primarily around functionalist notions of the nuclear family and "instrumental" and "expressive" roles portrayed therein, this paradigm accepts that sexual differentiation is a socially constructed phenomenon occurring via an individual internalisation of familial and wider societal expectations in terms of ascribed sex roles' (p.142). Father socialises the son into the instrumental, leadership roles required in the world outside the family. Boys to become real men must leave behind notions of expressive and caring qualities, modelled by the mother, and set forth into the

competitive world of men typified by business, politics, and sport. Sex-role theory is a perspective that has been widely accepted. Sex roles are ascribed by expectations from the family and wider society. This paradigm accepts that sexual differentiation is a socially constructed phenomenon internalised by each individual (Carrigan *et.al* 1985, Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998).

Wearing (1996) argues:

‘In a society of such rapid change as ours, where there is an increase in one parent families; in married women in the workforce; in unemployment for males and females; a decrease in the number of children that women have; and considerable shift in values and ideas concerning heterosexuality/homosexuality, sex-roles and gender stereotypes; the formation of fixed adult gender identity through socialisation becomes problematic.... The social construction of gender will continue to be a vital part of the preparation of the future citizens of Australian society...ensuring a different, more diffuse and flexible construction of gender’ (p.113).

The theories discussed above have influenced the way in which society looks at men and women and are therefore concepts within which to contextualise this study. It also seems clear that the theory of the social construction of gender has evolved from them and this theory is described next.

#### Gender construction/social construction of gender

From the outlines of the preceding theories, it is clear that there are many lenses adopted to look at gender and aspects of several frames seem to clarify the possible perceptions and attitudes that the participants in this study may have about what it means to be a man. As has been stated, it runs

counter to this researcher's counselling and personal stance to impose a rigid theoretical frame on clients and survey participants alike. Given this stance, a shift away from the popular sex-role model still adhered to in much psychological research, was needed. The process of socialisation and sex-role theory lacks the more dynamic perspective of gender construction, which sees individuals as having some agency over how they become masculine (feminine) and the existence of multiple masculinities at both institutional and societal levels. The theory of gender construction has been put forward by sociologists and critical thinkers such as Connell (1995), Davies (1996), Buchbinder (1994, 1995), McLean (1995, 1996) and others.

As has been noted, Connell (1995) is widely regarded and referred to in the research as the most influential and respected proponent of gender construction. He describes the shift away in sociology, which proposed sex-role theory, as being the discipline which has now made the biggest break from this framework and states that: 'There is no settled paradigm for this new work, but some common themes are clear: the construction of masculinity in everyday life, the importance of economic and institutional structures, the significance of differences among masculinities and the contradictory and dynamic character of gender' (p.35). This fluid and person centred approach is congruent with my own beliefs of listening to the individual story, and that people are constituted in their own unique way, but influenced by many different discourses and powers, including economic, cultural, sexual, educational and political. Gender identity does not merely descend upon one and become internalised, we have some say, some agency over who we become. Connell contributes further: 'That gender is not fixed in advance of social interaction, but is constructed in interaction, is an important theme in the modern sociology of gender' (p.35). Moreover, rather than treating masculinity as pre-existing norms, '...which are passively internalised and enacted, the new research explores the making and remaking of conventions in social practice itself' (p.35).

Gender conscious research no longer puts forward any one cultural variation of masculinity as a universal norm. Connell (1987, 1995) and Carrigan *et al* (1985) look at the contested nature of masculinity over time, the many different definitions throughout history and the struggle to establish and maintain certain constructions as hegemonic and dominant. They refute the socialisation theory perspective which has structures designed to have people *acquiring* particular behaviours or roles depending upon their sex. Carrigan *et al.* (1985) argue that socialisation theory allows for little social change and deviance, fails to look at complexity and power relations within sex roles and is too simplistic. Connell (1994) has drawn on the:

‘new socio-scientific research on masculinity, and existing research on gender in schools, to develop a framework for understanding this issue. Gender is actively constructed within institutional and cultural frameworks which produce multiple forms of masculinity; normally one form is hegemonic over others. Schools’ overall gender regimes typically reinforce an ideology of gender dichotomy, though some school practices reduce gender difference’ (p.2).

Clarifying this argument further Edley and Wetherall (1997) describe the social constructionist view as a non-traditional Western view, which sees people as ‘unique, self-contained motivational and cognitive universes’ and that they are seen rather as ‘being accomplished in the course of social interactions’ (p.205). They also argue that: ‘Perspectives cannot be labelled right and wrong’ (p.206). Parker (1996) summarises sociological developments thus: ‘Steering away from sex-role categorisation, particularly in terms of the construction of masculine identity, critical theorists have now come to acknowledge the existence of a multiplicity of masculinities at both institutional and societal levels’ (p.142).

Kenway (1997a) summarises the discussions about the construction of masculinity she finds most convincing, observing first that: ‘...it is difficult to go past Connell (1995) here’ (p.59), then generalising: ‘They argue firstly that masculine identities are not static but historically and spatially situated and evolving. They arise with an individual’s interaction with both the dynamism and contradictions within and between immediate situations and broader social structures...’ (P.59). Connell thus talks about masculinity as an ongoing, changing, making and re-making process. Kenway (1997a) observes that out of this concept of many and evolving masculinities, the institutional patterns of power cluster men into hierarchical groups (p.59). She goes on to describe Connell’s concept of hegemonic masculinity as referring to those dominant and dominating forms of masculinity which claim the highest status and exercise the greatest influence and authority (p.59). Connell (1995) argues the futility of trying to define masculinity as a natural character type, a norm, ‘...Normative definitions of masculinity... face the problem that not many men actually meet the normative standards. This point applies to hegemonic masculinity. The number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small’ (p.79).

In another study citing Connell, Parker (1996) describes him as being a particular advocate of multiple masculinities and the main proponent of a hegemonic masculinity. He uses this model of hierarchies in his study of schoolboys and the relationship of sport in producing certain masculinities (p.143). The notion of hegemonic masculinity will be used in this study to identify themes and trends in the survey analysis to assess how evident a hierarchy of masculinities is for the participants in this research, and whether, as conventional wisdom argues, the private (corporate) school produces predominantly hegemonic males. Connell’s (1995) premise is acknowledged and accepted:

'To recognise diversity in masculinities is not enough. We must also recognise the relations between the different kinds of masculinity, relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate, exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity' (p.37).

Men/boys maintain patriarchy by exhorting each other to not behave like a girl, be a man, toughen up, don't be a wuss etc. These views underpin the theory base to this study. The social construction view, which sees masculinity as having multiple and contradictory meanings within a contextualised setting, underlies the analysis.

Relations of power, subordination and alliance are also discussed by Segal (1990). She looks at the force and power of the dominant ideals of masculinity and at the multitude of masculine styles, but always within the context of differing relations of power such as culture, ethnic and socio-economic background, age and sexual orientation (p.xi). She explores the feminist interest in men and masculinity in the context of men's power over women and whether it arises from the innate nature of males, to their social conditioning, biology or social construction. She agrees that biology affects culture, but the way that we live as men and women is culture specific. She says also that it is time for psychologists to move beyond the nature/nurture debate (p.61).

McLean (1996) argues that:

'...human beings are social products, and that who they are is not determined by innate, universal characteristics. This is not to say that human beings are not shaped to some extent by biological factors, or that we can simply and easily change who we are, simply by

deciding to. It is to say, however, that human possibilities are far more open-ended than our culture accepts, and that we cannot justify our prejudices by hiding behind biological or psychological determinism' (p.12 ).

The social construction of gender sees masculinity as having multiple and contradictory meanings and different significance in different social contexts: 'The constructionist view makes apparent the connections between the world we live in- in this time and place- and the meanings we use and that use us. Ideas of masculinity are not truths about men's nature independent of the culture and politics of society' ( p.x).

Buchbinder (1994) also takes up the position offered by social constructionist theory. He argues that by proposing that gender is not innate but rather constructed within the context of culture, history and a given time, change in such constructions is inevitable and desirable, offering an '...interesting analysis of cultural conditions as they affect gender' (p.7). My position in this study embraces that view. We need to hear the voices of the participants, presenting their beliefs and attitudes; from them we may gain insight into the discourses that have influenced their perception of impending manhood. Buchbinder also clarifies the use of the terms 'culture' and 'society' saying that they are often used almost interchangeably, 'blurring any distinct meaning they once had' (p.xiv). It seems pertinent to state that I use these terms interchangeably in this study.

### **Poststructuralist theory**

Closely aligned to the theory of the social construction of gender is feminist poststructuralism, it is a key focus of many influential educationalists in Australia and will be briefly looked at now.

Considering the stance that poststructuralism takes on power relations and gender, agency and

choice in regard to self, and the positioning of the researcher in the research, was of interest and significance for this study. It is not the aim of this study to carry out a comprehensive review of the literature on poststructuralism rather to show how a tentative first exploration has offered this researcher some interesting insights.

Davies (1990) and Alloway (1995) agree with sociologists like Connell et al. that gender is socially constructed, is not innate and is not something that just happens to one. The contention is also that there is a degree of choice, some agency and control over how we turn out, albeit within the restrictions of institutions, social processes and social power, and importantly, the constraining power of gender. Davies (1990) in explaining the power of poststructuralist social theory in influencing and changing gendered behaviour says it provides:

‘.... a radical framework for understanding the relation between persons and their social worlds and for conceptualising the processes whereby gender is taken up in a changing social world. The structures and processes of the social world are recognised as having a material force, a capacity to constrain, to shape, to coerce, as well as to potentiate individual action... The process whereby a person takes her or himself up as a person is understood as an ongoing process through which the individual is constituted and reconstituted rather than the product of socialisation’ (p.76-93).

Poststructuralists use the term discourse as a way to describe ways of being. They describe discourse as being told in cultural stories that change according to the social/cultural location and the historical period. Gendered discourse is the way in which boys/men and girls/women speak themselves into existence. Alloway (1995) explains the poststructuralist use of discourse saying: ‘By wrestling with this understanding of how gender can be constituted through discourses, talked into existence, we find it easier to see how gendered relations can become desired and self-regulating



ways of being rather than externally imposed 'roles' that are accepted by passive and compliant citizens' (p.45). Poststructuralist analysis therefore regards learning and gendered behaviour as occurring through social processes, and that change is ongoing within the individual's social context. Gender is socially constructed and each individual takes up their own gendered discourse. Davies (1996) contrasts poststructuralism with the main assumption of socialisation theory, which is that society, other people, socialise us and therefore the individual does not have a choice. Berger (1967) as shown above, contends that identity is socially bestowed, socially sustained and socially transformed, showing the influence of society. In the 1960s, this was an emerging notion pitted as it was against both deterministic and essentialist theories, but the idea of individual agency is not argued. Davies (1996) argues that how a young man becomes gendered is within their control, their choice of a particular way of describing themselves (p.13). The degree of choice that the participants in this study perceive themselves as having with regard to who they are and what they become as men, is presented in Chapter 5 and discussed in Chapter 6. Davies (1996) also states that the: 'Policies and principles of social justice in Australia are strongly influenced by feminist post-structuralist theory' and that: '.... post-structuralist theory informs much of the thinking in Australia on gender' (p.11).

Post-structuralism has as its core aim the destabilising of power away from those who traditionally have held it, and establishing equity, and is seen as the major model for education (key feminists hold positions in educational bureaucracies, p.11). Davies (1996) describes: 'The radical moves are aimed at dismantling conceptions of the natural and 'correct' hegemony of the particular group that has traditionally held unquestioned power' (p.12). How has this agenda influenced the participants in my study? Do they have a sense of power, or do they feel disempowered? Conventional wisdom sees the boy/man who has undergone private single sex schooling as having hegemonic power.

Given that this power is under question from feminists it was imperative to explore how the young men in this study felt about this. It is interesting to note Silverstein's (1994) view here:

'In times of change- and ours is a time of great change, thanks to feminism, the end of the cold war, and less positively, the constriction of the global economy in general, the decline of the middle class in particular- those who have the most to lose are most vulnerable to such fears. Middle-class males are surely, as a group, those who have the most to lose' (p.234) .

Poststructuralists also challenge preconceived notions of what research looks like. Of particular interest to me as a researcher and counsellor was the positioning of 'the researcher' in poststructuralist studies and research. The subjectivity of the author, the authorial voice, is declared and the first person pronoun is often used, a reminder that this is their constructed text. In this study I am not always a distanced researcher standing objectively apart, I acknowledge my subjectivity and the discourses which influence me in this research, in particular being a woman looking at masculinity; a mother of two adolescent boys at the school whose students were the participants in this study, and a counsellor. This is discussed further in the methodology chapter.

## Summary

In looking at the literature a context has been established and evidence given to show how topical the masculinity debate is which surrounds the young men taking part in this research. The aim of describing the various lenses through which masculinity is viewed and in particular outlining the discussion about gender construction and feminist poststructuralism was aimed at giving the research question a contextual rather than theoretical frame. The development of sociology as outlined by Connell (1995) and others away from sex role theory and into a construction of

masculinity in social interaction sits comfortably with this researcher, but not to the total exclusion of other frames. These ways of thinking are influential in society today, and in education in particular. Some boundary was necessary, so I have assumed in this analysis a broadly psycho-social constructionist perspective on the formation of gender, without negating the inherent biological influences. This researcher aligns herself with the current discussion in the social and psychological sciences which holds that the bio-psycho social model makes the most sense. Montgomery (1998) outlines this: ‘...we have stopped thinking that anything significant in humans reflects just one factor. We recognise that it’s an interaction between biological factors, psychological factors and social factors, including both the immediate social environment and the sub-cultural and cultural environment’ (p. 101).

## **Chapter 3: Studies that influenced the direction of this research**

### **Introduction**

Many studies on adolescents, youths and men were read during the course of this research and have given an overarching general feel for the topic. This chapter reviews the studies that have clarified the direction for this research. The literature search encountered no study that asks young men at private single schools how they perceive their role as men. Academics, researchers, and social analysts in the area of gender construction, education, sociology, and psychology all call for more studies on boys and men, from all walks of life (West 1996a, Biddulph 1994, Connell 1995, Davies 1996, Kay 1994, Kenway 1997, Buchbinder 1995, McLean 1996).

In a meta-analysis of trends in adolescent research, Heaven (1994) notes that numerous studies in journals and other literature have reported troubled youth, working class youth, adolescence as a developmental stage, and specific aspects of adolescent behaviour. Some studies have included looking at gender roles and gender construction. Heaven (1994) describes the following as being extensively studied: ‘...problem behaviour like suicide; emotional problems (like depression); sexuality; parents and divorce; peers; issues connected with education; and work related issues’ (p.ix). He makes no mention of studies on role perception, or the construction of gender in adolescent middle class boys. Wyn and White (1997) describe young people as growing up in many and varied circumstances, with different priorities and perspectives. ‘While ‘youth’ does not exist as a single group, there is an urgent task in understanding what is happening in young people’s lives generally’ (pi). Problem saturated research also accounts for the majority of studies on men, including the effects of divorce and separation on men, domestic violence, work place stress, health issues and men’s rights, to name a few. Edgar (1997) argues that most of the writing about men is:

‘...special pleading for one cause or another, seldom based on research about ordinary men, too often drawing on the clinical descriptions of men in counselling or men for whom the struggle was so great they had to seek a support group of like-minded men’ (p.x).

The first seven studies I have chosen to review look at schools and their male students, the next three look at young men in various life situations and the last four look at men’s issues and concerns prevalent in Australia today.

### Studies of male students situated in schools

The way diverse masculinities developed within a private single sex school environment was investigated by Kay (1994) in his Masters thesis. He described his aim as wanting to ‘...question the conventional wisdom that this school and schools like it produce one particular form of hegemonic masculinity ’(p.5). Kay uses the concept of hegemony to ‘...describe a dominance which includes a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships’ (p.7). In reviewing the work of Connell (1987, 1994) and Kenway (1987, 1997b) and others, he says that these authors associate private boys schools with the production of a competitive and aggressive masculinity, and that the parents and their culture support this. The absence of research looking at the possible presence of alternative masculinities being present in these schools in a sense colludes with this conventionally held wisdom. In his findings Kay described how it was possible to identify the existence of multiple masculinities at Canberra Grammar School. He arranged these masculinities into a hierarchy of seven, based on the degree of recognition each was given within the school culture, these were: ‘the man as scholar’, ‘the man as sportsman’, ‘the man as leader’, ‘the sensitive man’, ‘the Christian man’, ‘the man as performing artist’, and ‘the whole man’ (‘the person’). Although these masculinities and the hierarchy were fluid and dynamic, Kay states that:

'During the time of the study the greatest support was for the "man as scholar", "the sportsman", and "the man as leader", three notions of masculinity traditionally associated with these schools' (p.v). However emerging strongly was support for 'the sensitive man' and 'the official move by the school's leaders towards the notion of "the person", rather than the man' (p.v and p.15). In his concluding remarks he argued: '...that the notion of person without reference to a boy's "maleness", had the potential to confuse boys' (p.161), and that in promoting counterhegemonic practice it was important to acknowledge '...boys' sense of maleness, so that they can possess "less masculine" qualities and traits and still "be male"...boys' notions of "maleness" or "manhood" are part of their identity work, or sense of reality, and to avoid these notions can undermine the counterhegemonic work already taking place' (p161). Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) also discuss the idea of multiple masculinities in their book *Masculinity goes to school*. They argue that multiple masculinities opening up in our culture offer diversity rather than constraint for men to have rewarding lives.

Kay was restricted in his investigation by the headmaster approving his study on the condition that he interviewed and surveyed only a small number of experienced staff, no students, and therefore his findings were based largely on his reading and interpretation of the school (p.26). He argues against this limitation because: '...interviews and questionnaires to the boys would have given me greater insight into their thinking about what it is to be a man at the school, as well as their views on girls and women' (p.49). He calls for further research on masculinity at this school, and others like it, in particular research coming at questions about masculinity from different positions. This researcher was using the same school as her survey base and viewed this as an invitation, and a challenge, as coming at questions from the position of being a woman and a counsellor would, I hoped, illuminate the area.

Kenway in her doctoral thesis (1987) and in subsequent work (1997a, 1997b) examined the part played by education in the construction of gender hegemony and class. She was looking in particular at the part high status schooling in Australia played in producing social power; one of the three schools she studied was a boys school. She found that the boys school contained ideas consistent with hegemonic masculinity. Kay quotes Kenway in his thesis as contending that her research began with a stance that: ‘...was clearly and openly critical’ of what corporate schools do, and that his position was one of ‘supporter of much that corporate schools seek to do...’ (p.46). My study is different to both of the above, I am not studying Canberra Grammar School as a system, and am I think fairly balanced in both my criticism and praise of its aims. I am looking at outcomes rather than desiring a particular outcome.

Parker (1996) also looked at the construction of masculinity. Like Kay’s study this research was concerned with the school culture as influence. The school in Parker’s study was a multiethnic inner city government school and attempted to discover how masculinity was constructed by adolescent males within the strategic site of physical education. Parker used an ethnographic methodology and analysis placing the students at the centre of the research. Using interviews and immersing himself in the school culture, Parker was able to identify three broad categories of students; the ‘Hard Boys’ (tough, aggressive, disruptive etc.), the ‘Conformists’, which took care of the majority of the boys, and the ‘Victims’ who were targeted by the ‘Hard Boys’. Parker outlines the existence of various masculinities within the school and how the school ethos itself might influence the personal way masculinity is constructed and the status of various masculinities within peer groups. He uses Connell’s notion of hegemonic masculinity ‘....in order to assess the extent to which a hierarchical ‘ordering’ of masculinities was evident within the research setting’ (p.143). The data showed little evidence of differing ‘masculine development amongst pupils of varying ethnic background... and,

just as an aggressive and violent approach to masculine construction appealed to boys from a variety of cultural backgrounds, so too did the values of scholarly attainment' (p.153). Parker concludes his study by saying: 'If these findings are to achieve anything, it is hoped that in locating physical education as a significant site in the construction of masculinities within schools, they may encourage a forthright attack upon the implicit and explicit masculine ideals which continue to permeate this curricular area, and which serve to create unequal educational conditions for many pupils' (p.153).

Edley and Wetherell (1997) studied a group of 17-18 year old students at a single sex independent school in England. Using data from extensive small group interviews the study looked at the way different identities are constructed, focusing in particular on those boys with subordinated identities within the school. How the participants talked about their status within the school, some adopting the 'new man' strategy and others 'buying back into the values embodied within a more traditional definition of masculinity' (p.203), became the focus of the study. The study outlines the tension between two types of masculinity, traditional and 'new man', assuming a 'broadly social constructionist perspective on self and identity...' (p.205). The researchers focused on those participants who made 'efforts to construct alternative, counter-hegemonic identities for themselves' and found as they had anticipated that the existence of stable or consistent selves was not shown. There was variation in the ways in which the participants talked about their gender identities (p.214).

In a study of adolescent boys, Hulse (1997) looked at gender issues, sexism, self esteem and academic achievement within both a single sex school and a coeducational school. She wanted to learn whether there were measurable differences between boys in single-sex and coed schools and



wanted to discover whether the qualitative, subjective observations she was making about single-sex school boys' behaviour might be empirically verifiable. Hulse selected four psychological tests and designed demographic questionnaires to obtain attitudes and opinions. The results that interested Hulse the most were from the *Sex Role Egalitarianism Scale* because: '...the results seem most obviously to fly in the face of our preconceived notions about educating boys in a single-sex environment. Most people believe, I suspect, that boys schools produce boys who are more sexist than other boys' (p. 15). Her research rather than supporting the notion that single sex schools produce a predominantly hegemonic ethos, shows that the converse may be true. More egalitarian attitudes about male and female roles were held by boys at the single sex school. Hulse argues that the results of the *Sex Role Egalitarianism Scale (S.R.E.S)* used in her study shows that the actual institution of educating boys and girls together during their adolescence becomes a factor in promoting sexism and perpetuating gender stereotypes in our culture. The coeducational school boys were less egalitarian than the boys school boys (p.30). She supports her argument with references to several studies in the area ranging from 1961 to 1997 and claims that there is very little research or data to show that children both learn better, or have a more egalitarian outlook when attending a coeducational school. Hulse quotes the authors of the *S.R.E.S*, King and King (1993), as finding in several studies which they conducted that:

' More egalitarian attitudes were associated with higher needs for autonomy and achievement and with lower needs for succorance and social recognition...that persons who adopt more non-traditional sex-role attitudes are those who are less concerned with their public image.... An egalitarian individual would feel free to endorse behaviours by men who appear more nurturant and less dominant than would be dictated by tradition and equally free to endorse

behaviours by women who appear less nurturant and more dominant than would be dictated by tradition' (p. 16).

Another study quoted by Hulse, Lockheed and Harris (1978), looks at role modelling as an influence:

' Children's experiences of...non-sex-role stereotyping are important determinants of their changes in attitude about these issues.... Children whose school experiences included having a man as a teacher, having a woman as a unit leader, having a woman as a principal, knowing women who supervise men and knowing women doctors- these children were more likely to hold more egalitarian beliefs about sex differences, intelligence, job discrimination, working women, and domestic roles...' (p.17-18).

The findings relating to gender issues are of the most interest and relevance to the present study and are therefore the ones reviewed. Hulse concludes that her data showed:

- Boys school boys are less defensive and less susceptible to social and peer pressure than the boys who attend the coed school.
- Boys school boys feel more comfortable about their relationships with girls than do the boys who attend the coed school.
- Boys school boys have more egalitarian attitudes towards women's and men's roles in society than do the boys who attend the coeducational school.

- Boys school boys have more options available to them in defining their masculinity. They do not need to cast themselves as the opposite of girls (p.42).

A study by Chiarolli (1992) describes how one single-sex catholic boys school was challenged to look at gender issues. By using a wide range of research tools and strategies to conduct their action research, including surveys, interviews, resource development and trialing new teaching methodologies, Chiarolli and her co-researchers achieved their main objective which was to situate gender and equity into the on-going development of the school. Steps taken to achieve this included looking at teaching styles and discipline techniques, determining the level of awareness of gender stereotypes and how and whether these were reinforced in group interactions. Ascertaining the degree to which curriculum policy was influenced by gender based attitudes and values and whether these reinforced traditional stereotyping was also part of the study. A major survey conducted as part of this study ‘...revealed how aware the students were of the stereotypes, particularly prevalent in the media, that limited and distorted their concepts of themselves as male’ (p.2). Some of the stereotypes, which emerged in this survey, have been included in the current research survey and will be referred to in Chapter 4.

A collection of studies and research brought together by Browne and Fletcher (1995) has as its central premise the need for boys to change. This is seen as crucial by many of the authors in this book as they address and report various ways they have attempted to start this process. The need for change is informed directly by the ‘acting out’ of boys in distress which causes havoc in many schools through disruptive behaviour. These accounts show how innovative approaches can change the way boys see themselves and others and have been of value from the counselling perspective. Browne in the introduction to the book points out that the need is to work from the boys’

experience, not impose ideas, moralising and judgment, but sharing communication and thoughts, struggles and beliefs. This underscores my central focus of asking the boys in this research their views. Fletcher (1997) says we need to identify exactly what we want boys to become when they are men.

Gilbert and Gilbert (1998) also look at strategies for change in schools and approaches to boys' education. They outline ideas for reform in gender education in Australia which will allow boys to understand '...how dominant masculinity constrains as much as it advantages them, they need to see how these images and practices are sustained, and at what cost to their opportunities to live lives which are open to diverse experiences and positive relationships with others' (p.222).

Poststructuralist analysis and gender construction as previously discussed argues that people have agency over how they turn out, and that each person has his/her particular contextual setting. The poststructuralist position does not see gender as ever finally achieved but always in process.

Browne and Fletcher (1995) believe that as a theory, the social construction of masculinity is dynamic and subtle in its complexity and that our response needs to be equally as broad.

#### **Studies looking at young men in various life/work situations**

Research undertaken by Johnson-Newell (1995) looked at the attitudes and perceptions of young men in the Western suburbs of Sydney about becoming adult men. He was particularly interested in apprentices because he saw them as entrenched in: '... an archaic institution...originating in the Middle Ages...Medieval or not it seemed to turn out...men who seem to have self confidence' (p.153). Johnson-Newell suggests that his findings show these boys to have a very secure sense of self-respect and sense of what it means to be a man, without being chauvinistic, and that being

surrounded by their same sex peers and elders accounts for this. He also makes the telling comment that many of their peers meanwhile are committing suicide, not making it to any sort of manhood (p.153). Johnson-Newell talks of a nihilism present in our society ‘...which is gathering strength because of people’s, and particularly young people’s, fears about the future...When this lack of future is coupled with a lack of any sense of an ongoing masculinity, I am suggesting that many young men become despairing’ (p.155). To obtain his data about masculinity and manhood Johnson–Newell used an interview methodology. He openly discusses his personal agenda about wanting to find out more about masculinity for his own sake (p.153). The same motivations, albeit from a woman, guide this research; we need to know more about this area. The results from the present study aim to illuminate how young men feel about becoming men, in relationships, as fathers, at work and in their future generally. Does belonging to an all male ‘institution’ as described by Johnson-Newell in the above study and the private boys school to which participants in this study belong, give a strong sense of self in other than the traditionally accepted ways of hegemonic masculinity? Do young men in these situations adhere to traditional values with regard to women, relationships, parenting and work? What will the present study find out about the students who are its participants?

In another study looking at self-perceptions and the most important concerns of young people, Evans and Poole (1991) studied a group of young adults at university, TAFE or in transition. They used open-ended questionnaires and self-rating scales to collect their data and also a time line approach to access the participants’ life lines on which were recorded major personal events. Evans and Poole, while acknowledging the predominant concern in society in general about the current unemployment and education of young people, make the interesting point that in their research when asking young people themselves, this is only part of their concern: ‘While education, training,

and work are important foci of the lives of young people, personal and social development, concepts of self, and the ability to control the main aspects of their lives are also vital concerns' (p.1). The authors argue the need to look at not only the immediate concerns of young people, the broader economic and social contexts in which they live, but also at significant contexts in which they develop their sense of 'control and competence' such as in school, with peer groups etc (p.1). Evans and Poole summarise the rationale for their study thus:

'In the shift in political values from Australia being the lucky, resource rich country, to its being a clever country more reliant on the skills and creativity of its people, it is necessary to understand the perceptions and motives of those who will in a short time be charged with attaining that cleverness. These are the young people just entering the work force or undertaking tertiary studies. It is important to know whether their values and self-perceptions are such that they could be expected to carry that responsibility' (p.2).

The focus of the above study, of wanting to ascertain and listen to the perceptions of young people resonated with this researcher, as this is the ethic that underpins the research presented in this thesis. Evans and Poole recognised the constraining power of the social structures within which their participants lived and the influence of this on their hopes, values, beliefs and expectations. They placed their research in the broader contextual setting, as does the present researcher. 'It is indeed important to understand these broader contextual factors and the ways in which they affect young people. However, it is also necessary to attempt to understand the perceptions of young people themselves, not only as members or potential members of the work force, but also in terms of the quality and richness of their lives' (p.2). Evans and Poole saw the young adults who participated in their study as generally positive about their lives:

‘The results are encouraging, not only in terms of the general self-esteem expressed by the young people, which appears to be robust even in those who appear to be at risk in terms of jobs and career, but also in terms of the general orientations they bring to life activities and in terms of their life concerns, with relationships, development, and enhancing achievement’ (p.288).

Do the participants in the present study feel confident and positive about the future in terms of the quality and richness of their lives? Do they feel confident about relationships and work? These are questions that the present study seeks to answer and they are explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

West (1996a) studied boys and men in working class Penrith and he gives an analysis of life for them in that area in the 1990s as they negotiate the current gender debate. West used an interview methodology for his research, preferring a qualitative approach where questions are asked: ‘Why? What does it mean? The emphasis is on quality and on feelings; this is the qualitative approach’ (p.212). He based his questions on some key issues including how a man defines himself, his relationship with his father and on whom he modelled himself. His findings compare views of men growing up between the depression and the 1990s and show that far more confusion about what it is to be a man is apparent now. West makes the point that he makes no claim on statistical exactness. He hopes instead that the stories told by his participants ‘...reflect some of the hopes, experiences and aspirations that many Australians might feel. Social science is not an exact art’ (p.215). West (1996b) also points out, in a paper delivered at an educational seminar, that the study of masculinity is an emerging one, and it does not have any one knowledge base, and adds that: ‘Nobody seems to think boys worth doing research on’. He reiterated this argument at the National Forum on Men and Family Relationships held in Canberra in June 1998, asking where are the men? ‘Too often, men

have become invisible in families to social science research and journalists', and also 'How do we expect men to become good fathers if we keep saying fathers are not important?' (Proceedings of *National Forum on Men and Family Relationships* June 1998, p.187).

Some thoughts and studies presenting men's views and issues

The three areas in men's lives presenting them with the most concerns are relationships, work and male identity. Studies examining the attitudes and issues men have in these areas, and the dilemmas they face, are presented below and serve as an introduction to concept areas which the participants in this study described in the survey.

The opening address at the *National Forum on Men and Family Relationships* (Canberra June 1998) given by Don Edgar encompassed many of the issues and areas of concern facing men at present. Edgar is the founding director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and now works at the Centre for Workplace Culture and Change. Edgar identified six risk factors when he reviewed the position of men in society. These are summarised below and appear in full in the proceedings of the forum.

Edgar argued that there seemed to be an apparent inability for men to express themselves, to have insight into themselves, accept their emotionality, acknowledge vulnerability and weakness and accept help. All these qualities Edgar described as being counterproductive to good partnering and parenting. These qualities also made for unproductive competitiveness at work, ill health and even premature death for many men. Edgar offered a range of speculations - some tongue in cheek but nonetheless telling - for the rising infertility levels in men and posed the prediction that men are becoming redundant, even in siring children! He asked whether the upward trend in male impotence echoed a



downward spiral in male confidence on every front, their every role, from worker to lover? Does impotence and low sperm counts signal an end to men as dominant, and mean women are taking over the traditional areas of control in sexual, social and political relations?

The major risk factor Edgar outlined was the apparent rising levels of male violence, in both domestic and public situations, ranging from spousal and child abuse to football melees and ethnic disputes. Edgar asked whether this is a male backlash writ large? Is it a result of the threat to male power, the man as breadwinner, his masculinity undermined by unemployment, the new found confidence of women; a political redrawing of the old boundary lines? (p.2). Further, is the effect of the relentless growth of globalisation with its flow of capital across nations blurring boundaries? Is the control being taken away from those traditionally associated with it, namely men? Are we returning, in a totally new way, to a class system in which only a select few - those with brain power, both male and female - have good jobs and therefore control society?

Another issue of concern was the education system which was described as increasingly focusing on vocational training and skills and: ‘...ignoring those other qualities that make for a humane, civil society – that is, qualities of caring, empathy, social responsibility, tolerance of diversity, values clarification and open communication’ (p.3). Edgar posed the question whether competition and endless hours of work was all it was about for men? Is the balance between work, family and relationships even less important now in the new information age than it was before, where a feeling of failure results for men, ‘...who won’t or can’t be masters of the universe?’ (p.3). He then went on to argue that ‘...I think there are various countervailing trends and indications about men which make the picture perhaps less bleak than what the above might suggest for the future of men...’ (p.3). These points were briefly that large numbers of men are now *less* willing to put the

interests of their family last by placing work as the priority. They are looking for balance and personal well being. The result has already seen a move towards a more family friendly workplace including legislation on parental leave, agreements about family responsibilities, and workshops on partnering and parenting. The slowly improving position and number of women in management and industry is acting also to gradually dispel men's views that women belong only at home with the children. Further, Edgar argues, there is a clear shift which is: '...quite apparent in the research, in younger generations of men, away from the blindly mechanical sense of invulnerability that kept their fathers going until they wore out and died prematurely, towards a more self-critical examination, to slightly better emotional intelligence, to demand for some sense of proportion in their own personal and work lives....Many younger men are also looking for a partner who is their equal – someone who can share the dual tasks we all face of earning an income and caring for a family, and they are not just the sensitive new-age guys of media beat - ups ' (p.4). Some demographic facts reflect the situation in which most younger men find themselves in when entering marriage. For many men and women education is prolonged, marriage and children are delayed. Most men have experienced several adult relationships with assertive, independent women prior to marriage. Marriage is entered into only after careful consideration and often because the partners want children. Being more experienced and older than previous generations of men and having deliberated over and discussed marriage and children with their partner it is perhaps not surprising to find these younger men wanting a part in caring for their children.

Edgar develops the theme of emotional intelligence, and looks at how this is being sought after in the work place now:- 'I think at the cutting edge of Australian industry there is a better understanding that communication skills, flexibility in thinking, empathy and emotional intelligence are the keys to performance and productivity in a competitive global

marketplace.....all make macho male of old, with his narrow and inflexible views, totally obsolete.....Rigidity, prejudice, blind assertion of control will no longer work' (p.4 -5). It would appear that both business and partnership needs are looking for a more sensitive human relationship approach. There is also a growing awareness amongst health and welfare professionals that men need to be respected for the concerns they have for their relationships, families and work rather than pathologising their issues and treating them as sick. Perhaps a more subversive and at the same time more respectful approach would elicit a stronger response allowing more men to seek help.

Edgar contends that: '.... some of the standard myths about men, marriage and families have little historical ground to stand on....men and women in Australia have always worked together as partners in building a new family, a new home in an alien land.....the Aussie male's best mate has been his female partner ....There's nothing stronger in the research than the fact that marriage and partnership is good for both men and women ' (p.6). Looking ahead Edgar predicts that changes in the nature of work as the information age and the global marketplace gets ever more sophisticated will see work location become irrelevant. The home will become the centre for work and men and women will be in closer touch with their children, their school, the local shops, street and community. With high unemployment and inequality the extended family will become the norm as a shared income generator and dwelling place. Do the young men looking ahead for this study envisage the same future?

Concluding his keynote address Edgar said we have to break down the notion that man has to be invulnerable. Instead masculinity should acknowledge and include weakness and imperfection; should agree that aggressive sports, boozing and 'taking punishment like a man' are unhealthy concepts that boys are still raised with, along with notions of men don't cry. If these limiting male

horizons are not stopped how can women hope to be treated as equals? 'Men can and do care. They show it in their devotion to work and family. But we have to expand their opportunities to care by altering the systems which limit the ways in which they can show they care ' (p.8). Edgar advocates a structural way of change through education, counselling, workplace strategy and community support; cultural change is what individuals look to.

Further discussion about the three areas in men's lives presenting with the most concerns, namely relationships, work and male identity can be found in The Mackay Report (1995) *Men in the 90s*. Mackay shows men to be grappling with a sense of lost male identity because of the blurring of traditional gender roles, a sense that: 'It wasn't fair when it was "a man's world"'. But there's just about nothing left of the man's world' (p. 49). Men accept that women needed greater equality, but feel that as a result of feminism, masculinity has been trampled underfoot and that 'men who are struggling to be "sensitive" may be further eroding their position' (p. 49). They feel that they are doing far more of the traditionally female chores than women are doing male ones and also that everyone is working harder since equal opportunities came in for women: 'This sharing is all very well, but we are sharing a much bigger total load of work than our parents ever took on' (p.52).

There was discussion about stress and time off, the former seen as inevitable and the latter unobtainable. A constant theme in this study is the observation that for many men and boys in Australia an enormous shift in role perception has occurred in an extraordinarily short time. Do the participants in this study have perceptions which fit with the above? Mackay used unstructured individual interviews and group discussions in his study and asked participants to reflect on their lives, and on being men in Australia in the 1990's. There was no set agenda and direct questions were avoided. Data was purely qualitative the research being exploratory and diagnostic in

character. The report summarises major themes and opinions that occurred consistently across the sample.

Russell has conducted research on fatherhood and families since the 1970s. He now works primarily in large corporations conducting seminars on work/family issues and has found a growing awareness amongst management of the impact of family life on work and vice versa. In an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 14 1997, Russell states: 'More and more men are feeling the pinch with regard to the conflict between being in the workforce and being a good father. They know the role of provider is being devalued, yet when you talk to men about this, they'll tell you they still see their work as family nurturing. They say they work the long hours to provide for and nurture their families'. They felt that they wanted closer and more rewarding relationships with their children than the ones they had had with their own fathers, but that they were still locked into the breadwinning role. In the same article Russell asserts that many men exaggerate the risks to their career were they to exercise more control over their work and the hours they put in, and spend more time with their families. Russell urges men to do so, not just for the children's sake but for the men themselves to achieve a balance in their lives. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* a week earlier (7<sup>th</sup> June 1997) Russell says he knows of an 'enormous number of men' who are challenging the 60-hour-plus week with young men in particular demanding flexibility. Research which Russell (1992) discusses points to fathers being happier when they are more involved with their children (p.3), and also that they wanted to share more in the family tasks, generally desiring a greater balance between work and family (p.4). Russell argues that since this role of caring family man '...contradicts accepted cultural beliefs, it may only be men who are high on self-esteem and independence who will either contemplate, adopt, or feel comfortable in going against the tide in this way' (p.7). The personal characteristics of involved fathers were likely to be androgynous, demonstrating positive

traditional masculine characteristics but also positive traditional feminine characteristics (p.7). Further discussion about masculine and feminine characteristics according to Russell *et al* takes place in Chapter 4, which describes the methodology used in this study. Russell described men with high self-esteem as being able to adopt new ways of being men. He goes on to say that men who come from non-traditional families were more likely to be less career orientated and less likely to be constrained by cultural views about men's roles (p.8). Russell believes that the most crucial aspect of establishing role sharing in relationships is a man's belief in fairness, and that men can nurture and women can have the same earning power as a man (p.10).

Much of Russell's work is with young men in the workforce with young children whose partners also work . He has found that these are the men wanting change and balance in their lives and, because of their dilemma, feeling more stress than their older counterparts. From surveys conducted in the organisations in which he works Russell (1998) has established that 63% of this group of young men say they would put their family first and turn down promotion, a new job, or a transfer, if it would impact negatively on family life. Subsequent data suggested that about 20% of these young men followed through when these decisions had to be implemented (p.72). Russell stresses that one needs to work with men the way they are, one cannot make assumptions, one needs to listen and be open and agenda free (p74). He also argues that there is more and more research which shows that there are links between workplace and family relationships, satisfying personal relationships are linked to job satisfaction and successful performance (p.76).

Edgar has monitored men's work and relationship issues over several years using both quantitative and qualitative research and his findings are similar to Russell's. He says men are expressing a concern for balance, they want to be there for their relationships, their children, and are totally

comfortable with women's equality at work. They often don't have a problem with staying at home if their wives are the main breadwinners and are certainly willing to spend more time caring for their children than older men. Edgar (*The Australian Financial Review Magazine*, Sept. 1997, p.31-39) agrees with Russell that Australian men used to only focus on work and that was the role model for their sons. Now however, 'in today's workplace that kind of one-dimensional man is counter-productive. It's the men who are good at relationships, who are emotionally intelligent and empathetic, who will be better managers'. Both Russell and Edgar are saying, men - and women - are changing, relationships are changing and work is changing.

Another aspect of men's lives that is changing is the high rate of divorce, one in three marriages ends in divorce, and of these two out of three divorces are instigated by women. Jordan is a family counsellor and mediator now in private practice having spent 16 years as a counsellor in the Family Court of Australia. His first research study (1985) emerged directly from his work at the Family Court where he observed that far more men than women were emotionally distressed after marital separation. The men were angry, tearful, and confused and found it hard to talk about, or listen to others talking about, their marital relationship. The aim of the research was to clarify the effect of separation and divorce on men. Jordan used a questionnaire to assess men's attitudes, feelings and reactions to separation/divorce and to relationships. The impact of separation on the overall well being of the men in this study was severe. Only 19% wanted to separate or were the ones to make the decision to separate (p.43). The findings in this study, that 1 in 4 respondents were unaware of recurring conflicts or chronic problems in their marriage, suggest a lack of sensitivity to the emotional state of their marriage and wives, and consequently they were devastated and shocked when their wives left them (p.49). Not only was the decision to separate the wives' (65%), but the respondents blamed the wives, showing an apparent powerlessness and also a lack of responsibility

for the relationship. Jordan reports that men took no notice of their wives' attempts to discuss problems in the relationship, and chose not to be involved in family and home life, often commenting 'a woman's place is in the home and she is responsible for that area...my role is to go to work and bring in the money' (p.50). The feelings respondents had about separation were shock and bewilderment, and the psycho-physical results were quite long-lasting health problems related to stress and bereavement. The effects on their life in general included social and practical difficulties including doing chores and making friends (p.44). Those most at risk of inability to cope were the type of man described above who had no idea anything was wrong with their marriage and had left all responsibility of relationship and family work to 'the wife'. Two out of three respondents sought no help or found no benefit from the help sought. Jordan questioned whether there were sufficient services that were relevant to men available (p.53).

Since the first study took place there has been continuing interest in Jordan's work and how men coped with separation and whether there have been changes in men's behaviour and attitudes about relationships and separation. A subsequent study (1998), which began in 1994, provided a longitudinal view of men's adaptive processes over some years using the experiences of men who separated in 1983, men who separated in 1993, and the follow-up group to the first study. Men in each of the samples felt severe emotional pain at the time of separation; physical and health complaints were common, as were problems of daily living. Those still living alone several years after separation/divorce were the most likely to have problems. When factors from the 1984 and 1994 studies, and the follow-up samples, were combined, there was a consistency of experiences in both groups of men. The implications of the research for counselling men was that it was fundamental for men to '... focus on this particular period at the time of separation ...before they shut down their hurt by suppressing or externalising it' (original emphasis, p.9). The data



suggested that men from the 1994 sample tended to blame women for the breakdown in the relationship even more than the men from the 1984 sample. Jordan argued that this indicated a need for counselling services to be '...attentive to the needs of men in this situation and to provide them with time, consideration and opportunities to be heard and understood...respondent men projected blame onto external factors beyond themselves...one of the purposes of counselling would be to create an environment where the men could begin to understand their role and responsibilities for their relationship ending' (p.29). Jordan states that of significance in his research was the extent to which the men valued their relationships and their children.

'Unfortunately it would seem they did not spend the effort and time necessary to maintain and nurture the relationship prior to separation, or maybe that they did not know how to or that they were reluctant or unwilling to seek outside assistance. For men, one of the great challenges is to reconsider and possibly redevelop their working and social lives so that their relationships and families receive the priority necessary for ongoing nurture, maintenance and fulfilment'. (p.30)

Jordan's research findings are pertinent to this study as asking the participants about their perceptions of being a man includes at its centre obtaining their attitudes and beliefs about relationships, parenting and the balance of work and family life.

## Summary

This brief review of studies relevant to the current research suggests several major topic areas that are significant for many of today's boys and men. It became apparent that different issues were important at various ages, such as a sense of belonging with peers, having a close relationship, maintaining sports and other interests, and having a good job. A wide range of methodologies was

used, but structured questionnaires and interviews appeared to be the most common. In many studies involving adolescents, the researchers made clear their awareness of their powerful position both as researchers, and as adults. By asking large groups of adolescents about their interests and concerns researchers gain vital insights into understanding the emotional and social world of young people. Only by listening to today's youth can programs and services be designed which help boys and men not only adapt to change, but influence the way change is manifest. There seems to this researcher to be a need to look at young men's perceptions, feelings and attitudes about their future as men.

Some central themes, detailed below, emerged from the literature review and served as a guide for contextualising the survey designed for this study.

- 1) beliefs and attitudes about egalitarianism and gender role perceptions
- 2) relationships, including with a significant other, their family and friends
- 3) work and work/home balance
- 4) whether there is confusion or optimism about being a man.

The many specific questions arising from the literature review formed the basis of the survey (which is discussed in the next chapter and displayed in Appendix 3). A summary of these questions is detailed in Table 1.

### Questions underpinning the survey

<p>Do the young men in this study appear to be confused about what it means to be a man in today's society given that manhood is being challenged?</p>
<p>Do participants describe family as being important to them? What is their concept of family?</p>
<p>How do participants envisage their work/employment? Will it dominate their lives in terms of interest and time?</p>
<p>Do participants value their relationship with parents? Do they have a close contact with their parents? Most schools of psychology describe the relationship an individual has with their parents as being central to a healthy self-concept, sense of identity and functioning.</p>
<p>What do participants say about friendship? Do they appear to have close bonds with their peers? Is friendship important to them?</p>
<p>Is being manly seen by participants as needing to be 'a winner'? Do the participants in this survey subscribe to the traditional concepts of being physical and strong?</p>
<p>Silverstein (1994 p.76) describes 'new men' as needing to be strong, silent types as well as being emotionally available, aggressive and empathic, tough and gentle and so on. How do the participants in this study envisage being adult men?</p>
<p>How does the debate in the media about masculinity and the perceived need for men to be better partners, fathers, and friends, seem to have influenced participants in this study? Do they refer to the media?</p>
<p>Are the participants generally 'nervous' and 'insecure' about their masculinity as described by Segal (1990, p.130)? Or do participants appear secure about their future as men?</p>
<p>How does one behave like a man if the definition is unclear?</p>
<p>Who do participants put forward as their role model or person they looked up to?</p>

Are the instrumental-expressive characteristics described by Talcott Parsons envisaged by participants? Do they conform to the supposed traditional social beliefs of “nurturing mother” and “responsible father” which are typified by men denying notions of caring and instead embracing the competitive world of “men” typified by business, politics, sport?

Connell’s (1987, 1994, 1995) thesis on the dominance and subordination between different types of masculinity in an all male school is shown through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate and exploit, particularly in the school yard. The present study, by posing questions that explore the participants’ views about their impending manhood using an anonymous supervised questionnaire, avoided peer group pressure. Under these circumstances how evident in their perception of their desired future adult lives is a subscription by participants to the hegemonic model of masculinity?

What degree of choice do participants perceive themselves as having with regard to who they are and what they become as men?

Davies (1996) when describing feminist objectives states: ‘The radical moves are aimed at dismantling conceptions of the natural and “correct” hegemony of the particular group that has traditionally held unquestioned power’ (p.12). Middle class privately educated students at a single sex school fit into this description and have arguably the most adjustment to make. Do they describe a sense of being under siege, or an understanding of the desire for equality?

The traditional qualities of competitive and aggressive masculinity are described by Kay as being associated with the type of school, parents, and culture to which the participants belong. Were alternative forms of masculinity evident in this school?

Do participants appear to identify more with traditional ideas of how to be a man or to ideas that belong more to the ‘new man’?

Do the participants in this study appear to have sexist attitudes commonly held to be a product of private single sex boys schools, or do they have an egalitarian outlook?

What beliefs and attitudes do participants have about men’s and women’s roles in society? Is there a sense that participants believe in equality, fairness, for men and women in relationships?

Do participants appear to have a secure sense of self-respect and sense of what it means to be a man without being chauvinistic?

<p>Do participants perceive work as being their priority in the future or do they describe commitment to family and balance in their lives as what they aspire to?</p>
<p>Do participants share a sense of unfairness with Mackay's (1995) group of men who feel that they are doing far more of the traditionally female chores than women are doing male ones, and working much harder since equal opportunities came in for women?</p>
<p>Do participants believe they would be happiest if they could be more involved in parenting and family tasks than their fathers were?</p>
<p>Do participants describe feeling comfortable with women's equality at work?</p>
<p>Do participants describe the possibility of staying at home to look after the children if their wives are the main breadwinners?</p>
<p>What are these young men telling us about their impending manhood and all that the future holds for them?</p>

Table 1

## Chapter 4      Methodology

### Introduction

This chapter begins by giving an overview of the frequently contested nature of methodology in the social sciences. The stances of quantitative and qualitative analysis are often perceived as opposing, the differences encompassing the *objective vs. subjective* view of the world. This researcher hopes to show how this research dilemma was analysed given that either or both of these supposed antithetical stances seemed to lend themselves to this study. The stages involved in the development of the research design are looked at and the research approach, a survey questionnaire, described. A description of the participants and of the culture, namely the school, in which the study is situated follows. To conclude this chapter an account of the implementation of the survey, the analysis process, and some research reflections are given.

### Methodology review

Methodology is taken to be a research framework, an orientation for research in which are embedded knowledge, assumptions about the nature of reality, and a conception of the relationship of the researcher and the researched.

Historically, social research has its roots in either an objective, scientific approach or a subjective, interpretive approach. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) describe the quantity-quality debate as having been anchored within two apparently opposed epistemological traditions: 'The two poles are known variously as 'experimental', 'hypothetico-deductive' or 'positivist' and 'naturalistic', 'contextual' or 'interpretive' approaches respectively' (p.98). These terms seem to be used interchangeably in the literature.

## Positivism

The methodological approach most often used in both social and educational research over the last two or three decades has been based on the empirical quantitative perspective. Firestone (1987) describes quantitative research as being largely based on a positivist approach which assumes that there are social facts that are rooted in objective reality, individual perceptions and beliefs are not accounted for. The positivist approach has an empirical base which is underpinned by the natural science / experimental model (Henwood and Pidgeon 1992, p.97). The positivist paradigm adheres to a realist ontology and seeks quantifiable information obtained through what are thought to be objective investigations and analysis such as hard data, controlled trials, randomised samples and reliable results, all derived from using scientific methodology and presented in numerical form. The researcher takes an impartial and neutral stance. The natural science model has a reductionist approach to human consciousness. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) describe this approach as viewing reality as consisting of a world of objectively defined facts using the hypothetico-deductive method as the principal means by which causal relationships are established.

## Naturalism

The naturalistic or interpretive paradigm is one of the major epistemological positions taken by social scientific research. Researchers belonging to this approach include phenomenologists and ethnographers who acknowledge that their evidence will be subjective. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) view qualitative methodology as a descriptive investigation of phenomena from the viewpoint of the participant which leads the investigator towards an untested yet emergent theory accounting for the complex nature of that phenomena (p.97-111). Qualitative methods are committed to exploring and understanding subjectivity, people are both source and resource in this approach. The aim is to understand the complexity and richness of people's experience within their

own unique social context. Firestone describes qualitative research as being rooted in a paradigm which views reality as socially constructed through the individual in a cultural context (1987). The notion of one unequivocal world is rejected and the idea that reality is socially constructed and culturally and historically situated embraced. The social constructionist frame was discussed in Chapter 2.

A central tenet of naturalistic research is that theory is generated in the course of analysing qualitative data. This idea was originally put forward by Glaser and Strauss in *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967) and is the polar opposite to the positivist approach which sets out to prove a preformulated theory. This researcher aims to be aware of the constant interplay between data and conceptualisation or as Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) put it the 'flip-flop between ideas and research experience' (p.104). They argue that naturalistic research '.... acknowledges the ways in which research activity *inevitably* shapes and constitutes the object of inquiry; the researcher and the researched are characterised as interdependent in the social process of research. This can be termed the reflexive character of research' (p.106). Anderson and Poole (1998) describe this as meanings in context being stressed ( p 26). Bouma (1996) adds that 'Qualitative researchers are often concerned to empower those studied and to ensure that the results of the research are available to be used by them' (p.184). Context remains at the fore of this research and its analysis, so, as the study is context specific, no other group of participants would do, it is these young men, in their particular school, who are being studied.

### **Discussion and limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches**

In qualitative research where sampling has not been random or made on other statistical grounds, the research cannot aim to generalise the findings. The present study used purposive sampling. The



exclusivity of the subjects means that the results of the study can not be regarded as a reflection of a more general population. The positivist approach would regard this as a limitation. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest that researchers talk in terms of transferability, rather than generalisability, of findings.

When looking at attitudes and beliefs in this study I focussed on what and how rather than why questions. Some research aims to primarily describe, to answer questions like how many, who and what, and to add to our knowledge of the social world (McNeill, 1985,p.9). Beliefs are difficult to quantify other than by averages and percentages. Quantification allowed the researcher to ascertain how many participants held certain beliefs and attitudes. This painted a broad picture, however using statistics alone would not have given this study depth.

Qualitative analysis is inclusive because it views participants as central to the research project. It has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 1996, p.61). This puts participants on a more equal footing with the researcher and as a counsellor this stance fits for me. It is important for this study that context is not stripped away by only emphasising statistical significance, because as Fielding (1994) explains, if context is stripped away differences may be explained from the researcher's perspective or assumptions. He also argues that researchers often: '... reify stereotypes when they use "established" scales...' to measure for example degrees of masculinity and femininity (p.426). However when used to triangulate - discussed below - which may include some scaling questions, as this study does, it can build up a vibrant picture of those being studied. To render the study rigorous and acceptable, I feel it is important to use both accepted scales, quantitative data, and qualitative data which present the participants' worlds and views. When a major aim is to hear what the participants have to say, the manner in which this is reported has to be valid and authentic. The

participants in this study are variously seen as minors and therefore with few rights, (children) or privileged and therefore not as socially needy (private school students). The qualitative approach allowed the participants to express in their own words what they thought about being a man.

Qualitative research with its focus on the unmeasurable and use of subjective data means that it can lack scientific rigour or be perceived as 'waffly'. Wolcott (1995) explains it nicely: 'Qualitative approaches represent a different way to achieve a different kind of understanding, one that appeals to those who find satisfaction in partial or tentative explanations of what is going on without the hope of ever quite achieving the authority of cause-and-effect studies. Every way of knowing has its place' (p.163). The emphasis in qualitative methods is on the validity of the data collected. In this research it is what the participants write about their perceptions and attitudes about being men that is placed at the forefront of the analysis. It could be argued that this emphasis may not produce reliable or representative results. However, integral to this study is the concept that social reality is not objective or external but is a construction of shared meanings and interpretations.

By reviewing the methodology literature this researcher gained some clarification concerning the merits of both qualitative and quantitative methods and whether using one analytical approach precluded using the other. It is important to choose an approach that fits best with the questions posed by the study, with the capabilities of the researcher and with the needs of the participants.

### Triangulation

Combining, or triangulating, qualitative and quantitative methods is not uncommon. Many writers advocate using more than one type of approach in a study, giving a 'binocular' focus. Firestone (1987) argues that when used separately, qualitative and quantitative studies provide different kinds of information but that:

‘When focused on the same issue, qualitative and quantitative studies can triangulate, that is, use different methods to assess the robustness or stability of findings. Where studies using different methods have similar results, one can be more certain that the findings are not influenced by the methodology’ (p.20).

Fielding (1994) agrees: ‘Triangulation not only provides the advantages of different techniques for getting information, but it provides opportunities for cross-checking and situating human events within their wider context’ (p.426). This includes examination of archival material, such as the literature review. The feminist researcher Reinharz (1992) outlines feminist criticism of statistics, which are generally seen as part of a patriarchal culture looking only for ‘hard facts’. However she goes on to argue for the inclusion of quantifiable facts when they are combined with other methods (p.93).

This study used triangulation to obtain its results. The questionnaires used in the survey combine both qualitative and quantitative data and the study used both primary data in the form of information obtained through the survey and secondary data from the literature review and archival and observed data from the school. Central to the argument for combining methods is that each approach can provide insight to the research issue in a way that neither method could on its own. Triangulation is therefore defined as the use of differing research methods to target and examine aspects of the research questions.

### **Research mission and purpose of the research**

Hadley and Mitchell (1995) describe the entire set of reasons why any project is being carried out as its *mission*. A project’s mission is more than its research questions. They argue that when expressing the purpose of the research its questions are outlined, but why answers to these questions

are sought is left to supporting discussions of the project's purpose (p.17). De Vaus (1990) argues that: 'With either descriptive or explanatory research it is necessary to have a frame of reference within which to interpret the results -a frame of reference that enables one to do more than simply report the results' (p.33). In other words a context is needed to make sense of the data. This context encompasses not only the social but also the historical, the culture of the participants and the broad picture given by the literature review. This project used a descriptive and exploratory research approach. Ary, Jacob and Razavieh in Hadley and Mitchell (1995) succinctly noted that the purpose of descriptive studies is 'to tell what is'. Hadley and Mitchell argue that in purely descriptive studies the idea of cause is often absent from the research question, though questions of causality may appear elsewhere in the study (p.32). This study, in making correlations and tentative links may point at times to cause, however it is not the major purpose.

Only after taking into account all of the voices of boys and men can a valid picture be drawn. The aims of the study therefore were to obtain and examine the attitudes held by years 10 and 11 at a single sex school about what it means to be a man in today's society. It was hoped that from their descriptions and perceptions indicators could emerge which offered insights into the confusion about what it means to be a man in Australia today. If the findings indicated either a positive or negative outlook on manhood what could account for this? I also wanted to assess the conventional wisdom, which holds that schools like this produce particular forms of hegemonic masculinity. Listening to their voice was the research imperative. I wanted them to be able to express this without coercion or feeling they had to portray a masculinity that was desired from them. The perceived alienation and confusion of young men in Australia is of concern to our society as a whole and also as a counselling issue. Looking at young men from all perspectives will illuminate our understanding.

## **Research design**

### **The survey approach**

Valid description is critical in all research and is important in its own right and one category of descriptive approach is survey research. The research questions of a survey generally describe defined groups of people. The survey used in this study describes two year levels in one school. Marsh (1982) states simply: 'A survey is performed to better understand something' (p.126). She describes the survey method as not only being a way of collecting data but also a way of analysing the results. Further definition refers to the subject matter as being social, where systematic measurements are made and data are analysed to see whether a pattern emerges (p.6). Hadley and Mitchell (1995) add: 'A survey is a research approach or a project based on this approach, not an instrument for data collection such as a questionnaire or interview' (p.211). Although the use of survey research design has traditionally used only quantitative data collection methods and low level researcher participation, this is no longer the norm in social research. Survey research designs now often involve more than one technique and method of data collection using the strengths of one method to compensate for the weaknesses of another in the overall research design.

Designing a survey entails a two pronged approach. Participants are chosen and an instrument developed or chosen for collecting data (Hadley and Mitchell, 1995). The instrument may use a combination of existing and specifically developed tools, as is the case in this study. The term survey is used for research in which information is obtained through the responses that a sample of participants gives to questions. The orientation of the research to the participants is to treat them as informants. Only they can provide the details about their attitudes and beliefs in which the researcher is interested (Marsh 1982, p.126). Questionnaires are a central feature of the survey process. The questionnaires used must be tailored to the study's purpose. It was therefore imperative for this researcher not only to immerse herself in the literature on what it means to be a

man in Australia today and the various frames from which views emerge, but to be aware of both the school's philosophy with regard to masculinity and the student culture. Wilks' (1992) study with adolescents supports the use of structured questionnaire items based on literature reviews combined with open ended measures for more in-depth probing into the specific survey situation. In some personal correspondence Peter West asserts 'I don't use questionnaires, they don't probe beyond the shields that men feel it necessary to wear'. Perhaps surprisingly, feminist researchers, with whom I share the concern to hear the individual voice and a suspicion that statistical manipulation of data depletes the richness of the data and fails to listen to the individual voice, have recently taken up survey methodology (Reinharz,1992).

#### **Development of questionnaire design**

In Chapter 3 the topics undertaken by social and educational researchers concerning adolescents and their interests and concerns were outlined. The main topics included relationships with parents and peers, school and work, drug and alcohol use and self-concept (Heaven 1994). This study hopes to add some insight into the perceptions some young men have about what being a man means. To fit in with the prerequisites of the school, and to add weight to the findings of this study, it was decided that a questionnaire survey would be appropriate.

Wilks (1992) argues that structured questionnaires are often used in studies involving large numbers of participants:

'...and although some authors criticise the structured formats for imposing predetermined adult values on adolescent respondents (Smith 1980), it is interesting to note that the same clusters of interests and concerns emerge from a range of different studies using various methodologies' ( p.49).

When constructing the survey consideration was given to the tension between data richness and the need for its management. Some point form questions were used, scaling was used, and one section of the survey was open-ended allowing for the individual stories to be told. The researcher took care to produce a concise questionnaire, lengthy or difficult questionnaires contribute to non-completion and lack of interest by participants (Bouma, 1996, McNeill, 1985, Oppenheim, 1966).

The first three sections of the survey were based on the themes and markers that emerged from the literature review and my knowledge of the school. These were, beliefs and attitudes about egalitarianism and gender role perceptions, relationships, family, work, leisure and work/home balance, and outlook on the future. The questionnaire also dealt with a variety of background and demographic factors.

The questionnaire data helped to describe the research issue. By using two lenses, or methods, to focus on this research a broader picture was aimed for than would be possible if only one approach had been used. The quantitative data established some trends and patterns and the qualitative analysis was concerned with providing conceptual depth to the study. The responses to the survey were tabulated, averages and percentages calculated and graphs and tables produced. Perceptions concerning the qualitative written responses were analysed and commonality presented in the form of frequency bar graphs. Written responses are liberally quoted to give voice to the participants and to add weight and colour to the analysis.

The survey was guided both by the research question and the population sampled. The researcher's aim was that the survey be viewed as an integrated whole. Each section and every question should serve a purpose and complement the other. Answers to survey questions may be affected by the questions that precede them. The way a question is asked affects the participants, their responses

reflect this directly (Reinharz 1992, p. 87). The ordering of the sections in this survey was carefully structured to facilitate the participant's meaningful response to section 3 which was regarded by both the researcher and the participants in the pilot study as the most difficult to respond to. I anticipated that this section would also give the research its central core and reflect my aim of hearing the participants' voices. The two sections preceding section 3 acted as a gradual introduction to the themes being explored, as a warm-up, and sowing seeds for further thought. They were also easy to understand and generated a rapid response. De Vaus (1990) states that: 'Typically attitudes and opinions are complex and are best measured with a number of questions to capture the scope of the concept' (p.51).

The method of inquiry adopted thus arises from the research literature. Another key factor was the stated preference by the headmaster for a questionnaire approach. Random verbal sampling of the participants added weight to this rationale. They felt that a questionnaire would elicit a greater response than would an intervention, such as interviews or focus groups. The significance of the model of inquiry will reflect on the validity and reliability of the results.

### Research instrument

The research instrument took the form of a four part questionnaire. The title '*Having Your Say: A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man*' headed the front page. The researcher chose a title that would put the participants at the forefront of the research and, quite simply, make them feel that what they were about to write about themselves mattered and was important. The study was then described and it was also stated that participants' responses were anonymous and confidentiality was assured. They were told they could withdraw from the survey at any time. This



was followed by a brief instruction page and then by the four sections of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2).

Section 1 asked some general background questions some of which were demographic in nature. It also looked at influences. I was interested in constructing a broad picture about the participants' family life, whether they felt close to someone, had role models, felt the school and their peers were an influence on them, what they watched on T.V and whether they found the issue of being a man/masculinity confusing. This section involved mostly choosing a single response, for example, *Please circle one answer to questions unless it specifies otherwise.* It took approximately 10 minutes to complete (see Appendix 3).

Section 2 asked the participants to respond to statements relating to ways of being men on a Likert type scale. The construction of these statements was carefully undertaken and emerged from a synthesis of issues and ideas in the literature and conversations with young men of this age. A report by Maria Chiarolli (1992) of research that she conducted in early 1990 proved particularly useful in obtaining some of the stereotypes put forward in this section.

Oppenheim (1966) argues that if one is wanting to explore attitude patterning then the Likert procedure is probably the most relevant. A five-position continuum is the most commonly used. Participants place themselves on an attitude continuum for each statement running from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'uncertain', 'disagree', and 'strongly disagree'. These five positions are given simple weights of 5 4 3 2 and 1 for scoring purposes. More complex scoring methods have been shown to possess no advantage ( p. 132-133). Section 2 can be coded simply by applying two major attitudinal values, traditional, hegemonic views on one end of the scale and modern, egalitarian, views on the other. Because a scale was used in responding to this section it did not matter which

way the questions appeared to be loaded. Each statement was pre-coded individually, for example, Q.7 *A man needs to show everyone that he is boss*. Circling 1 on the scale would indicate very traditional views, circling 5 would indicate the opposite. This section took approximately 7 minutes to complete (see Appendix 4).

Section 3 asked the participants to write down their own thoughts on the topic of being a man. A major research aim as stated was to hear the voices of the boys participating in the survey. Participants were encouraged to take at least 20 minutes on this section. Three vignettes were posed as statements to prompt the participants to write their own descriptions. During the pilot survey a major concern of mine was how to frame this section. Two ideas were put to the participants of the pilot survey, one a very open version simply asking them to describe how they envisaged themselves as men in the future. The second idea, the vignettes mentioned above, was the version ultimately considered most 'user friendly'. Participants in the pilot study helped to phrase these questions (see Appendix 5). At the bottom of the page participants were asked whether they had difficulty describing how they saw themselves as men and whether they had thought of this before. In analysing this section, the aim was to avoid presenting the contents as a distillation into academic prose but rather have the participants speak for themselves.

Section 4 uses the *Australian Sex Role Scale*, called by the authors the *Personality Description Questionnaire* when given to participants. This neutral language decreases the risk that participants be influenced by the suggestion that they are undertaking a 'sex role survey'. It is as a personality description questionnaire, rather than as a scale, that it is used in this study. The ASRS was designed to measure both positive and negative masculine and feminine characteristics as well as socially desirable and undesirable characteristics. For the purposes of this study the scale was used

in a modified way, the aim being to get an idea of how participants described themselves now, utilising the adjectives selected by the authors. The ASRS developed by Antill *et al.* (1981) is an established Australian scale, using a Likert type scale for measurement. For the purposes of this research the scale was used to measure how often a characteristic was used to describe how participants saw themselves now and not to *test* participants concept of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The ASRS has two alternative survey forms, termed Form A and Form B. Russell and Antill (1984) found however that form A showed higher degrees of validity than form B and recommended that form A be the preferred research alternative. As a result, in this study, form A of the ASRS was used in the survey instrument.

The scale is composed of a list of fifty adjectives which are divided into five subsets: (1) ten positive masculine characteristics; (2) ten negative masculine characteristics; (3) ten positive feminine characteristics; (4) ten negative feminine characteristics; and (5) ten neutral items made up of five desirable and five undesirable social characteristics. This section took approximately 5 minutes to complete and was used in this study as a cross reference for the other sections of the survey and to enhance and triangulate findings (see Appendix 6).

In brief, the questionnaire survey consisted of a combination of forced choice questions, yes/no, circling a letter, ticking, and scaling, with open-ended questions encouraging individual written responses. This triangulation of methods combined a necessary parsimony and simplicity with exploratory opportunities to assess outcomes allowing the opinions and voices of the participants to be heard. As described above, the literature shows that a choice of responses is best for both the researcher and the participants, giving a rich database useful in social analysis. My study is exploratory and descriptive looking at the attitudes and perceptions of this particular group. Analysis will test for frequency of responses as an indicator of trends, there can be no attempt at

generalising the findings. Tentative suggestions about the usefulness of the findings will be made within the context of the research (Bouma, 1996, p.119).

## **The School**

### **Background to the school**

Canberra Grammar is a corporate single sex boys school founded in 1929. It is the only Anglican boys school in Canberra, and the only boarding school. Conventional wisdom perceives this type of school as subscribing to the concept of hegemonic masculinity and producing boys with a power ethic, competitive, tough and aggressive with a particular way, 'the way', of viewing the world and their relationship in it (discussed in chapter 2 with particular reference to Connell, Kenway and Davies). Certainly the stereotype of masculinity perceived as being a product of schools such as this exists. Kay (1994) quotes Kenway who describes boys whose '...masculinity is strongly associated with physicality, drinking, water sports and being 'social' ' (p.4). There is no doubt this masculinity exists at Canberra Grammar School but there are many other ways of being masculine that this school presents, accepts, and rewards. In his study of which masculinities the school encouraged and exalted, Kay identified seven notions of masculinity, namely 'the man as scholar', 'the man as sportsman', 'the man as leader', 'the sensitive man', 'the Christian man', 'the man as performing artist', and 'the whole man'. He argues that it was difficult to compare the relative support for each notion of masculinity but the order as presented here was a loose hierarchy as he perceived it. In essence he argued that the school's culture presents alternative, multiple and contested masculinities to boys. Kay in a paper (1997) summarising his work, also illuminated the headmaster's pivotal role in encouraging multiple masculinities. He states that the headmaster and deputy headmaster's apparent support for 'the sensitive man' suggested that nurturing was

important to the school (p.3), and further that ‘ the leaders promote the notion of “the person”, rather than this or that “man” ’. He quotes the headmaster: -

‘...the notions of masculinity being exalted at C.G.S are more and more those relating to boys that try rather than bludge; aspire to the best rather than settle for she’ll be right; respect the capable and the versatile and the achiever, rather than knock, mock or despise him; recognise the winner, who is a doer, rather than the “loser”, who is someone who doesn’t help himself, or have pride/self-respect; accept the giver/carer rather than thinking he’s wet...etc. I believe this is the way things are moving here, and I hope we can do our little bit to “change the world” in this direction’ (p.5).

The values expressed here are very different to those hegemonic values traditionally associated with this type of school.

The philosophy expressed in *Towards 2000*, a school publication, underpins the school’s approach to valuing change, integral in promoting several masculinities:

‘At Canberra Grammar School we will always strive to find the proper balance between continuity and change. Traditions in a school are valuable in so far as they symbolise or promote character and lasting values. The importance of being open to change is axiomatic: those of us who cannot adjust to change will fall by the wayside’ (p.7).

The belief that students’ learning should be essentially fourfold is also expressed in *Towards 2000*.

*They should learn to learn* - to develop the motivation and resources to be responsible for their own learning.

*They should learn to give* - to develop a sense of responsibility, a concern for the welfare of others and a desire to give of their gifts.

*They should learn to stand* - to build strong foundations for their behaviour and a code of ethics by which to live... a desire for discipline.

*They should learn to fly* - to develop a spirit of inquiry and adventure, a desire to explore, have visions, reach out, take off... a desire for freedom.

My sense of the school came from several sources. Curriculum content and the structuring of each cycle is too large an area to describe, but selected influences of which I was aware may further illuminate the school and learning culture of which the students participating in my survey were a part. A strong pastoral care program at the school which involves regular tutor groups and a mentoring system between older and younger boys is part of a supportive House system. The valuing of difference and cultural diversity was a strong theme in school assemblies and the weekly newsletter (The Gazette). The headmaster's report on Speech Day 1997, spoke of this and also the increasing involvement of the school and of the students in the community, of the growth of a sense of caring for others evidenced in several community initiatives.

The school celebrates aspects of achievement in all spheres. Attending concerts, debates, drama productions, art exhibitions and sporting events on a frequent basis also gave an insight into the ethos of the school. One such art exhibition during the course of my research was entitled

*Masculinity.* Art students in year 11 were engaged in looking at masculinity in a representational way. An exhibition of their work was held in the school gallery with a formal evening cocktail opening and guest speaker. The students produced a program which outlined their sense of being young men fitting into a society defined by previous generations, it also stated:- 'Traditionally schools often have stereotypes for male students which revolve around achievement in sport. We see the existence of an exhibition of this nature as a positive statement about the development of boys' education'. Perhaps the hope expressed by John Bednall (1995) at an Education Forum at Canberra Grammar School, that boys schools should seek to liberate their students from the oppression of gender stereotyping, was active at this school. When describing the students perceptions of their future as men would this emerge?

Establishing contact with the school.

The research area having been established and the sample group identified, the first step was to create a mutually beneficial relationship with the school. The process of introducing the research idea to the headmaster was facilitated by several factors. The first of these was that I was already known to him as a parent of two students attending the school. The second was my knowledge of his interest in actively promoting several masculinities within the school. A survey into how students perceived themselves as men would therefore probably not pose a threat. A third aspect, which I was made aware of when researching the possibility of implementing my survey at the school, was that a study looking at how masculinity was envisaged within the school had been supported by the headmaster. This research had been conducted by a member of staff, Geoff Kay, between 1991 and 1993. As a senior housemaster it was considered inappropriate for him to survey or talk directly to the boys for his study. Instead his research looked at how masculinity was promoted within and by the school, discussed previously in Chapter 3.

There were many informal discussions with the participants, friends of my sons visiting at home, at sporting fixtures and other activities at the school. Generally immersing myself in school activities added colour to the picture I was building. In other words, I had a general sense of the school and the young men at the school.

The school culture seemed to me to be one which created a context in which students could make rational and informed decisions about what it means to be a man themselves, a view expressed as being desirable by Bednall (1995). Researching this material about the school gave my study another dimension. I could now test out in some way whether these masculinities came to life in the students perceptions and attitudes about how they saw themselves as men. This would clearly emerge as a dimension in the analysis of results and something from which the school could gain. Being allowed to survey students in a school brings with it responsibilities both to the school as an institution and to the students, my participants. I was being entrusted with describing their perceptions and attitudes, giving them voice; I told them this on the front page of the survey (see Appendix 1). The students, their parents and the staff ultimately gave me an entire period of a core subject - this having been established as the best time from the researcher's point of view, when greatest application could be expected. I took this responsibility seriously and wanted to give them something back. Whatever the results they could clearly not be separated from the school as an institution of influence. Outcomes would undoubtedly reflect school values and attitudes.

Following successful negotiations and the acceptance of my research idea, I was actively supported by the headmaster who invited me to attend a staff in-service day, introduced my survey to parents in the school newsletter (*The Grammar Gazette*, No. 10, May 1 1998), and asked me to meet a visiting American scholar on masculinity in schools, to talk about my research. I was introduced to



the senior executive staff and the study was discussed with them. Communication was very open and productive over several meetings. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were introduced by me and were at the fore of discussions. Once the headmaster and executive had approved the study, a letter to this effect was attached to the completed ethics proposal form and submitted to the university ethics committee.

### Sampling

As in much social research the process of sampling for this study was purposive (Anderson and Poole, 1998, p. 27 and Bouma, 1996, p.119). This type of sampling occurs when it is known that a particular group is needed for the study. The participants were chosen to fill a perceived gap in the literature. Canberra Grammar School is the only single sex boys school in Canberra, other than catholic schools. All students in years 10 and 11 were potential participants, 340 students in all. In year 10 of 164 potential participants 2 were exempt because parents declined permission, 13 were on camp, giving a total of 149 year 10 participants. In year 11 of a potential 176 participants there were no exemptions, 8 were absent from school, giving a total of 168 year 11 participants. From the returned questionnaires 6 year 10 participants were identified as either sons of foreign diplomats or short term exchange students. Since what this study attempts to describe is culturally specific, short stay overseas students were not required to participate; their completed questionnaires were not entered onto the database.

### Pilot study

The questionnaire was pre-tested in May 1998 to assess whether there were any problems with wording, question construction and question content. The participants used in the pilot study were

students of the same age as those who were to be investigated in the actual survey. The participants were asked to comment on any questions which they felt were intrusive, incomprehensible, or ambiguous. They were also asked how long it took them to read the cover page, which outlined the survey in some detail, plus a second page of brief guidelines on how to answer the 4 sections of the questionnaire. They also recorded the time it took them to complete each section. The time allowed for the implementation of this survey was one class period of 45 minutes, the format therefore had to be tailored to this need. The results of this pilot survey showed that the questionnaire did fit into the required time frame, and the time test facilitated the eventual instructions given to each administrator of the survey.

Participants were asked to contact me if any questions had raised issues on which they were dwelling or could not resolve by talking to someone. It was important that since there was to be no follow-up contact with the participants after the survey was implemented that questions of a confronting nature be excluded.

### Questionnaire administration

The Director of Studies, one of the executive staff, was appointed my liaison person at the school. With him I discussed the letter and permission form to go to each parent of year 10 and 11 students informing them of the study in detail. The school decided to endorse the letter as coming from them and used my original letter as a draft (see Appendix 7 and Appendix 8). Permission forms were attached to each letter, which the school then posted to parents (see Appendix 9). The headmaster had granted my request that the survey be done during periods when students would normally be expecting to apply themselves with some rigour. The Director of Studies spoke to the heads of the English and Mathematics departments and scheduled a time during week five of term three, August 1998, for the implementation of the survey. The school also undertook the printing and cost of the

survey questionnaire. I wrote guidelines for the administration of the survey which included some time prompts, based on the pilot study, and urged teachers to encourage application, but to avoid walking around the room so that students felt free to write their answers without being observed (see Appendix 10). Instructions about the validity and confidentiality of the survey were attached to the back of each envelope containing the surveys given to the teachers (see Appendix 11). The students were to complete the survey in their normal classes and classrooms. Fifteen teachers were involved in administering the survey, seven in year 10 and eight in year 11. The surveys were pre-numbered to 376. The difference between the number of students participating and the number of surveys issued was 65, allowing for aborted efforts and restarts. All the surveys completed, and the extra copies, were collected immediately upon completion in the sealed envelopes provided. The tight administrative control ensured no copies were unaccounted for.

#### The process of analysis

Although this researcher had no involvement with the participants during the implementation of the survey, my involvement with the students and the school prior to the construction of the survey was in *a sense* that of a participant observer. Insight gained from my knowledge of the school could be checked against survey data. At the very least my knowledge of the school did not render me impartial and I engaged in a reflexive process during the analysis process.

The process of analysis involves a search for meaning through explanation and understanding. Concepts are tested or advanced and developed. My survey asked the participants about attitudes and beliefs and looked at how these were perceptualised. De Vaus (1990) distinguishes between attitudes and beliefs as follows:

‘The focus of belief questions is on establishing what people think is true rather than on the accuracy of their beliefs. Belief questions can be distinguished from those that aim to establish the respondents *attitudes*. Whereas belief questions ascertain what the respondent thinks is true, attitude questions try to establish what they think is *desirable*’ (p.82).

Both these types of questions are included in sections 1, 2, and 3. Oppenheim (1966) argues that attitudes are reinforced by beliefs which are strongly felt. ‘As a rule, attitudes are acquired or modified by absorbing, or reacting to, the attitudes of other people’ (p.111). This research aims to describe how the students who participated in the survey perceive themselves as men. Several questions will be posed in the discussion (see chapter 6) and tentative answers to some of these questions offered. De Vaus (1990) outlines questions that are designed to obtain information about the respondents characteristics in the sense of attributes and traits. These questions include information generally demographic in nature, age, education, ethnicity, and questions about personality traits. This type of question is asked in sections 1 and 4 of the present survey and is intended to give information that can perhaps begin to look at links between answers given by the respondents. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) venture that qualitative and quantitative research procedures can be viewed simply as ‘...different forms of the analytic practice of re-representation in science, in that both seek to rearrange the complexities of ‘raw’ data’(p.99). They add that the use of one or the other approach or the combination of both, are often based on pragmatic rather than epistemological grounds. The choice is to do with suitability in answering the research questions. For the present research the quantitative data in sections 1, 2 and 4 of the questionnaire helps to describe the research issue. The qualitative nature of section 3 and associated analysis is concerned with providing conceptual depth and insight.

## Analysis of questionnaires

As mentioned earlier the methodology for this study comprised the combination between the two perceived opposing approaches of qualitative and quantitative research and analysis. A triangulation of these methods and the use of secondary data was used. The method took the form of a multi-sectioned questionnaire asking both closed and open-ended questions. Analysis of the content utilised both quantitative and qualitative approaches by way of establishing and examining both trends and individual responses.

Managing both quantitative and qualitative data involves reducing its size and scope so that the reporting and analysis can be useful. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (1996) outline four techniques for managing data which this researcher has made use of:

1. *Coding*. The process of simplifying and standardising data for analytical purposes. The process may involve giving a numerical identity to a response.

2. *Annotating*. The process by which written material is commented upon by the researcher. This may take the form of simply highlighting words or sentences. The process aims to draw attention to significant data which may later be clustered into meaningful groups or used for later abstraction and quotation.

3. *Selection*. This is a key process in managing the data. It is acknowledged that subjectivity is involved in this process which aims to tease out significant, unusual or representative items to illustrate the argument.

4. *Summary.* The aim here is rather than choosing examples from the data to illustrate a point or theory, the body of data is reduced into a synopsis to portray the big picture (p.184).

The analysis of the qualitative data from the questionnaire comprised a threefold approach:

1. a semi-structured coding approach involving clustering responses.
2. a structured coding response involving counting responses.
3. an unstructured approach based on quoting and abstracting what the participants wrote about being a man.

Many qualitative research questions can be answered without numbers, for example by listing, quoting, summarising. However adding information such as frequencies and percentages is better in many cases than qualitative statements alone (Hadley and Mitchell, 1995, p. 147 ).The aim of the analysis in section 3 was to give voice to the participants' views using their own language, to portray as directly as possible what their attitudes are. However this researcher accepts that through the very nature of analysing data, choosing quotes and phrases which appear significant or illustrative, a selection and refinement of the words written will have occurred. It is hoped that in abstracting and drawing attention to what this researcher feels is of particular importance, insight and significance will be demonstrated.

The purpose of combining the quantitative approach with the qualitative approach in this study was to describe trends. The analysis of the quantitative data from the questionnaires and scales therefore involved:

1. direct measurement, or raw figures.
2. categories where responses have been coded.

3. percentage, a measure of proportion and
4. averages, which summarise a series of measurements.

During the process of analysis the researcher tried to be mindful of the bias of social stereotypes. Hadley and Mitchell (1995) quote Denmark, Russo, Frieze, and Sechzer (1988) who noted that some research is flawed 'because interpretive logic included social stereotypes as premises' (p.17). Among other examples these authors include: 'Differences in male and female nurturing behaviour are assumed to be biologically based because women give birth and breast-feed, even though research has determined that nurturing behaviour is strongly influenced by culture and previous experience' (p.17). Hadley and Mitchell (1995) argue that science produces more carefully reasoned arguments than common sense but that both are used in research and neither are infallible (p.17). This researcher aimed for a balance of common sense and scientific method in the process of analysing data.

#### **Reflections on the evolution of the research methods used in this study**

With the advent of the ethnographic view of research it became possible for the influence of the researcher's own subjective world to be acknowledged. This researcher's personal stance as a counsellor, of actively listening and attending to the client, lends itself to an ethnographic or case study approach to research. However, the headmaster expressed his preference for research that did not involve personal contact with the students. Implicit also in a field study undertaken by a sole researcher are the constraints of a limited time frame and budget. Wanting the study to have some weight, and ultimately for the expediency of both myself and the participants, the choice of survey research using a questionnaire was made.

On reviewing the literature on survey methodology I became aware that perhaps I would be able to construct a survey which was congruent with my beliefs. I could use both qualitative and quantitative methods in the survey. I wanted stories and some statistics to test these out. I did not want to lose the richness of the data, and the individual voice, in data condensing processes, which end up with statistical facts devoid of the human story. My study gathered a large amount of data as all boys in years 10 and 11 were asked to take part in the survey; a group of 340 potential participants.

I was encouraged by the work of Wolcott (1995) which lent weight to my own emerging needs as a researcher. He says: 'A new self-consciousness about representation, especially about *voice*, has allowed (and even encouraged) authors to put more of themselves in fieldwork-based accounts...', and 'Writing in the first person often helps' ( p.206). I have found it useful to combine the two, 'I' and 'The Researcher'. Wolcott warns of both seeking rigour in methodology at the expense of content and insight, and of becoming merely a creative writer (p.209-210). Wearing (1996) talks of letting her own voice be heard, of owning her experiences and values (p. xii) and West writing in *The Australian* argues that when we write as researchers we can not leave ourselves out of the research. We have to acknowledge that belonging to one or other sex we may see things differently, not that this always need be the case (Nov. 11 1998). Rankin agrees and argues, in an article about the convention of the literature review and writing for research in general, that we should look for more ways to include ourselves in what we write: 'Perhaps we should all be leaving more traces, in our scholarly writing, of the paths we follow as we seek answers to questions that intrigue us' (*The Australian*, April 29, 1998). This is the way I have chosen to conduct this research and write about the field study.



To develop an appropriate method tailored to this research I had to be constantly reflexive and aware of my dual position of researcher and parent. Although it was not my aim to study the school as an institution, clearly what I knew of the school and its students gave me a lens through which I perceived them. My attitudes would necessarily act as a filter process to what I absorbed and how I analysed the data. Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) state that the naturalistic paradigm ‘.... challenges the dualistic distinction between the knower and the known, leading to the realisation that the personal is always present in research’ ( p105). McLeod and Yates (1997) discuss the feminist and poststructuralist position on researcher involvement and their reflections on this issue resonated with me. They state:

‘We are highly cognisant of feminist, poststructuralist and other injunctions that the researcher be reflexive about their position, recognise their authority and power, and foreground the role they play in the construction of the truths they are apparently “discovering”. These methodological cautions tell us that the story produced by the researchers will be incomplete (since telling all stories is an impossibility) and embedded with the researchers’ own values and purposes, and indeed, in its empirical dimensions, constructed by them’ (p.26).

Before the methodology was decided upon I was already planning questions that I wanted to ask the students, not just from my knowledge of the current debate about what it is to be a man in Australia today, but also formed by my knowledge as a parent of the school. This knowledge was through everyday contact via my sons, their friends, tutors, teachers and housemaster as previously mentioned. I also had an active role on a range of committees and regularly attended school functions. Rather than attempting to survey the participants ‘cold’ so to speak, or distance myself

from the school now that I was a 'researcher', I decided to immerse myself more fully into the philosophy and ethos of the school. This sat comfortably with my belief that all research, and counselling, is culture specific, life is not acted out in laboratories. Fundamentally the researcher cannot be separated from the research.

An 'ethnographic attitude' was integral to the field study plan as devising a methodology that would suit the participants was central both in terms of my personal ethics and describing the data. Wolcott (1997) urges that studies can be a bit more ethnographic and that a little ethnography is better than none at all. He states that research needs to be more than just method. I saw method and methodology as a way of looking and a way of seeing. I also saw a tension between data richness and the need for its management, combining a need for openness and self focus with ease of answering questions for this *particular* age group.

Congruent with this belief is the acceptance of the limitations of this study. There is no claim made of scientific objectivity. The results cannot be generalised to other schools identified as belonging to this type of school. However the survey ultimately developed could certainly be used anywhere and the results would be very interesting to compare. In a sense this research is undertaken with a case study, Grounded Theory, *mentality*. The case study provides a more interesting understanding of context and is more likely to give feedback to those studied. It is therefore the more egalitarian methodology. Grounded Theory also lent its characteristic spirit and belief, it does not adhere to a purely objective analysis but expects the researcher to seek an analysis more from the viewpoint of the participants (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

## Limitations of the study

In a study such as this, which emphasises context and social construction, it is implicit from the beginning that the focus of the research is narrow. It was these students at their school who were needed in order to answer the research questions. Similar studies of both other single sex boys schools and co-educational schools would offer informative comparisons and is discussed in the final chapter as an opportunity for further research. In declaring the limitations of this study I cannot purport to be objective since my observations are focused through the questions asked in the designing of the survey. The questions asked generate the answers sought. The research goals guide the analysis and data is filtered accordingly.

This researcher acknowledges that even research which attempts to be comprehensive in its representation of participants' views, is, in the end, a personal study that reflects the values and assumptions of its author. I stated that as a counsellor I try to be aware of my position, where 'I am', and have attempted to bring this ethos into my research. To echo Wolcott's (1995) sentiments, I have endeavoured to make the survey and the account of my field study careful and accurate without losing the reflective quality which aims to make it deeply human (p.14).

## **Chapter 5: Data Presentation**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter looked at the methodology used in this study and how the decision to use a survey as an information gathering instrument was reached. This chapter presents the data from the survey. The responses that are given in the survey are the data on which the research results are based. The orientation to the data is thus 'person centred' looking at 'who gave them, under what conditions and with what significance?' (Marsh, 1982 p.126). The theoretical task is to interpret these results. The quantitative aspect of this interpretation is simply measured by figures, the qualitative by written analysis.

The survey in this study asked participants about their beliefs and attitudes about being a man and was divided into four sections. The first section sought to gain information of a demographic nature and looked at influences. The aim was to construct a broad picture about the participants' family life, school and peers. The second section posed statements which participants responded to on a Likert type scale. This section assisted in identifying beliefs and attitudes about being a man from which themes and categories emerged. The third section attempted to elicit personal written responses to three vignettes posed as statements. Participants described their future roles, expectations and relationships. The fourth section used a standardised sex role scale aimed at finding out about how the participants described themselves now. The scale also identifies sex role stereotypes and acted as a cross-reference and check for the other sections.

The results of the survey have been presented in graph, table and written format.

Section 1 used descriptive statistics. The response to each question was computed in percentage and frequency tables. Content analysis, in the form of listing and categorising was used for question 15, which was open-ended. Fifteen categories were identified and described.

Section 2 is presented in graph form. Frequency and percentage tables were computed for each question and each of the five ratings on the Likert scale. The average and standard deviation for each question is shown. A written report on this section is also included.

Content analysis of the data in Section 3 resulted in the development of a set of categories outlining the participants' perceptions and attitudes. Coding, annotating, selection and summation were utilised. A major aim during the analysis of this section was to present the participants' *own* written responses. Extensive quotes using the participants' words without editing are therefore included. This approach was adopted to hear what the participants had to say, with some commentary by the researcher.

Section 4 of the survey comprises the ASRS and was scored according to Antill *et.al.* (1981). The results are shown in table format with a brief written explanation.

There are variations in the number of responses given to questions in the survey due to some responses being incomplete. Where participants did not answer all of the questions in the survey this is commented upon by the researcher.

All students in Years 10 and 11 were potential participants (n= 340 ). Of these potential participants 311 took part in the survey giving a response rate of 90%. The breakdown is shown in Table 2 set out below.

### Sample Size and Student Response Rates

	Year 10	Year 11
Number of potential participants	164	176
Number of absentees through illness	0	8
Number of absentees through camp	13	0
Number whose parents chose not to permit participation	2	0
Number of overseas and exchange students identified and taken out of study	6	0
Actual number of participants (student response rate)	143	168

Table 2

There were no significant differences in the results of the survey between the two year levels or the age groups within them. The results are therefore analysed as a whole to gain an overall picture.

#### Survey Results: Section 1

A summary of responses is shown in Appendix 12. Comments on specific aspects are set out below.

##### 1. Demographic profile of participants (Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 19).

At the time of the survey, most participants were aged 15 (32.2%) or 16 (53.7%), and had been at the school (including primary) for over 5 years (55.3%). The vast majority lived with both parents (87.1%) with those that did not (12.9%) spending more time with their mother (57.5%) than their father (12.5%). Participants generally came from families with two or three children, having one brother (39.9%) and/or one sister (45.3%). Over half (55.3%) described their family culture as Australian. Australian/European (23.8%) followed this.

2. Responses concerning perceptions and attitudes about roles (Questions 8, 9, 10,17,18, 24).

The majority of participants perceived both their mother (78.5%) and father (76.8%) as combining work with being a parent and homemaker. This description was also the best fit for their idea of a future wife/partner (83.9%). Participants generally felt the question, whether manhood/being a man in our society, was being discussed 'a bit' (44.7%), with an almost equal response of the issue being discussed enough (18.3%) and it not being discussed enough (19.3%). They felt their idea of what sort of man they would be was pretty clear to them (73.3%), and were not confused about masculinity/being a man in our society (71.7%).

3. Responses concerning relationships and significant others (Questions 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 23, 25).

Most participants chose their mother (34.6%) as the person they would talk to most about school, friends, and things in general; this was followed closely by both parents equally (27.7%). Only 6.8% said they were most likely to talk to their father. A number of participants (14.1%) said they would not talk to anyone. The next question concerned parental (primarily) involvement in activities such as homework, sport and hobbies. Here the response indicated that both parents were equally involved (48.2%), followed by fathers (23.6%), then mothers (15.9%). Participants were asked who of their parents they felt closest to, and responded most frequently with 'both equally' (61.1%), followed by mother (27.3%) then father (10.6%). The question '*Who is the man you most admire at the moment*' elicited a high response for fathers as being the man they most admired (34.4%). This was more than twice the number of the next most popular choice, sportsman (15.1%). The breakdown is shown in Table 3 below and is in the order in which the questions appeared in the survey.

Who is the man you admire the most at the moment?

A.	Father	34.4%
B.	Brother	4.8%
C.	Other relative	9.3%
D.	Class teacher	1.9%
E.	Priest	1.6%
F.	Sportsman	15.1%
G.	Actor	4.8%
H.	Rock star	5.8%
I.	Other	12.2%
J.	No-one	6.1%
K.	Not answered	3.9%

Table 3

The category J = 'No-one' and K = 'Not answered' were added during analysis as a number of participants wrote 'no-one' and some did not answer the question.

Categories identified for qualities (Question 15)

The positive qualities the participants chose about the man they most admired were compiled into content areas. A range of expressive and instrumental qualities were identified. In terms of Antill *et al's* (1981) terminology (see section 4 of survey in Appendix 6), this can be expressed as feminine positive and masculine positive qualities. Several categories contain gender non-specific qualities and could therefore be termed egalitarian, or according to Antill *et al.* (1981), socially desirable qualities. The heading of each category was the word most commonly used to describe that particular cluster of qualities. This is followed in descending order by the other words most commonly used. Not all participants gave three qualities. A number of participants simply put 'He is my father!' and a number of qualities appeared only once and did not fit any of the identified clusters.



**Caring** - loving, loves me, concerned, kind, helpful, supportive, understanding, thoughtful, always there for me, devoted, listens to me, empathic, unselfish, generous, interested in me, makes me feel good.

**Successful** - good at what he does, rich, high achiever, famous, skilful.

**Confident** - independent, strong, leader, assertive, high self-esteem, positive, strong character, determined, not influenced by others, individual.

**Intelligent** - knowledgeable, resourceful, wise, perceptive.

**Hard worker** - works hard, works hard for me.

**Fun** - fun to be with, sense of humour, funny, playful, entertaining.

**Particular attributes/talents** - creative, artistic ability, a champion, poet, fit, speaks well, unique.

**Honest** - has integrity, truthful, decent, honourable, good, good bloke, good morals, humane, loyal, humble, modest, true.

**Responsible** - trustworthy, committed, dependable, reliable, dutiful, disciplined, dedicated.

**Friendly** - easy-going, out-going, approachable.

**Personality** - great personality, liked by all, nice person, a character, popular, interesting, cool, sexy, trendy.

**Happy with life** - content, positive, balanced outlook on life, good attitude, calm, copes with everything, hangs loose, level headed, cool under pressure.

**Tolerant** - patient, sensitive, fair, even tempered, respectful, non-aggressive.

**Ambitious** - motivated, driven, persistent, competitive, focussed, perfectionist.

**Brave** - strong, has courage, firm, has will power, adventurous, spontaneous.

Quality	Percentage
Caring	56.6
Successful	26.7
Confident	22.8
Intelligent	22.2
Hard worker	17.4
Fun	16.7
Personal Attribute/Talent	14.8
Honest	11.4
Responsible	10.9
Friendly	9.3
Personality	9.0
Happy with Life	8.7
Tolerant	7.7
Ambitious	5.1
Brave	3.9

Table 4

Participants (56.6%) chose the category of qualities headed by 'Caring' most frequently. This response was more than double that of the next category of qualities headed by 'Successful' (26.7%). The category 'Brave' which included such qualities as strong, adventurous, strong willed, firm, was chosen least frequently (3.9%).

In response to whether participants saw this person as a role model, 62.7% answered 'yes', and 26.4% answered 'no'. Several participants qualified their 'no' with an explanation such as 'I really admire my father but don't think I want to be like him'.

Participants most frequently chose a male friend as the person they would talk to if they needed help with an emotional problem (70.4%), followed by their mother (67.2%), father (61.1%) closely followed this. Of the 28.0% of participants who found the issue of masculinity/what it is to be a man confusing, more than half (55.4%) would choose to talk to their male peers, followed by fathers (24.1%), mothers (21.7%) and female peers (20.5%).

#### 4. Responses concerning perceptions of influence and possible sources of influence

(Questions 3, 20, 21, 22, 26).

In the literature reviewed, several contextual factors were perceived as having an influence on young men's beliefs about masculinity. The three areas of influence, which appear significant in this survey, are the school, fathers and peers. The majority of participants saw Canberra Grammar School as being an influence on how they saw themselves as a man (74.3%). An overall figure was obtained for the order of importance in which participants ranked those they felt influenced them most about how they saw themselves as a man. Their peers, father and school were seen as having the greatest influence. The table below sets out the overall ranking.

Influences
1. Peers
2. Father
3. School
4. Girls
5. Brother
6. Media
7. Mother
8. Sister

Table 5

The influence of TV and reading did not appear to have any obvious influence on the data and is included here only as of passing interest. They watched news and current affairs (79.1%), sports (65.6%), drama (53.1%) and a range of soaps, comedy and cartoons, with 'South Park', a cartoon show, the most commonly chosen favourite T.V program (18.3%). This was followed by 'Seinfeld' (14.5%) with 'The Simpsons', 'Friends' and 'The X-Files' at (4.5 %) each. A wide range of material was read with newspapers (55.9%) and fiction (59.5%) at the top of the scale and comics (8.0%) at the bottom.

## Survey Results: Section 2

This section of the survey aimed to identify beliefs and attitudes about being a man. Themes and responses were identified and key concepts and trends established. The frequency of these concepts and trends appear in the tables that follow, and the summary of significant findings.

The questions in this section were clustered into three broad categories expressing traditional/hegemonic beliefs, non-traditional/egalitarian beliefs and generally held, but gender non-specific, societal beliefs. Traditional or hegemonic beliefs are defined in this study as those embracing the masculine/feminine polarity. This involves the conventional roles of men going out to work and exercising authority in the family, whilst women are predominantly housebound looking after the children and the family's emotional well being. Men who define themselves in this way believe they must be emotionally and physically strong (see Connell 1995). Non-traditional or egalitarian beliefs are defined in this study as those embracing attitudes of equality between men and women and tolerance for various masculinities. Non-traditional roles for themselves and women are endorsed. Those embracing egalitarian attitudes are individualistic, adopt more nurturant and less dominant behaviour and have more mutually supportive relationships (see Hulse 1997, pi 5-16). The questions in the last category were aimed at getting the participants' response to some societal beliefs and/or debates. These questions were deemed to be gender non-specific and for the purposes of this study were called neutral probes.

1. Traditional/Hegemonic beliefs. These questions included 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 36. An example of this type of question is *Question 5. Men are more admired if they are strong, rugged and athletic.* If participants responded with 'strongly agree' or

'agree' to questions belonging to this group they were deemed to hold traditional or hegemonic beliefs.

2. Non-Traditional /Egalitarian beliefs. These questions included 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 13, 28, 33, 40.

An example of this type of question is *Question 3. It is important for a man to have close friendships where he can share his feelings and concerns.* Participants who responded with 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to questions belonging to this group were deemed to hold non-traditional or egalitarian beliefs.

3. Neutral probes (term coined by researcher). These questions included 6, 15, 17, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39.

An example of this type of question is *Question 15. It is better to be entering manhood now than it was when my father was a boy.*

There was no attempt in compiling Section 2 to have an even number of each type of question, as it was the response on the scale, which indicated the trend. The wording of each question in Section 2 is contained in Appendix 4.

The following three pages contain descriptive tables.

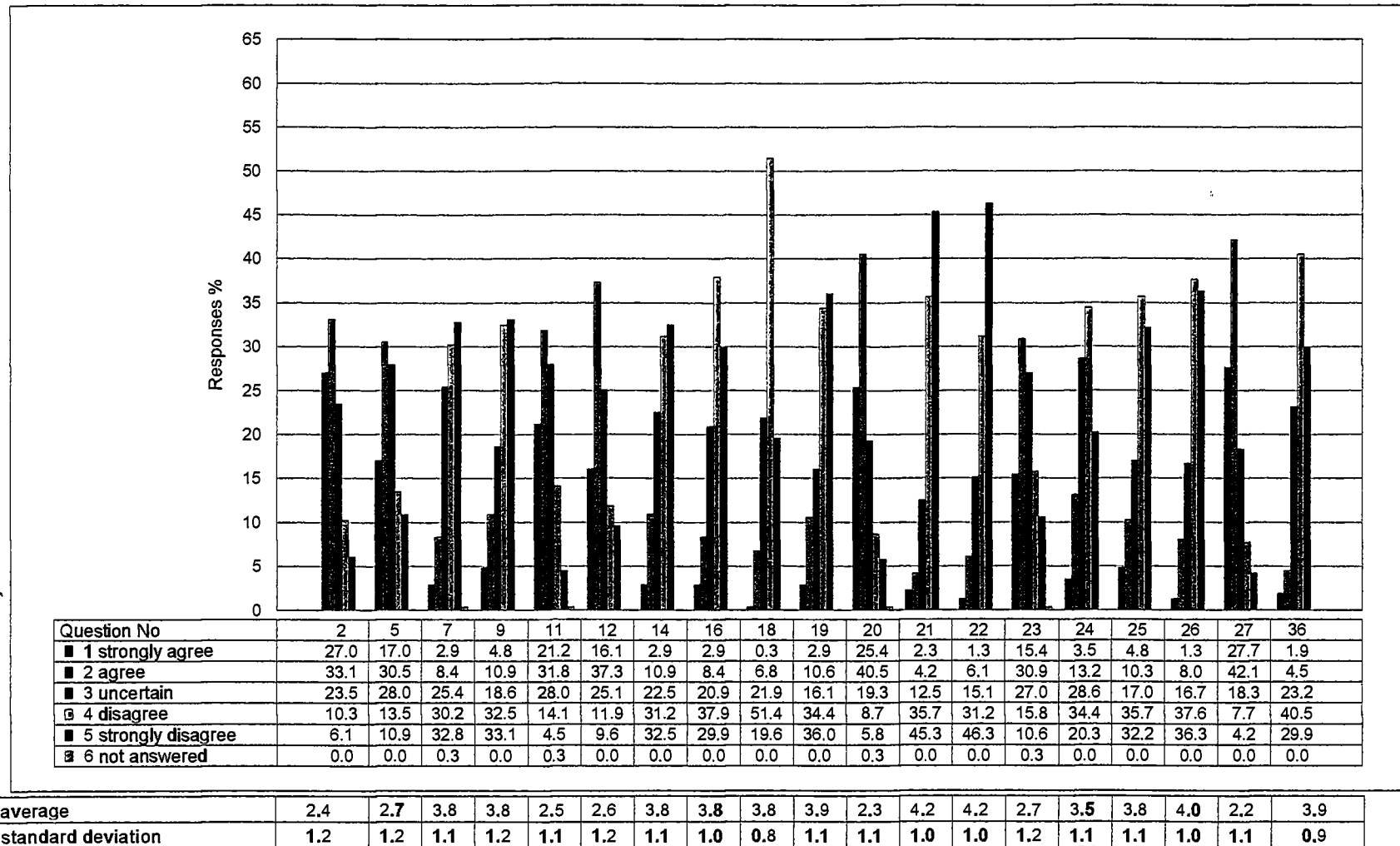
# Having Your Say

## A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man

### Summary of responses to the survey

#### Section 2: Questions exploring Traditional beliefs

Table 6



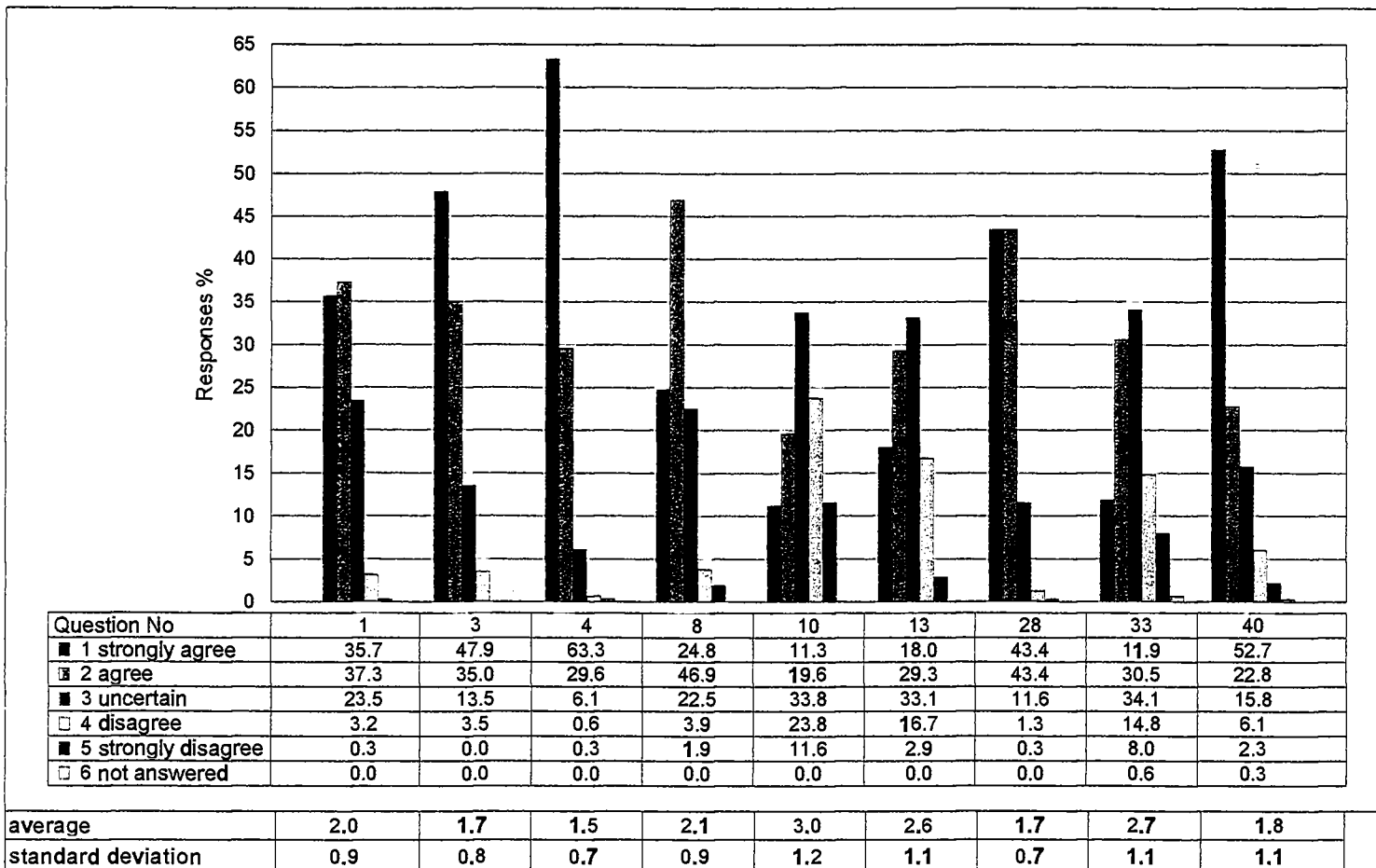
# Having Your Say

## A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man

### Summary of responses to the survey

### Section 2: Questions exploring Egalitarian beliefs

Table 7



# Having Your Say

## A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man

### Summary of responses to the survey

#### Section 2: Questions exploring Neutral beliefs

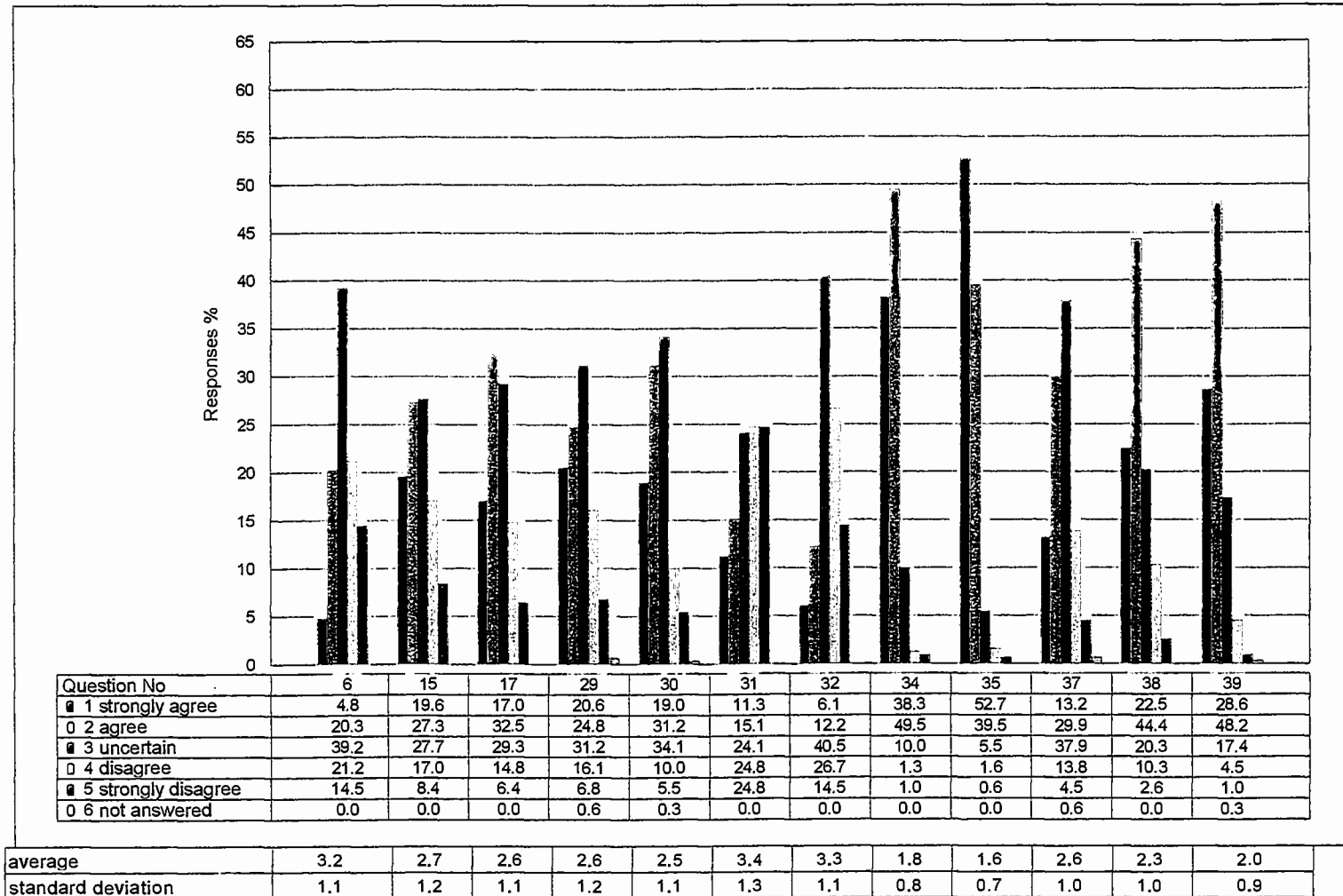


Table 8



## Overall perceptions of the beliefs and attitudes about being a man

In examining the data in Tables 6 -8 containing the three categories of statements outlined above, five clusters of beliefs emerged. These will now be discussed in turn.

### Beliefs and attitudes about work

The participants agreed with traditionally held beliefs that men needed to make long range plans for their lives (*30.9% agreed, 15.4 % strongly agreed*). The more egalitarian view that the same holds true for women drew the same response (*30.5% agreed 11.9% strongly agreed*). Participants also agreed with the traditionally held belief that to be successful men have to be very competitive (*42.1% agreed, 27.7% strongly agreed*). This corresponded with the belief that it is important for a man to have a well paying job with sixty percent of participants agreeing (*33.1% agreed, 27.0% strongly agreed*). However over sixty percent disagreed with the statement that men should only undertake so-called men's careers and jobs (*32.5% strongly disagreed 31.2% disagreed*) with over fifty percent disagreeing that men must succeed at all costs because they are the future breadwinners, providers (*34.4% disagreed 20.3% strongly disagreed*). The notion that it is best if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and family was strongly rejected (*35.7% disagreed 32.2% strongly disagreed*).

### Beliefs and attitudes about friendships

Participants responded in an apparently contradictory way to the question of friendships. On one hand participants believed that they needed to be autonomous, keeping their friendships with each other fairly superficial and 'matey' (*37.3% agreed 16.1% strongly agreed*) and on the other they felt it was important for a man to have close friendships where he can share his feelings and concerns (*47.9% strongly agreed 35.0% agreed*). The same dichotomy occurred when participants

agreed that they expected to fend for themselves if they were physically or verbally abused (31.8% agreed 21.2 % strongly agreed) but disagreed with the notion of not getting involved if they saw a friend being verbally or physically abused (45.3% strongly disagreed 35.7% disagreed).

### Beliefs and attitudes about gender roles

Participants perceived women as being more caring and nurturing than men (40.5% agreed 25.4% strongly agreed) and viewed men as being more admired if they are strong, rugged and athletic (30.5 % agreed 17.0 % strongly agreed). They disagreed however with the statement that it is the male image that is important not a man's personality (40.5% disagreed 29.9% strongly disagreed). Over sixty percent disagreed with the statement that a man needs to show everyone that he is boss (32.8% strongly disagreed 30.2% disagreed). An even stronger response was obtained to the statements that men needed to be aggressive and act superior in order to prove their masculinity (36.0% strongly disagreed 34.4% disagreed) and that to be 'manly' it is necessary for men to be dominant over women (46.3% strongly disagreed 31.2% disagreed). Strong disagreement was elicited by the notion that men must keep their problems to themselves as communicating their needs is a sign of weakness (37.9% disagreed 29 % strongly disagreed). Seventy one percent vehemently disagreed that girls/women like men who keep their worries to themselves (51.4% strongly disagreed 19.6% disagreed), agreeing instead that girls/women like men who share their concerns with them (46.9% agreed 24.8% strongly agreed). The same response was elicited from statements about feelings. Participants disagreed that they should not show any soft emotions (33.1% strongly disagreed 32.5% disagreed), or hide their emotions (37.6% disagreed 36.3% strongly disagreed).

### Beliefs and attitudes about relationships

Over seventy percent of participants believed that it is important for a man to have a close relationship with his parents (*37.3% agreed 35.7% strongly agreed*). The statement that a man should spend a lot of time with his children elicited the strongest response to this section of the questionnaire, with over ninety percent of participants agreeing (*63.3% strongly agreed 29.6% agreed*). Very high agreement was also obtained for the statement that it was important for a man to spend a lot of time at home with his family (*43.4% strongly agreed 43.4% agreed*). However whilst more participants agreed than disagreed with the notion that men value the work of parenting as highly as they do their job/careers, many were uncertain (*29.3% agreed 18.0% strongly agreed 33.1% uncertain*). Participants agreed that it was important for a man to be in a stable committed relationship with a partner (*32.5% agreed 17.0% strongly agreed*), but most were uncertain whether it was important for this to be marriage (*39.2% uncertain 21.2% disagreed 20.3% agreed*).

### Beliefs and attitudes about being a man

The statement that men have choices about what direction to take in their lives today elicited a very positive agreement (*49.5% agreed 38.3% strongly agreed*), as did the notion that a man is free to adopt whatever type of masculinity he likes (*52.7% strongly agreed 22.8% agreed*). Participants felt men did not have more choices about what direction to take in their lives 20 years ago (*24.8% disagreed 24.8% strongly disagreed*) and agreed that it was better to be entering manhood now (*27.3% agreed 19.6% strongly agreed*) rather than when their fathers were young. There was a feeling that life was probably better when you are a boy than when you are a man (*24.8% agreed 20.6% strongly agreed 31.2% uncertain*). However participants felt it was usual for young men to feel optimistic about their future (*44.4% agreed 22.5% strongly agreed*), despite that in today's society it is usual for a man to feel confused about what being a man means (*29.9% agreed 13.2*

*strongly agreed*) because of the mixed messages our society sends out about what is expected of men (*48.2% agreed 28.6% strongly agreed*). There was very strong agreement that women have gained status over the last few years (*52.7 % strongly agreed 39.5% agreed*) and both agreement and uncertainty that men have lost status (*31.2% agreed 19.0% strongly agreed 34.1% uncertain*).

### Summary of significant findings in Section 2

The following 8 points are presented to serve as a concise summary of the major features that emerged as the most interesting findings in this section.

#### Participants believed: -

- that men have choices about what direction to take in their lives and how to express their masculinity, despite feeling some confusion about societal expectations.
- in the importance of being competitive and having long range plans and well paid work. However their work did not have to fit into areas traditionally regarded as men's work/careers.
- in the importance of women having long range work/career plans. They rejected any traditional preference for women to stay at home caring for the family whilst men went out to work.
- that women were more caring and nurturing than men, but that it was important for men to have close friendships where feelings and concerns could be expressed. Communicating needs was not seen as a sign of weakness or unmanly. The belief was expressed that girls/women like men who share their concerns with them.

- that whilst men were admired if they were athletic and strong, a man's personality was more important.
- that men did not need to be aggressive to show that they were boss, or be dominant over women to prove their masculinity.
- very strongly in the importance of men having close relationships with their partners/wives , children, and parents.
- strongly that women have gained status over the last few years and that men have lost status over the last few years. Notwithstanding, participants believed it was usual for young men to feel optimistic about their future.

### Survey Results: Section 3

The analysis of this section begins by giving a brief numerical introduction to the way participants chose to respond to this part of the survey. It is then shown how findings in this section have been illuminated and supported by extensive verbatim quotations from the written responses. An introduction serves to present each theme, which emerged, and a linking commentary weaves these themes together. Rather than paraphrasing the participants' ideas about being a man, and including only short representative segments, I decided that, to convey individual voices, longer excerpts were needed in the body of work rather than in an Appendix. This was in keeping with the counselling stance of being person-centred and placing at the fore what the participants had to say.

From the 311 potential responses for this section 297 participants chose to respond. Of these responses 244 participants wrote at length using both sides of the page. The remaining 53 participants briefly elaborated on the three vignettes/statements posed. Of these 53 participants 24 incorporated the three statements in their answer, 15 identified most commonly with the second statement, 8 chose statement three and 6 chose statement one. The statements presented as prompts to facilitate these written responses are given in Appendix 5.

This section also posed two questions asking participants for 'yes' or 'no' responses, these are tabled below.

#### Did you have difficulty in deciding how to describe yourself?

	Yes	Some	No	N/A
Number of Participants	39	148	97	27
Percentage	12.5	47.6	31.2	8.7

Table 9

Have you ever thought about this before?

	Yes	No	N/A
Number of Participants	203	81	27
Percentage	65.3	26.0	8.7

Table 10

Focus of the responses identified through content analysis

Content analysis is a method of analysing the contents of written work or other non-statistical material in such a way that it is possible to make statistical comparisons between them (Bouma, 1996). The raw data gathered needed to be considered systematically. In analysing the data, a range of themes and issues were identified. This was initially achieved by reading the transcripts several times and counting the frequency with which sentences and opinions occurred. The issues described by participants as either a priority, or very important, concerned in order of frequency, relationships, parenting, and sharing work opportunities and responsibilities with their wife/partner. Interests, sport, health and having a happy family life took precedence over wanting to be successful, and work or career. The full results are shown in Table 11 on the following page.

# Having Your Say

## A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man

### Details of responses to the survey

#### Section 3: Sentences or themes occurring frequently

	Frequency No	Frequency %
1 Equal relationship with wife-often used as a broad introductory statement	104	33
2 Equal part in raising children	87	28
3 Expect both will work/share work opportunities	86	28
4 Expect to share housework/responsibilities	52	17
5 Sports/interests/health important	41	13
6 Family will be priority/happy family will be very important	40	13
7 Wanting to be successful mentioned	39	13
8 Career/work will be priority	34	11
9 Expect to have lots of options/several jobs	29	9
10 General comments about perceived role of men/women	29	9
11 An enjoyable/interesting job will be priority	28	9
12 Wife/partner can choose what she does regarding work/not working	27	9
13 Good/loving/successful relationship priority	23	7
14 Friends/mates important	22	7
15 Good income important	21	7
16 Children will come first/close relationship desired	21	7
17 Not confident/ confused about men's roles	20	6
18 Wife should stay at home when children are young/wife best suited to nurturing role	18	6
19 Expect to work hard	18	6
20 An enjoyable life/balanced life/being happy will be a major focus	16	5
21 Expect to spend a lot of time travelling	16	5
22 30 mentioned as age at which would most likely marry	16	5
23 Confident/not confused about men's roles	15	5
24 Work stability will be important	13	4
25 Expect to share everything with partner-including emotional life and general interest	12	4
26 I will just be me/ I am a person	12	4
27 Childcare not wanted	11	4
28 I should be the main breadwinner	11	4
29 Wife should work/have own life/be independent	11	4
30 Influence of media (mainly television) discussed	10	3
31 Money will not be a priority	10	3
32 Very clear and confident about what future holds	9	3
33 Being a nice/decent/kind person priority	8	3
34 I would stay at home if wife's career/job took precedence	8	3
35 Felt unsure about what future holds	6	2
36 Wife should work part-time	6	2
37 Traditional roles and qualities described as desirable	5	2
38 Relationship with parents will be important	5	2
39 Angry responses	4	1
40 Don't expect to share everything with partner	1	0



A synthesis of the themes was then made and they were grouped together arriving at three broad categories of beliefs. A cohesion developed linking excerpts from the participants written work with findings from Section 2.

#### Categories of beliefs to which themes and sentences correlated

- *Beliefs and attitudes about being men and gender roles:* - 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 39.
- *Beliefs and attitudes about relationships including personal, parental and friendship:* - 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 13, 14, 16, 25, 27, 38, 40.
- *Beliefs and attitudes about work, money and success:* - 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 15, 19, 24, 28, 31.

#### Having Their Say

The analysis for this section proceeds through beliefs and attitudes about being men and gender roles, beliefs and attitudes about relationships and beliefs and attitudes about work, money and success. Attention will be drawn from time to time to the numerical outcomes quoted in Table 11 to keep the focus and general outcomes in perspective.

#### Beliefs and attitudes about being men and about gender roles

Many participants wrote eloquently in general terms about their perception of the roles of men and how manhood is regarded in our society. Although numerically placed tenth out of thirty six themes occurring frequently, I chose to quote these at some length to serve as an introduction to the material these students produced. The aim was also to show the diversity of opinions these young men had and to allow them to describe the several masculinities they envisaged.

The responses are open-ended and where themes have developed a narrative will weave these together. They are also quoted verbatim and uncorrected. The first cluster of transcripts presents a reflection on stereotypical images of masculinity.

*As a man I expect to be friendly, caring and generous. I don't expect to be the typical macho guy displayed in films, though I would still like to be respected as a man..... I have no idea what girls expect of me or think. Although we get a very clear picture of what the ideal man should be like, I seriously doubt everybody believes in this image. It seems that caring, gentle people have taken over the 90's, but I am still stuck with a bit of the strong man of the house image from TV and my father..... I hope this doesn't rub off on me. Society sometimes has too great an effect on people, forcing its views on us to the exclusion of our own.. Although we also have the positive side of generally accepted morals and laws everyone should be able to form their own views of what they want to be, without this influence.*

(Participant 173)

*I think that when I'm a man I will be very different to the older generation. I don't really agree with a lot of the stereotypes about men and I want to change them.... My feelings are that my father's views are old and prejudiced. I understand that he can have them because of the different society that he was brought up in, but I don't like his attempts to force his beliefs on me. I would not want to be like this with my children. I like to think that I am open and accepting to other ideals and cultures etc. I think that we need to make a move away from the man the breadwinner crap.*

(Participant 253)

*When I'm a man I feel that I will not be limited to the traditional constraints that society places on a man or the expectations that used to be in place. I don't believe that there is a fixed role for a man to play in society any more ie get married and support your family. I will be single and do not wish to be tied down, but wish to experience as much as possible. However if the right woman happens to come along then I probably won't mind adapting my view or actions to hers, as I believe in an equal partnership.*

(Participant 313)

Although the participant below appears to feel his views are opposite to those that 'society still rams down our throats' in fact 33% of his peers based their written material on the equality they expected and wanted to have in their relationships. Equality in relationships is discussed further under the heading 'Beliefs and attitudes about relationships'.

*I do not like the term 'masculinity'. In our society it implies that if men are not macho and do not love sport then they are not 'masculine' and therefore not men. It's the same with*

*parenting and jobs. Some men hold views that god put them on the earth to keep women in check and become the sole provider while their wives cook, raise the children and clean I hold opposite views to the views society still rams down our throats. I feel that if you are in a relationship the 'duties' should not be based on sex. All cleaning, cooking and caring for children should be based around the responsibility of being a parent and they should be equal.*

(Participant 018)

The next four transcripts illustrate aspects of a sense of threat. The participant below opens with a general discussion of stereotypical male qualities. He goes on to outline what he sees as still prevalent and dominant in society, 'macho man', seeming to align himself with males under threat from the 'cools'.

*Men's roles in society are, although changing, still often that of the stereotypical or typecast role e.g he is often thought to be stronger and a better leader than women, often with more power. It is changing and women are gaining more of these things, although men still carry the upper hand. So, some men are becoming more of a "family man", taking on more parental responsibilities. In society today I think that many men are scared of being an outcast, and so often assume a stereotypical role and become one of the crowd. This is because of things such as the "football jock". These thugs tend to take over and dominate us, or are prolific in our society, where a group will go along with one person who is "cool" just so that they are not viewed as different. People in society are losing their individualism and sense of identity. Thus, while there is a stereotypical view of a "man" in society, many individuals don't know what to think of it.*

(Participant 126)

The three participants below identify a sense of threat brought about by women's emancipation.

*Things such as test tube babies have really reduced the importance of men. We are continually hearing how women don't need men any more and this is a frightening thought. Women are taking over men's traditional "breadwinner" roles in society, this is a good thing, but nevertheless it does scare a lot of men. We see changing attitudes towards men in society, on T.V, in newspapers and in people simply walking down the street. Relationships have become equal partnerships, which I feel is the only way they can work. However, deep inside men is the hormone which makes us want to dominate and control. We are being required to "un-learn" that which is built into us.*

(Participant 149)

*There are definitely changing perceptions in society in regard to men, what women want from them etc. However I think the main point that comes from this is that women can not expect men to change for them. Regardless of what men are told, like that we're emotionally retarded some men might not want to share their emotions which is very different from saying that they can't. Men are what men are and while the increase in women's status is good, it should not*

*undermine men. I think that there are some great differences between the genders and that we don't really understand them yet. Personally I get offended when I'm told men need to open up more because it is a broad generalisation and some men might not feel the need to, regardless of the turmoil in their lives. There are also some double standards in terms of sexism now, advertisements, TV shows have men doing certain things which, if women did would cause an uproar (the first squeeze O.J ad. These double standards annoy me also.*

(Participant 327)

*I don't think that I or too many other of my peers really know what it means to be a man in today's society. Sure, 30 years ago men would go to work while their wives stayed at home, but now the situation has changed dramatically and men are not really sure of their place in society any more. There has been some talk that having a man/husband is only seen as a career option these days for women. Now women can have children and raise them without any help from a man. I hope a man's role in society comes to be established in the near future so people will know what to expect.*

(Participant 124)

In contrast to the extracts above illustrating a sense of threat, the opinion expressed below is also typical of the responses given on this issue.

*I am confident in my role as a man and equally confident that a man's role has become more like that of a woman's in the last few years: caring, sharing, same opportunities etc.*

(Participant 123)

The question asked by participants about what there is to replace the old role models of being a man, is illustrated by the participant below.

*Although the stereotype of a man being 'muscles and no brain' of several decades ago is well and truly gone, there's no obvious replacement to fill the gap - no 'ideal' man to strive to be. What I feel I need is a clear role model, something for which there is no obvious choice.*

(Participant 171)

Amongst the 9% who made general observations about being a man in our society, there was an acknowledgment of the changing roles of women, mixed with wondering what women might want from men.

*Men are expected to be breadwinners still while a woman's role in society has changed dramatically. Now if a man works while a woman stays at home it is considered a sexist relationship. As a man I want an equal relationship with my female partner and hope to work in*

*many varied jobs during my career. I now know that I will be competing just as much with women as with men for these positions.*

(Participant 165)

*It can be quite difficult to see what girls/women want in today's society, but many existing stereotypes can be discarded. I suppose personality is an important thing - someone who will be there for them, to understand, to listen, to care. Such things are more important than things like looks, career, and so on. I am sometimes confused about what it means to 'be a man' but every man is different - he should not have to conform to society's definition of a 'man', and each man should be able to express their masculinity in a way that is uniquely theirs.*

(Participant 118)

*I want to be able to share feelings and everything with my wife. I think to be a man doesn't mean that you don't show your emotional side. But to be a man is to be able to cope or adapt to the situation and to have a leader quality. I'm really confused about what women/girls want from a man/boy nowadays. I think to be "manly" is not an answer. It all comes down to an individual's personality and qualities. Man needs to have an emotional side and to be able to share his feelings with his partner. That's my definition of a 'man'.*

(Participant 092)

*As I grow older I expect that women will continue to grow in dominance but I believe they will still be left behind by men. That is not because I think they should be, but that seems to be the way society works when it comes to the higher profiled people. You only have to look at sport to realise all men's sports are played on TV far more regularly than women's. I think there needs to be a balance between the roles of men and women, both at home and at work. I think that the home is not too far from this, but the work sector has a fair way to go before we see more female bosses.*

(Participant 164)

Some participants (4%) saw the concept of 'being a man' as constraining and chose to think in terms of being an individual or 'person'.

*I don't really worry about what it is to be a man, but rather a person, I am not at all confused about masculinity - I believe I am easy going about it. I like to think that I shun stereotypes and generalisations.*

(Participant 154)

*The real essence is being a man in my own eyes. There are certain stereotypes however I don't believe in these. They shape too many cultures and men's lives, but not mine. It's astounding how people perceive masculinity. It's directly correlational to my upbringing and my future. There are two extremes S.N.A.G - Macho bloke, but I'm in the middle, you have to be ambitious, yet caring, life is a real metaphor, both go hand in hand and this integration envisages excellence.*

(Participant 231)

The role that the media plays in shaping perceptions has already been mentioned by some participants in other contexts above, those quoted below further illustrate this aspect.

*I believe that the stereotypes of masculinity are very wrong, and that society is receiving a wrong image. The media plays the biggest role in influencing this. Society does not cater for people who see themselves differently.*

(Participant 244)

*There is a stereotype of the successful man with the home wife but that is unrealistic, this is highly perceived on TV.*

(Participant 062)

*Sometimes the role of a man is confusing but I know what I want and plan to achieve it. The media influences my perception of masculinity but I think what the media has projected has been quite positive; men are seen more as having emotions and dependent on others for support which I think is healthy.*

(Participant 319)

The participants below described perhaps more conventionally held beliefs about what was desirable in a man, although even here equality is mentioned. These traditional qualities were described by 2% of participants.

*When I'm a man I will be rich and powerful. Competitiveness, will power, ingenuity, imagination, intelligence and risk taking will win the day. I will be independent. I want a wife who'll love me but I don't care if she has a job or not. I expect us both to take equal care of any children we have.*

(Participant 335)

*As a man I expect to have to be ever dependable. A man should never let anything cloud his judgement, so you should not show emotion at inopportune times. As a man you are often relied upon at various times to be completely dependable and showing your true feelings may do damage to others in certain situations. One day I expect to be a father and more than anything else you mustn't show your emotions to your children. Kids rely on their fathers as being a reliable, staunch, dependable figurehead, therefore he cannot let them see any emotions.*

(Participant 147)

Perhaps surprisingly only 6% of participants discussed any apparent confusion about what it means to be a man in our society. However since confusion may give rise to counselling issues it seems valid to include a number of transcripts to try to clarify what this confusion is about.

*In today's society masculinity is very confusing. Today there are huge extremes and men feel they have to be one or the other, there is no in between. There are those who are gay (often seen as caring and pedantic) and those at the other end of the spectrum who are tuff, strong, well-built and outgoing. I feel that it is quite confusing for men to know where they sit because often if they are not the sporty type many begin to rate them into the category of gay. However, this is slowly, very slowly, changing.*

(Participant 153)

*At the moment I am somewhat confused about what being a man in today's society entails. The main reason for this has been the rapid and dramatic change in the position that women take in today's society. This is not meant in a bad way but it means that the "traditional" manly role has been discarded and a new role imposed. This new role is as yet not clear cut and as a result it is hard for me as a boy, and men in general, to know where they stand. Hopefully in the next 5-10 years this role will become more finite in order for men to be what society (in particular female society) expects them to be.*

(Participant 152)

*I am often confused when it comes to the concept of masculinity. I am unsure of how to behave in given situations as to prove myself to be masculine.*

(Participant 265)

A few expressed exasperation or concern from different stances.

*.....Just a quick aside I think it is bloody tough to be a guy right now. It appears that everything is going towards improving the status of girls and women while everybody is forgetting about boys and men.*

(Participant 293)

*As a man I generally am not confused about masculinity. Chauvinistic and conservative... (insert words !:) who generally express the view that "women should be kept in bed or in the kitchen" annoy me - mostly they are arseholes or bullies who like to inflate themselves in front of their friends (male).*

(Participant 266)

Perhaps the participant below would come over as one of the chauvinistic males who annoy the participant above. However the last few words may belie the preceding statement and would perhaps be an opinion the participant would not have the courage to share with his peer group.

*The whole "male role" thing actually really pisses me off! Men will continue to be men as they always have. These idiots stating that men are becoming extinct have just lost the plot. Personally I don't think any men I know have changed very much over the last 10 years. They have continued to be leaders and money earners, women have not squeezed them out at all, nor*

*will they. If some women get the position in a job over a man, WELL DONE, so what, what is the bigfucken deal? Male or female dominance means nothing to me.*

(Participant 198)

Expectations and concerns regarding the future were expressed in both optimistic (3%) and pessimistic (2%) terms.

*Sometimes I feel optimistic, sometimes I feel confused and pessimistic about the future. Women send mixed messages about what they expect, and often tend to seem superior in that respect.*

(Participant 238)

*I expect many changes in my life and a bright prosperous future are my main aims at this stage. Friendships are also important, social bonds to connect with other people will be an integral part of my life. As a young man I am focused on the future, hopes, plans and dreams of what I hope to achieve and who I hope to be. The world will continue to grow ever faster as I grow older and hence I will need to respond to these changes, something which will be vital for future success and most importantly, happiness.*

(Participant 247)

This participant gave an embracing summary of his point of view and exhorted this researcher to take action.

*It is confusing nowadays what the role of the man is. In times gone by, when women were at home and men did the work, it was one natural, basic instinct and order of life. As this is all changing now it seems that the family unit is breaking down. The family is the basic social unit, and when it begins to malfunction there are a lot of confused young men. As the status of men has dramatically changed a lot of boys are suffering from mixed messages. As women's status rises, and men's falls/changes, there is a big gap, and it is so quick, that kids are caught in the way. There are a lot of boys out there who need guidance, but aren't getting it. We need an order once again, something to identify with. And after so many suicides and depressed pot-heads going around, its about time a survey like this comes out. I just hope you do something about it.*

(Participant 207)

### **Beliefs and attitudes about relationships**

The desire for an equal relationship with their wife/partner was the major focus for participants establishing a strong egalitarian trend. A greater number of participants (33%) chose to concentrate



on their future relationship as a broad introductory statement, than on any other aspect of being a man.

*My main goal in life is to be happy. I expect this goal to come with success, money and a positive relationship with my future wife and family. I want my career established and so too, my partners, before considering a family. I want to be able to respect my partners desire to either be a working/career woman or a family woman. Most likely I would like a common ground or blend of the two where both of us share the responsibilities equally. I would want my future partner to be just as successful as myself and it would not bother me if she was more successful. I would definitely want a long lasting, truthful, trusting mutual relationship.*

(Participant 167)

*I think I'll probably have several jobs during my working life. I feel marriage should happen after I have a proper income source. I expect to work to raise a family and sharing equal roles in this family is very important to me. Women working is a very good thing and I would be prepared to leave my work for the sake of my wife's job.*

(Participant 248)

*I don't want to marry a submissive, viewless woman, nor do I want in any way to force my wife to stay at home and mind the children. I want to marry a woman who is intelligent and who provides me with great intellectual stimulation. I want a woman who is willing to take me on and challenge me, if she happens to excel in a field and wishes to work in that field then so be it. However I do want for any children I may have to have an input from loving parents who care and are interested in what they are doing.*

(Participant 163)

*I would like a relationship that is equal in all aspects, child rearing, tasks etc. We both should be able to do the things we want including our hobbies. I hope that most things will be shared and not just one person does everything. Women have just as much right to work and do what they want as any man.*

(Participant 010)

*When I'm a man I intend to share work and parenting with my wife although I would not be upset if she wanted not to work and to be a housewife. I would not be too worried about what my wife's decision in life is - working woman/wife/mother or just a wife and mother it is not my decision but I would be happy for her in any decision she makes.*

(Participant 081)

A slightly different slant was also expressed.

*I guess that one day I hope to be in a stable relationship although I don't want that happening too soon. I expect any future partner to be able to support herself as I have no aspirations for being a 'breadwinner'.*

(Participant 254)

Thirty was mentioned by participants (5%) as the most likely age at which they would marry.

*Enjoying my life will be my priority. On the same token it wouldn't hurt being successful as well. Marriage is definitely an option, but not until I'm about 30. Travelling around the world is something I definitely want to take on in the future. The relationship with my partner should be honest and open, and we should be able to share our feelings 100%.*

(Participant 373)

A number of participants (7%) stressed the importance of a good/loving/successful relationship placing this as the priority in their life.

*To be involved in a firm, caring relationship with a partner is essential. To have someone who cares, loves and understands you changes one's attitude to life and has a positive effect. As my partner would probably have similar interests herself responsibilities would be shared. I believe there should be a good balance between work and relationships/family/interests etc. Work is important, but it must not dominate over other areas in life.*

(Participant 118)

*I hope to have a stable relationship, which shares parenting etc. equally. But most of all, I wish for a partner I am able to lean on and confide in - to be my second self.*

(Participant 148)

*When I am a man I would want a job which allows me to stay and work at home so I can take full advantage of a close, loving relationship with wife and children.*

(Participant 038)

Several participants elaborated on how they perceived equality with regard to women's choices, work, raising children and emotional sharing. A strong theme emerging from the data were the egalitarian beliefs concerning male and female roles. Taking an equal part in raising children was mentioned by 28% of participants as was equal sharing of work opportunities. These were the joint second most frequently mentioned aspects of being a man. Expecting to share housework and other responsibilities was mentioned by 17 % of participants and was the fourth most frequently mentioned aspect of being a man (refer to Table 11).

*I expect that I will get full time work and that my wife probably will too. She may have a few years off when the children are born but I hope she returns to work. I want to carry equal responsibility for the children. I don't really want to be a "housewife" because I would be dead*

*bored - and I guess that is how my wife would be, so I hope she does get full time work, it is up to her though - it doesn't matter really, what I want, I mean I could discuss it with her but when it comes down to it, it is her decision what she wants to do.*

(Participant 115)

*When I'm a man I would like an equal relationship with my wife. I would share in the responsibilities of children. I would also like me and my wife to both work because she should be able to do the things she wants to just as much as I do.*

(Participant 103)

*If I ever marry it would be to a career and life focused person, who understood that if we had children the responsibilities would be shared as would housework.*

(Participant 339)

There were a number of participants (9%) who indicated a nascent egalitarianism stating that they wanted their wife to do as she pleased regarding working / not working but that they wanted to provide for her to be able to have this choice. This at the same time seemed to imply that women have more choices than men do.

*A good job is a priority, I wish for success. However money and success are not the only things. I do desire to be happy and healthy in particular. I expect my wife to do as she pleases whether via parenting or working, I hope to be able to provide her with the opportunity to make that choice. I also want to form a tight relationship, which is equal, sharing opportunities and happiness by sharing a common bond.*

(Participant 247)

*I will insist that my wife choose whatever career path she wishes, and if this means that children get in the way then I will retire early and look after the children while she follows a career path, if she so wishes.*

(Participant 128)

A number of participants (6%) held firm beliefs that the wife *should* stay at home/do most of the parenting.

*My partner will probably be a working mother and I will support her I do however believe that she should have a more influential role in raising the children. This maternal instinct comes from the mother and is apparent in most animals of various kinds. I will talk with her and discuss what is best for both of us.*

(Participant 324)

A number of participants (3%) held the view that *they* would stay home in the primary caregiver role.

*When I'm a man I would like to work but if my wife wants to be the career woman I will support her and stay at home and look after the children. I know what I want when I am older and I hope I am heading in the right direction.*

(Participant 065)

*I strongly believe that if my wife were to earn more, then I should spend more time with the children. I feel I know what my role is, and, personally, I influence me, no one else.*

(Participant 292)

The use of childcare facilities was commented on a number of times by participants (4%) as something they did not want their children to experience.

*Special emphasis would be placed on spending time with children and I would agree to stay home and look after the kids over childcare if my wife wanted to work.*

(Participant 277)

The family was placed at the forefront of their life by 13% of participants. Many participants discussed being a parent and the responsibilities that this involves. Children were regarded as a prime concern by 7% of participants.

*When I'm a man I see myself involved in a mutual relationship. Both parents will share responsibilities and working. I want to be a strong influence in my children's lives, as caring and as someone to turn to.*

(Participant 208)

*If I did have children I would definitely spend a lot of time with them, a lot more time than say, a few decades ago, where the mother stayed at home and the father worked. I think it is important to show your children how a 'man' behaves and show how 'men' treat other people. If I had a boy and a girl I'd make sure both children get equal time with mother and father.*

(Participant 088)

This participant expresses both traditional and more egalitarian beliefs.

*A family needs a father in it to give guidance to the children, especially the sons. The male in the house should be reasonably dominant but help out around the house etc. I believe most problem children are so because their parents, especially their fathers are either not around or dominant enough.*

(Participant 166)

The thoughtfulness and maturity when discussing fatherhood was a surprise to this researcher.

*When I'm a man, a lot of my attention will be targeted towards raising a child and being a good parent. To give my children the opportunities that I have been given I will need to work hard. If it calls for me staying at home then I would. To me, a sound relationship with those you chose to live with and bring in to the world is the most important thing about being a man. My relationship with my wife would be very equal and tolerant of each other's needs, hopefully our feelings on this idea of 'masculinity' would be more or less the same.*

(Participant 278)

*I'll be in an equal relationship with a woman, who can get any job she wants but must be committed to a family the same as I would, lots. I see myself in a job I enjoy and earning enough money for support. I'd spend much time with my family and help my kids to lead a fulfilled life.*

(Participant 310)

*When I am a man, I want a caring wife who will share my interests and have a great sense of humour. I want to be comfortable financially. I want a few kids. I want to balance my working life and family life. Most of all I want a happy family.*

(Participant 185)

The participant below wrote an account of his envisaged future which nicely encapsulated the general trends which emerged from the data to this point. Many participants in this study described their perceived future as having balance, they eschewed the old stereotypes of being a man who was dominated by work and the power ethic. They expressed the desire for close relationships with a partner, their children, other family members and friends based on sharing responsibility and sharing themselves.

*As a man I will have to juggle many things at once. I want a career that doesn't involve a lot of travelling or very long hours. I want to get married and for my wife to have a job. I would like children and for my wife to take time off work to look after them before they start school. I also*

*would like to not work all the time when they are young. I think it important for children to have both parents around. I don't want my children to spend their childhood in a school or early childhood in a day care centre. I will do home duties and look after the kids. I will also share all responsibilities. As the children get older I would like my wife to do what she wants. I think it is important for people to do what they want and like, because of this I would want to keep my hobbies and sports up. As a family I wouldn't like to live in an apartment, I would like my children to have a garden in suburbia. I don't feel I have to be the sole supporter of the family and the only one with a career.*

(Participant 059)

### **Beliefs and attitudes about work, money and success**

Career/work was focussed on under several headings including as the priority in their envisaged futures by 11% of participants. A prerequisite was that their job be interesting/enjoyable for 9% of participants and being successful was desired by 13% of participants. Expecting to have several jobs, and/or lots of options, was envisaged by 9% of participants; they described this as being a continually changing aspect of their lives to which they had to be ready to respond. A good income was seen as important for 7% of participants, but for 3% money was not a priority.

The participants below described a traditional view of being a man placing their career as first priority. However they also had the expectation that their partner would have the same aspirations.

*As a man I expect my career will be my first priority. Success is extremely important and is worth sacrificing parts of your life to achieve. I expect the woman I choose to be my partner, to also be heavily into her career and prepared to make a few sacrifices as well.*

(Participant 120)

*When I'm a man I expect work will be a priority for me. In order to achieve success and stakes in the modern world, work must take on an added importance as success or failure when you are young shapes the rest of life. When I eventually get a partner I would hope that she sees things in the same manner, in either valuing work as highly or being willing to accept my commitment to work*

(Participant 172)

The need for flexibility to cope with continual change was described.

*As a man I expect that I will have many jobs and a variety. I think that it is important to enjoy your career because most people spend the majority of their life working. Money is not a number one priority in my life, enjoyment has priority over money. I believe, whether I marry or not, that both parents should have equal roles and responsibilities, and I don't think that being a man is about being all big and tough.*

(Participant 067)

*In today's society men and women have many career changes. I expect that my career and it's changes will revolve around my hobbies and sports because I don't have any need to participate in a high status career, and some male stereotypes say you should.*

(Participant 190)

The transcript below reflects the measured and considered approach which several participants took when discussing their prospective job and how it would fit into their envisaged futures.

*As a man I expect that a stable job is important, however, at the moment I feel that job security is very difficult and the opportunities are low. I feel that having a sound relationship that is equal and sharing would be ideal in these days or the near future. I want to succeed in my job, whatever it may be, although that is not overly important to me. What is important, however, is earning a good income that will support my family well. Therefore, I expect that my wife will also work to help in this area as well as being a good homemaker and sharing responsibilities with myself for our children. I want a job that would influence how people live today or in the future. Jobs such as IT, engineering and others of the like. Another aspect that I feel is important is pleasure. I feel that this as important as work itself because it allows reflection of my own personal life and gives enjoyment.*

(Participant 174)

The view that it is important to be a success, but not at the expense of being a nice person, was expressed by 3% of participants and is conveyed by the participant below.

*It is important to be a success in ones career but not at the expense of being a nice person. Its important at some stage to bond with other men and have fun as mates in our society. I also see myself as a caring father for children, possibly a family of 2 children and a lovely wife who I will have an equal, in every way, relationship with. Ultimately I see myself as a sensitive new age guy.*

(Participant 318)

Working hard to support the family in a traditional sense was expressed by 6% of participants.

*When I'm a man I will work hard to support my family. I'll want a good supportive wife who works part time and also at home. I will try to spend as much time with my wife and children, and take some weight off my wife's shoulders at home by helping her.*

(Participant 064)

Finding a balance in one's life was mentioned by 5% of participants.

*As a working man I will try to find a balance between a working, home and social life. While I will put providing for my family high on my list of priorities, I will always find time to communicate with my family, and spend time with them. I expect my wife to do what she wants in relation to being a family, or working woman. I will try to assist with the life she chooses.*

(Participant 113)

The last quote presented in this section seems to capture some of the general trends emerging as being at the core of the participants' attitudes and beliefs.

*As a man I think I'll have several jobs during my working life. My wife and I will take equal roles in work, interests, child-rearing. I would like to have a very active role in the raising of my children. I would like to be successful, but keep active with my friends and keep in touch with the majority of my family. I'd like to be assertive but not self-righteous. I'd want to be even handed and accepting of others choices and opinions.*

(Participant 134)



### Summary of section 3

There was a wide range of individual perceptions of what it is to be a man. One general impression that clearly emerged however was that participants took this issue seriously and responded with a good deal of thought and sincerity. This in itself was an indicator for this researcher as to the general mood of the participants, which seemed open, inquiring, positive and forward looking. Of the 297 participants who responded to this section of the survey, 9% chose to formulate their written responses around a theoretical discussion of masculinity, describing the issues in a general, rather than personal sense. Although it is not the aim of this research to classify types of masculinity, it was possible to see variations within the two polar opposites of egalitarian and traditional beliefs.

Of the participants who commented directly on the roles men and women should play in a relationship, the great majority of participants, 28%, believed both in having an equal part in raising children and in sharing work/career opportunities. Traditional beliefs were held by 6% of participants who believed that the mother should stay home and look after the children with 4% believing the man should be the main wage earner. Childcare was mentioned as not being an option, an observation that was surprising in its frequency (3%) as no prompts or questions in the survey directly related to this. There was a clear trend towards egalitarianism with 33% volunteering that they desired an equal relationship with their partner/wife.

It appeared to this researcher, whilst analysing the transcripts, that those participants who identified with a more sensitive nurturing type of masculinity sensed a prevalence of the opposite form of masculinity in our society, whilst those holding with the more traditional role perceived today's man as being predominantly more sensitive. Neither seemed to feel they were in the majority. This could indicate that for participants in their particular cultural environment, home and school, and

also in a broader societal context, there are several ways of being a man. Indeed participants say this themselves as has been shown in the transcripts, and although they acknowledged this as right, there does appear to be some insecurity, or uncertainty, about which is the *best* way to be. The issue of whether participants were confident (5%) or unsure (6%) about men's roles was addressed by almost the same number of participants, but was an issue that did not generate as much comment as relationships and discussing the evolution of being a man in general terms. This finding was unexpected, as much of the material researched before the survey was undertaken pointed to a high degree of both confusion and pessimism about being a young man in Australian society today.

It must be remembered when reading the analysis of section 3 that it was open-ended with no set questions to answer, participants were able to choose what they spent their time writing about. Therefore it is the choice made on what to concentrate in this short time frame (participants were asked to allocate about 20 minutes to this section of the survey) that is of interest.

## Survey Results: Section 4

Section 4 of the survey used a standardised sex role scale with the aim of finding out how participants described themselves now. The *Australian Sex Role Scale*, called *Personality Description Questionnaire* when administered to participants, identifies sex role stereotypes and acted as a cross reference for the other sections. The ASRS was designed to measure both positive and negative masculine and feminine characteristics. The emerging results showed participants as describing themselves as possessing egalitarian type sex-role characteristics rather than the traditional or hegemonic type of characteristics that conventional wisdom prescribes for this type of young man.

The scoring of this test is outlined by Antill (1998, Appendix 13). Each scale is scored by summing the individual item scores of all the items on the scale. The 50 items were answered on a 7 point Likert-type scale (1= never or almost never true to 7=always or almost always true). Each characteristic in the scale is given a positive or negative masculine, feminine, social desirability rating. Of interest for this study was simply the frequency with which participants chose characteristics to describe themselves. The rationale for using a pre-existing scale of characteristics was that Antill *et al* (1981) had established through extensive surveys which characteristics were judged significantly more characteristic of the typical Australian male and which were more typical for Australian females. The M+ and M - subscales contain items typical of males and are judged to be desirable or less desirable, respectively. The femininity and social desirability scales are similarly constructed. These characteristics are now looked at in turn and a synopsis, using averages, given about how these young men, as a group, described themselves (see Table 12).

## Section 4

### Personal Description Questionnaire (A)

showing average score

This task asks you to describe yourself. Below is a list of personality characteristics. Please use these characteristics to describe yourself. Indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 how true of you these various characteristics are. Please do not leave any characteristics unmarked.

Example: Forceful (ie assertive)

- Mark 1 If it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE that you are forceful  
 2 If it is USUALLY NOT TRUE you are forceful  
 3 If it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 4 If it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 5 If it is OFTEN TRUE that you are forceful  
 6 If it is USUALLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 7 If it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE that you are forceful

Thus, if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are forceful (assertive) you should write a "3" next to forceful:      FORCEFUL     

	1 NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE	2 USUALLY NOT TRUE	3 SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE	4 OCCASIONALLY TRUE	5 OFTEN TRUE	6 USUALLY TRUE	7 ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE
Love children		5.1	Competitive	5.2	Childlike	2.9	
Firm		4.5	Casual	5.0	Anxious	3.5	
Dependent		3.3	Timid	2.9	Devote self to others	4.0	
Patient		4.6	Self-critical	4.5	Feel superior	3.5	
Tense		3.6	Logical	5.1	Boastful	2.9	
Bossy		3.0	Grateful	5.4	Loyal	5.7	
Noisy		3.4	Sarcastic	4.4	Strong	5.0	
Need approval		3.6	Forceful	3.4	Carefree	3.8	
Rash		2.9	Clear-thinking	5.0	Absent-minded	3.1	
Show-off		3.1	Weak	2.6	Rude	2.6	
Interesting		4.9	Bashful	2.9	See self running show	3.5	
Appreciative		5.6	Mischievous	3.6	Outspoken	3.6	
Nervous		3.8	Responsible	5.6	Worrying	3.7	
Sensitive to the needs of others		5.3	Emotional	4.4	Gentle	4.7	
Aggressive		3.3	Resourceful	5.0	Silly	3.2	
Confident		5.0	Skilled in business	4.6	Pleasure-seeking	5.4	
Self-sufficient		5.0	Shy	3.4			

### Masculine Positive characteristics

Perhaps not surprisingly for this group of young men, and conforming to some stereotypes, they most frequently described themselves as *confident* (5.0), *competitive* (5.2), *strong* (5.0), *casual* (5.0), and *pleasure seeking* (5.4). The responses for whether they saw themselves as *being skilled in business* (4.6) and *firm* (4.5) was more often true than not with *forceful* (3.4), *outspoken* (3.6), and *carefree* (3.8) eliciting responses between sometimes but infrequently true and occasionally true.

### Masculine Negative characteristics

The characteristics in this category could be considered undesirable in our society so it was perhaps not unexpected that participants felt that they were sometimes but infrequently *show-offs* (3.1), *aggressive* (3.3), *noisy* (3.4), *boastful* (2.9) *bossy* (3.0) and *rude* (2.6). However they rated being *sarcastic* (4.4) more highly than other items in this subscale. Being *mischievous* (3.6), *seeing themselves as running the show* (3.5) and *feeling superior* (3.5) scored between sometimes but infrequently true and occasionally true.

### Feminine Positive characteristics

Participants rated themselves highly on several feminine positive characteristics placing being *responsible* (5.6), *appreciative* (5.6) and *loyal* (5.7) as nearer to usually true than often true. *Loving children* (5.1), being *sensitive to the needs of others* (5.3) and being *grateful* (5.4) also rated highly being more than often true. Being *gentle* (4.7), *patient* (4.6), *devoting self to others* (4.0), and *emotional* were perceived by participants as being more than occasionally true of them.

Traditionally regarded as archetypal and desired qualities in women, these young men showed a high degree of ownership of these feminine qualities.

### Feminine Negative characteristics

Participants rated themselves low on being *timid* (2.9), *weak* (2.6) and *bashful* (2.9) the average falling just below sometimes but infrequently true. They decided that being *dependent* (3.3) and *shy* (3.4) was sometimes but infrequently true of themselves. The *need:for approval* (3.6), being *nervous* (3.8), *anxious* (3.5) and *worrying* (3.7) rated nearer to being occasionally true than infrequently true. Being *self-critical* (4.5) was the characteristic most often identified as being true for participants in this subscale, the average response fell half way between occasionally true and often true.

### Social Desirability

Participants described all the qualities in this subscale as being often true. They saw themselves as *interesting* (4.9), *self-sufficient* (5.0), *logical* (5.1) *clear thinking* (5.0) and *resourceful* (5.0).

### Social Undesirability

Participants described themselves as only sometimes but infrequently possessing the socially undesirable qualities of being *rash* (2.9), *childlike* (2.9), *absent-minded* (3.1) and *silly* (3.2). They described *tense* (3.6) as being nearer to occasionally true for them.

### Summary of Section 4

A picture emerges from the results described above of participants possessing a combination of instrumental and expressive qualities. They saw themselves as *confident*, *competitive*, *strong*, *casual*, all typically regarded as positive masculine qualities. Participants countered this by having *a strong sense of loyalty* and *responsibility*, and an *ability to show appreciation and gratitude*, all feminine positive qualities. The results suggest that many of these young men described themselves

as being “often” to “usually” *sensitive to the needs of others* and *loving children*, also regarded as typically positive feminine qualities. The scores were markedly lower for both the negative masculine and negative feminine qualities, only a tendency for *sarcasm* and being *self-critical* - one quality from each subscale - ranked slightly higher, as fairly often true. Participants described themselves as having all the socially desirable qualities. The overall impression gained was of young men with high self-esteem, and a combination of sensitivity, strength and responsibility.

## Summary of significant findings from the Survey

To give immediacy to the survey findings a shorthand device was created with which to convey them; in a sense it takes the form of a story but in essence it is a synopsis. In keeping with the style of this type of summary therefore, percentage figures are not used but can be referred to in the tables in the preceding sections. There was a clear correlation between findings in each section as can be seen in the section summaries.

Participants in this study, students in years 10 and 11 at Canberra Grammar School, had typically been at the school for over 5 years and thought that the school had influenced how they saw themselves as a man. They also typically lived with both parents who both combined work with being a parent and they described their family culture as Australian. Participants felt equally close to both parents and also that they pursued interests and activities with them both equally. However of their parents it was their mother, whom they talked to the most about issues, interests, friends. The man participants most admired was their father, and the overarching quality they admired was that he was caring. They felt quite clear about what sort of man they wanted to be themselves, and felt that what it means to be a man in Australia was being discussed "a bit" (term used in survey) in society. Friendships were highly esteemed and participants would choose to talk to a male friend, followed by their mothers, above all others. Their peers also figured highly in terms of who participants felt influenced them about their beliefs about masculinity, as did their fathers. Participants felt strongly that a man did not need to show everyone he is the boss, be aggressive and act superior. On the other hand they did express agreement with the idea that a man is more admired if he is strong, rugged and athletic.

There was a good deal of variation in the way participants described their perceived future role as men, but also a sense of cohesion in their outlook on several issues. The results present a positive



group of young men who value equality with women and relationships with their parents and potential children above a career. The analysis of the participants' own written expressions demonstrated that there was a high level of interest and thought about their personal relationships; the salience of relationship issues to participants presented one of the most clear-cut survey findings. They appeared highly motivated towards developing and maintaining committed relationships with a significant other. The relationships they described gave both partners autonomy with a sophisticated level of negotiation about work, children and hobbies. The idea that men must keep their problems to themselves was strongly denied, instead a keenness for sharing thoughts *and* feelings was expressed. Indeed the perceived characteristics of a good relationship were that it be equal in every way. The notion that to be 'manly' it is necessary for a man to be dominant over women was firmly rejected. Second only to the priority placed on relationships was the expectation and desire to be a fully involved parent sharing an equal role in child raising, even though women were still regarded as being more caring and nurturing than men. There was a desire for keeping work in perspective and maintaining a healthy balance in life with sports and other interests. A happy family life was considered more important than work or having a successful career, although it was acknowledged that work was important, with enjoyment of work taking precedence over a high income. Work was viewed as a means to an end rather than of prime importance. Several participants commented that they would give up their career to stay home with their children if their partners needs required this, and childcare was mentioned as being undesirable and not an option. Participants felt optimistic about their future placing an overriding importance on relationships, which included relationships with a partner, children, family and friends.

A general picture emerged from the data. The synopsis above aimed to capture this. Within this general picture there are of course differences. Some of the minority views and also some of the data are of potential concern both as counselling issues and possible indicators of a need for change.

It is therefore important to add the views of those participants who may feel differently and even marginalised, and pinpoint their areas of concern. This data is briefly summarised below.

- 14.1% of participants did not talk to anyone about school, friends, things in general.
- 8.0% of participants stated that no one did things with them, such as taking them to sports, helping them with homework, sharing their interests.
- 6.1% had no man that they admired in their lives.
- A small number of participants, 1.6%, decided that they would have no-one to talk to if they needed help with an emotional problem, not even a counsellor, who 25.1% would chose to talk to.
- The potential dilemma between the belief that successful men need to be very competitive (69.8%) and the strongly expressed belief that it is important for a man to spend a lot of time at home with his family (86.8%) was noted. This could give rise to problems as the time needed for both these could conflict.

## Summary of significant statistics from the survey

- 87% of participants stated that they lived with both parents.
- 78% of mothers combine work with being a parent and mother.
- 76.8% of fathers share parenting and home duties with a full time job.
- 83.9% of participants expect that their future wife will combine having a job with being a parent and homemaker.
- 61.1% of participants felt equally close to both of their parents.
- 34% of participants named their father as the man they most admired. This was more than twice as many as the next most admired, sportsman (15.1%).
- 70.4% of participants chose a male friend as the person they would talk to if they needed help with an emotional problem. Mother, 67.2%, closely followed this, then father 61.1%.
- 71.7% of participants stated that they were not confused about what it means to be a man in our society.
- In order of ranking those perceived as influencing participants most in how they saw themselves as a man were 1) Peers and 2) Fathers.
- 70.4% of participants disagreed with the statement that men needed to be aggressive and act superior in order to prove their masculinity.

- 66.9% of participants disagreed with the notion that men should keep their problems to themselves as communicating their needs was a sign of weakness.
- 71.0% disagreed with the statement that girls/women like men who keep their worries to themselves, agreeing instead that they liked men who shared their concerns with them.
- 92.9% of participants felt it was very important that fathers spend a lot of time with their children.
- 87.8% of participants agreed that men have choices about which direction to take in their lives today.
- 75.5% of participants felt free to adopt whatever type of masculinity they liked.
- 66.5% felt optimistic about their future.
- 76.8% of participants felt society sends out mixed messages about what is expected of men.
- 92.2% of participants agreed that women had gained status over the last few years.
- When asked to describe themselves as they saw themselves now on the ASRI the average for participants on ten masculine positive characteristics was 5.1, ten feminine positive characteristics 5.3, and five social desirability characteristics 5.0. A score of 5 denotes often true and is a positive response for masculine and feminine positive characteristics and social desirability characteristics.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and concluding reflections

*The child is father of the man*  
William Wordsworth 'The Rainbow'

This chapter discusses the findings presented in Chapter 5. The survey carried out for this study provided considerable insight into the participants' overall attitudes towards becoming adult men, including their attitudes and beliefs about relationships, family, fatherhood, gender roles, work, and leisure, and whether impending adult manhood appeared confusing and negative.

### Introduction

Before more formally discussing what the findings in this study mean, I want to reflect on my first reaction to the responses in the survey; I was overwhelmed by the serious and sincere way in which the participants undertook the task. I felt that this was a finding in itself. The responses were thoughtful, well written and generous in their honesty. Why? Why had these participants as a whole felt swayed to not 'mess around', giving me a wealth of material with which to work. That their views were being asked for is I think at the heart of this question; I believe that the participants felt valued, respected, safe in the knowledge that their responses would be represented and that they could express them without peer pressure, teacher assessment or parental involvement. Several participants wrote 'thank you' notes at the end of the survey most of them simply saying they were glad to be asked their views. Some participants said that it was time that they were listened to and assumptions not made about their attitudes and beliefs by 'experts', particularly those in the media, but also at school and home. From a few came an urgency and a plea that something be done to stop young men engaging in life threatening behaviour and suicide.

My general impression was that these were well-informed young men, who were aware of the changing attitudes about being a man in our society, and who had arrived at astonishingly egalitarian attitudes, albeit in the privacy of this survey. Connell (1987,1994,1995) as described in Chapter 3, has developed a thesis on the dominance and subordination between different types of masculinity in an all-male school. He describes this as being shown through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate and exploit, particularly in the schoolyard. The present study by posing questions which explored the participants' views about their impending manhood using an anonymous supervised questionnaire avoided peer group pressure. Under these circumstances, the subscription by participants to the hegemonic model of masculinity was not very evident. Further, the developmental stage, which Erikson (1968, 1985) described, can be seen in action here.

Adolescence is often characterised as a period of turmoil and stress (see Chapter 2) but also as a time of social learning and identity formation. In Erikson's developmental terms, adolescence is a time when individuation occurs. An understanding of the viewpoint of others begins, adolescents are less self-centred than they were, and they are able to plan and look ahead. To look ahead is what this study asked of the participants, to conceptualise and think about their future as men. During the course of this study I had reason to marvel at the contradiction in what I was writing about these students as a whole, and what I was hearing about the 'cools'; their 'typical adolescent behaviour' could not be called thoughtful or egalitarian. I wished at times I had asked them the question: 'Do you think your behaviour now as 15-17 year old indicate/reflect your beliefs and attitudes about how you will be as an adult man? However, the general trends outlined in the previous chapter are strong attitudinal trends and attitudes and beliefs, I believe, shape behaviour.

The results of the survey, apart from constructing a picture of a broadly egalitarian masculinity envisaged by these young men rather than one overriding hegemonic masculinity, also offered insights into how they looked to the future. These young men seemed to regard their future in the

adult world with a mature, measured optimism. Why do these young men feel positive about their role as men, can we find any tentative answers in what the data presented? Counsellors in general deal with areas of dysfunction or distress in their clients' lives. It is hoped that this study can provide an added context within which to further counselling knowledge when dealing with young men's issues. Experiences and attitudes that reflect all areas of our society are important for illuminating the work of counsellors. These include an apparently adaptive, healthy focus by participants when responding to questions and issues posed in this study.

The discussion in the rest of this chapter looks at the cultural background in which the students in this study are situated, comparing the findings with studies and literature reviewed in chapters 2 and 3. The beliefs and attitudes that participants expressed about gender roles and being a man, about relationships, including those with a partner, parents and friends, and beliefs and attitudes about work, money and success are then discussed. There was a clear correlation between findings in each section of the survey, as can be seen in the section summaries in the preceding chapter. The discussion therefore treats the findings as a whole.

#### Cultural products: hegemonic or egalitarian young men?

The research carried out in this study is filtered through the cultural and social lens of the white, mostly middle class, Anglo male. Buchbinder (1994) states: 'This model of masculinity is the one held up persistently and powerfully in most English-speaking countries, in the distribution of social and political power as well as in the media, particularly in advertising... and precisely because of its pervasiveness and its power, deserves to be examined carefully and critically' (p. x). It is also frequently held up as privileged, with the perception that those who belong within its frame are going to stick to the power and privilege they know. Some observers tell us that white middle class

boys/young men who go to a single sex private school almost invariably belong to, or aspire to, the hegemonic model of masculinity. Kenway (1997 b) states:

‘At this stage of Western history, hegemonic masculinity mobilises around physical strength, adventurousness, emotional neutrality, certainty, control, assertiveness, self-reliance, individuality, competitiveness, instrumental skills, public knowledge, discipline, reason, objectivity and rationality. It distances itself from physical weakness, expressive skills, private knowledge, creativity, emotion, dependency, subjectivity, irrationality, co-operation and empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and certain affiliative behaviours. In other words it distances itself from the feminine and considers the feminine less worthy’ (p.121).

A question asked in the summary of the literature review was whether the instrumental-expressive characteristics described by Talcott Parsons, and enumerated by Kenway above, were envisaged by participants? Did they appear to conform to the supposed traditional social beliefs of ‘nurturing mother’ and ‘responsible father’; did they deny notions of caring and embrace the competitive world of ‘men’? From the results of the survey carried out for this study, it can be seen that participants subscribe to only some of the hegemonic qualities described above, but to several of the more expressive qualities as shown in Section 4 of the survey which utilised the *Australian Sex Role Scale*. The traditionally masculine qualities participants described themselves as having included being confident, strong, casual, countered by a strong sense of loyalty, responsibility, the ability to show appreciation, sensitivity to the needs of others and loving children, all regarded as typically positive feminine qualities (see Tables 6, 7, 8 in response to Section 2, also data analysis of Section 4, Appendix 4 and Table 11). This study in part refutes the stereotypes that surround students at corporate schools, including those that purport that these students will hold hegemonic,



traditional views about masculinity and their role as men. Hulse (1997) in her study argues that more egalitarian attitudes develop in these institutions when compared to mixed sex situations, my study adds some weight to this argument.

This study concurs with the argument that those who have traditionally held the power and maintained hegemony are now perhaps those with the most to lose (Silverstein and Rashbaum 1994, p.234, Davies 1996, p.211, Segal 1990, p.130). Davies (1996, p.12) describes the feminist agenda as dismantling conceptions of the hegemony of the particular group that has traditionally held unquestioned power and that they arguably have the most adjustment to make. There did not appear to be a sense of powerlessness and confusion expressed by these students. They did not appear generally 'nervous' and 'insecure' about their masculinity as described by Segal (1990, p.130). There was also no sense of defensiveness, which is a common response when under attack. Only 28% said they felt confused about what it is to be a man with 71.7% saying they were generally not confused. The idea of what sort of man they wanted to be was 'pretty clear' to 73.3% of participants and not clear to 25.4% (see Appendix 12, questions 18 and 24). Indeed participants seemed to be adapting to the rapid change and progress, taking place around them. Davies (1996) argues that 'If hegemonic masculinity is simply repressed, it will undoubtedly re-emerge in one way or another as an even more powerful mode of being' (p.211). Attitudes described in the data in this study could belie this assertion, but clearly the participants are not testing reality yet. Tacey (1997) argues: 'masculinity must not be eroded or washed away by the rising tide of the feminine, but instead "remade", "reconstructed", and allowed to become the intelligent and self-critical partner of the new feminine reformation'. He argues for 'balance and integration rather than for the eclipse of masculinity by femininity' (p.1). There was a good deal of variation in the way participants described their perceived future as men, but also a general sense of confidence in their outlook.

There was no sense of their masculinity being eclipsed by femininity, but indeed the balance that Tacey argues for seemed to be what they perceived as their desired futures. It appeared to me that in general the participants in this study were comfortable with the many hats that they are expected to wear today. Most did not feel that men were being marginalised, rather there was a sense that they confidently shared centre stage with women.

Rose Weitz (1977) argues that: 'The cultural products of any given society at any given time reverberate with the themes of that society and that era' (p.194), and Mackay (1999) in the preface to *Turning Point* says: 'Attitudes are the symptoms of a society's state of mind' (p. vii ). The hopelessness and alienation described by Eckersley (1993, 1995, 1996, 1997) and Mackay (1993,1999) are true for many young people in our society, but so also is the sense of optimism and the engagement with their futures that the participants in this study display. Both are equally products of our society. The concern of this study has been to give voice to, and present the beliefs and attitudes held by these young men.

### The importance of relationships

The clear thread running through the analysis of the data was the importance to the participants of equality in relationships, and the active part they expected to have in maintaining these relationships. Participants focussed on the equality they expected to have with their partner/wife and the equal part they expected to play in raising children, placing these first and second out of forty themes or sentences occurring frequently (see Table 11). Responding to whether they agreed that it was important for a man to be in a stable relationship with a partner, 49.5% said that it was. However most, 39.2%, were uncertain whether it was important for this to be marriage (see Table 8). They asserted as a matter of course that women had the same needs and rights as men to a career

and that they would want and expect to be very involved fathers. Edgar (1997) says younger men accept as natural women's equality at work, many are willing to spend more time at home and to contribute more to child-rearing, and are also accepting if their wife/partner wants to be the major breadwinner. Both these points are born out by the results of this study (see Table 11). The salience of relationship issues to participants presented one of the most clear cut findings. They appeared highly motivated towards developing and maintaining committed relationships with a significant other, 49.5%. The relationships they described gave both partners autonomy with a sophisticated degree of negotiation about work, children and hobbies (refer to Tables 6-8). Russell (1992) describes the core reason for sustaining equality in terms of role sharing, as a man's belief in fairness, his belief that men can nurture as well as women, and that women can perform at work equally as well as men (p.10). These were all beliefs firmly expressed by participants. The sharing of their emotional selves was also discussed with the idea that men must keep their problems to themselves vehemently rejected (66.9%). The notion that to be 'manly' it is necessary for a man to be dominant over women was strongly rejected (see Table 6 and Appendix 4, question 22). The apparent duality of needs and expectations placed on men today was described by Silverstein (1994) and was one of the questions posed in the questionnaire (see p.47). She described 'new men' as needing to be strong as well as emotionally available, aggressive and empathic, tough and gentle. Exploring this possible dilemma with the participants in this study, it was apparent that, to them, it was not a perceived dilemma in their future as men; they were expecting to incorporate these dualities into their way of being.

Russell (1992) argues that, since the role of caring family man even now contradicts accepted cultural beliefs, it may only be men with high self-esteem and independence who will either contemplate or adopt new ways of being men, or feel comfortable in going against the tide. He says

that the personal characteristics of involved fathers were likely to be androgynous, demonstrating positive traditional masculine characteristics but also positive traditional feminine characteristics. This is borne out by the participants in this study who displayed a balance of both positive masculine characteristics and positive feminine characteristics exactly as described by Russell (see Table 12 and analysis of Section 4, Chapter 5). Hulse (1997) describes the students from the private school in her study as having higher self-esteem and more egalitarian views than the students from the coeducational school. This current study has shown that the masculinities produced at the school which participants attend, encompass an egalitarian outlook rather than a predominantly hegemonic one. A sense of self-esteem is inherent in the data outcomes.

A 10 year research project being carried out by the University of Melbourne's Youth Research Centre (reported in *The Weekend Australian*, 13-14 November 1999, *Chronicles of the Future*, a six part series) and due to be completed in 2000, points at some similarities with, but also some quite marked differences to this study. Although clearly the research instrument used to gain results was different for both studies it is interesting to compare some of the findings. Both sets of participants placed family relationships as a high priority. Participants in the current study considered having children and being good fathers very important, it appeared as two themes, in 6<sup>th</sup> place and 16<sup>th</sup> place out of 40 themes or sentences that occurred frequently (see Table 11). Participants in the Youth Research Centre's study however placed having children 12<sup>th</sup> out of a list of 15 personal priorities. Both groups indicated that commitment to a relationship whether marriage or not, and having children would most likely not be before 30, this was placed 22<sup>nd</sup> out of the 40 themes in Section 3 of this study.

### The importance of the family of origin and fathers

An very significant number, 87.1%, of participants responded positively to the question 'Do you live with both parents?' (the remaining 12.9% spending more time with their mother, 57.5%, than their father, 12.5% and 30.0% spending equal time with both parents). This certainly goes totally against the divorce trends, which are variously described as 1 in 3 marriages failing, to nearer half of all marriages failing. What can be extrapolated from this percentage is beyond the scope of this research, but it would be interesting to find out why there are so many apparently intact families.

Over 70% of participants believed that it was important to have a close relationship with their parents, and typically felt equally close to both parents and also that they pursued interests and activities with them both equally. However, of their parents it was their mother whom they talked to the most about issues, interests, friends (34.6%). Also described in the findings are the participants' perceptions of their fathers, their relationships with them, their influence, and their participation in the home (see Appendix 12, questions 9, 14, 15, 16). The man who was overwhelmingly the man participants most admired and saw as a role model was their father (see Appendix 12 questions 14 and 16), and the overarching quality they admired was that he was *caring*. The role models these men presented to their sons were not just of work driven men, but showed men who participated equally in home-duties (76.8%), a scenario described by Russell (1998) as his aim for promoting balance between work and family in his work with corporations and the business world.

Faludi (1999) in her book *Stiffed: The betrayal of the modern man* describes how the many hundreds of men she interviewed had one common refrain, 'My father never taught me how to be a man'; they were portrayed as being emotionally if not physically absent from their lives. She summarises the men she interviewed as believing that: 'Having a father was supposed to mean having an older man show you how the world worked and how to find your place in it' (p.596).

Fathers, as described by their sons, in the current study do not conform to the latter stereotype, indeed they appear to fulfil the desired role as described by Faludi's participants (see Appendix 12, questions 4, 9, 11A, 12B, 13-16, 23D, and 26).

Biddulph (1994, 1997) places at the forefront of his agenda the need for Australian men to become better and more involved fathers. It would seem that from the responses about who participants see as their role model, who they feel close to and pursue activities with, that perhaps some fathers are doing 'fathering' well (see Appendix 12, questions 9, 12, 13, 14, 16). Participants expressed their beliefs about the importance of being fathers and that they will be taking an equal and active role in parenting (see Table 11, point 2, 6, 16). Biddulph, acknowledged as the leader in Australia of the 'Men's Movement', in an edition of 'Compass' (March 1998) entitled 'Making Men', talked of industrialised society as first removing fathers away from their families, which in particular affected boys, as now doing the same with mothers. From the current study we can see that both fathers and mothers combine work with parenting, and this seems to work for participants in this survey in terms of having close and involving relationships with their parents (see Appendix 12 questions 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16). Participants also described the high priority they placed on being good and involved fathers, suggesting perhaps that they had been valued as children. Participants commented also, without any prompting question, that they did not want their children to go to childcare (Appendix 11 point 27). Biddulph talks about some of the desirable qualities of the 1950s man, as being needed still, such as being loyal, dependable, trustworthy, looking after his family. The 'Men's Movement' is directly opposed to economic rationalism, and the way our society is driven by materialism, and has a desire for expressiveness to come to the fore. There are some parallels between the philosophy of the Men's Movement and the beliefs and attitudes of the participants in this study (although I'd venture they would not subscribe to this movement). Participants in this study appear not to place the highest

priority on materialism. They talk rather about the great importance to them of being good and involved fathers. Over 90% of participants felt it was very important to spend a lot of time with their children (see data analysis of section 2), be involved partners and share equally with women. They also talked about wanting an emotionally open and rewarding relationship and considering their partner/wife their best friend (see participants transcripts chapter 5 and Table 11 points 1, 3, 4, 13).

### **Work and Life Balance**

Participants in this study expressed the desire and need for balance between commitment to their relationship, being a father, work, family, friends and a healthy life which included sport and hobbies (see Table 11 most points but in particular 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 20). They did not envisage a life dominated by work to the exclusion of a happy and egalitarian family life, although it was acknowledged that work was important with enjoyment of work taking precedence over a high income. Work was viewed as a means to an end rather than of prime importance (see Table 11 point 6, 13, 16 and participants transcripts in chapter 5). Several participants commented that they would give up their career to stay home with their children if their partners needs required this, and childcare was mentioned as being undesirable and not an option (Table 11 points 27, 34). Edgar (1998), in his keynote address to the Forum on Men and Family Relationships, argued the need for balance in men's lives in which caring for themselves lead to caring for the significant others in their lives. This caring, he explained, would be expressed by maintaining a healthy mind and body, earning an income and participating on a practical level in family life; family to include their partners, children and parents.

The young men in this study seem to have already worked out that neglecting their relationships and children, and placing work as their priority does not appeal to them. They seem to be driven by

human rather than economic values. The young men in this study are traditionally regarded as those with power and privilege and were the managers of the past because of their schooling, class and hegemony. If they were adhering to these conventionally held attitudes, then according to Edgar and others (Segal 1990, Kenway 1997, Davies 1996) they would have the most to lose. This study has demonstrated that they do not have these attitudes but rather have egalitarian attitudes towards both men and women's roles. According to Edgar (*Australian Financial Review Magazine* September 1997) it is the men who are good at relationships, who demonstrate both empathy and emotional intelligence, who will be the better managers, the managers of the future. In that sense then perhaps these young men have not lost their 'power', rather they have demonstrated in their attitudes and beliefs about being a man today, a relevance, awareness, and adaptation to both their own needs and the needs of society. Russell (1998) has carried out extensive work on fathering in corporations. He equates happier employees with a better work ethic, and therefore better productivity, and says those who are happiest are the people who have 'work life balanced with commitment to their family (p.76). He describes his main focus as being work life balance and encouraging the view that this is an opportunity for men, their relationships, their families and for organisations' (p.71). Participants in this study have demonstrated a clear attitudinal shift away from work being the priority in their lives towards balance in their lives between family, leisure and work. Russell has found that it is young men, who want to change things, who are leading the way in '....wanting to have a better balance in life....' (p.72). From their responses we can see that participants in this study clearly refute the idea that the career driven, ladder climbing workaholic's life is a recipe for happiness. This runs counter to some research Wearing examines in her book on gender (1996). She looks at some findings published in *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1989 of a cross-class follow-up of students who left four Sydney high schools in 1972.



'The most outstanding finding was the clear split along gender lines of the definition of happiness', and she quotes: 'For a man, happiness is a solid, well-paid, high status job. With only a handful of exceptions, the men equated happiness in life with jobs. For women, the common denominator of happiness is a healthy family life' ( p. ix).

Attitudes in the current research, two decades later, seem to be changing. It remains to be seen whether these attitudes manifest in behaviour when these young men are confronted with actualising their beliefs and have personal experience of the rigours of manhood.

#### Looking forward with optimism and engagement or negativity and detachment?

In discussing what youth want from their future Eckersley (1997 b) looks at the tension 'between the real and ideal in the hearts of today's youth. Surveys suggest they appear to be adopting attitudes and values they believe are demanded by the world they live in and the future they expect - mistrust, cynicism, self-reliance, detachment, materialism, impatience etc - not those needed to achieve the world they want ' (p.248). He describes one extreme of society, homeless youth, as appearing on one level to have adapted to their situation, being street-smart and self-reliant whilst at the same time experiencing a world of violence, drug abuse, suicide, and crime. Eckersley states that what street kids want most are caring families and trusting relationships. He calls for acknowledgment of the tensions and contradictions inherent in describing young people: 'To represent young people as comfortable with the 'postmodern' world - even enthusiastic about it - when this is not true, risks fuelling their cynicism, alienation and disillusion' (p.248). Significant to note therefore is the fact that the young men in this study who describe having caring families, the one thing most desired by the homeless youth, do not appear to be adopting those attitudes and values believed to be '...demanded by the world they live in and the future they expect'(p.248).

They emphasise the importance to them of caring relationships, family and friends, these are what they valued the most highly for their futures. It is significant that these young men have the confidence to express and acknowledge that relationships, with a range of significant others, are more important to them than exciting, high powered jobs with status and money, this does not describe the materialism, detachment, mistrust and cynicism found in the several surveys reviewed by Eckersley.

Mackay (1999) *Turning Point: Australians choosing their future* talks of his hope that society sees the need for *reconnection* with each other to counteract the alienation and disconnection produced by an economically and technologically driven world. Participants in this study are already talking about connection. Connection with significant others, wives/partners, parents, children, friends, these were the aspects of their lives identified as most important to them; in their attitudes these students are set to fulfil Mackay's hopes.

Clearly masculinity is not just a given category to which you automatically belong, and there are real problems for boys/men in knowing who they are, and who they want to be and also what they have become or are in the process of becoming. I feel boys and men will represent a greater counselling client base in the future as issues of identity continue to become more confounding. Therefore it is hoped that my research will add to the knowledge we have on notions of masculinity and ways of being for men. Faludi (1999) encapsulates in part a sentiment which I think the participants in this study have displayed '... as men struggle to free themselves from their crisis, their task is not, in the end, to figure out how to be masculine- rather, their masculinity lies in figuring out how to be human' (p.607).

### Limitations of the study

The findings of this study must be considered within the boundaries of this thesis. It was only one case study of 311 students at a private single sex school in Canberra. This researcher acknowledges that the observations made based both on the quantitative and the qualitative research cannot be projected to the population of 15-17 year old young men in general. Another school in another context may give totally different results. However the researcher has been true to the tradition of research and the whole process has been documented. The attitudes expressed in all sections of the survey were so consistent that the results gained suggest a reliable tool and a useful outcome. The survey designed and used for this study could therefore be used in other survey settings with young men and the data gained usefully compared and contrasted with this study.

This study carries the limitations of all studies utilising questionnaires as research instruments:

- respondents may not answer honestly or accurately.
- respondents may misunderstand questions.

Marsh (1982) states that inconsistency between attitudes expressed in a survey and subsequent behaviour is not problematic, or surprising, for the survey researcher (p.127). This researcher acknowledges that the attitudes expressed here may not always translate into action, or behaviour, once the participants are faced with 'real life'. It was the attitudes that were being probed in this study, and there is no attempt to predict whether behaviour would be consistent with attitudes. However since an individual's attitudes shape their behaviour, this researcher is hopeful that the egalitarian beliefs and attitudes expressed in this study may translate into egalitarian behaviour when the students in this study reach the manhood they were envisaging.

It would have been fulfilling to have been able to convey at greater depth through an ethnographic study, whether, or to what extent, the attitudes expressed were instantiated in everyday discourse (see Edley and Wetherell, 1997). As described at the beginning of this chapter, the use of a questionnaire survey allowed students to describe themselves without fear of challenge, ridicule and repercussions. This was important for this study. The 'jocks' or 'cools' or, in Connell's (1987, 1995) terms the hegemonic group of boys holding power, did not challenge the 'nerds' or other subordinated groups of boys, each group and indeed each individual were given the safety of privacy to express their thoughts. There were instances of disclosure about their place in the hierarchy from both camps and disclaimers about how they would be expected to respond to particular questions.

A final and not inconsequential limitation of this study were the capabilities of the researcher. Due to the decision to conduct an exploratory survey of 311 participants which included four sections, the data was at times overwhelming for a sole researcher. This was initially most apparent at the data entry stage, although this was also a very exciting stage, but perhaps even more so at the analysis and discussion stage. This researcher feels inadequate in not being able to do justice to all the fascinating data outcomes which are worthy of far more analysis and comment than were able to be given in the required field study component of this Master of Arts degree.

### Concluding remarks

This study looked at the attitudes and beliefs about what it means to be a man constructed by young men within a specific cultural and institutional setting. How these young men are adapting to the redefinition of manhood they observe going on around them, and how their beliefs and attitudes are expressed, informed the findings. My approach combined a weaving of analytic comments around

themes and excerpts of narrative with a look at numbers and trends arising from each section of the survey. Specific questions were addressed if they seemed significant.

I acknowledge the frustration inherent in attempting to gain a sense of order and closure to the issues and questions raised in this study. Connell (1982) states: 'Complex and open-ended social dynamics don't lend themselves to neat formulae or simple practical solutions' (p.183). There is no overarching theory that makes sense of the whole field, only more questions with which to explore further.

Paradoxically to this researcher this is a comfort, it allows for difference and precludes fixed assumptions. My aim was to analyse what the participants shared about their attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and manhood, to highlight the common patterns and feelings of these, and make comparisons and links where appropriate. My research was therefore attitudinal.

The current study has added some Australian content to an area of research which is contested and vigorous in its development. By exploring the beliefs and attitudes of a group of Australians who are on the brink of manhood, tentative insights have been offered into the process of social and cultural change. The ways in which boys/men are positioned by a historically given set of discourses was looked at within the context of the present influences and state of flux. The broad aim was to add to the debate about the changing nature of masculinity in Australia today and to tentatively hazard whether these are instantiated as contextual phenomena. Broad cultural analyses such as this study attempts in part to give, can be useful as a starting point for questioning conventional wisdom. Contained within this aim was the wish to contribute to the counselling knowledge of mens issues, and to learn whether the young men in this study do, or do not, share the alienation and role confusion generally perceived as endemic to our culture.

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# **HAVING YOUR SAY A SURVEY**

## **of Your Beliefs and Attitudes About Being a Man**

**INTRODUCTION:** There is a great deal of discussion in our society at present about what it means to be a man, how men should behave, think and feel. This survey is interested in getting your views on the subject. Some questions ask you to look ahead a few years, some ask you about now. Try to answer questions as honestly as you can, there are no right or wrong answers, only YOUR answers. It is your answers that are central to this research.

**THIS SURVEY** consists of questions and statements. Some questions will be answered very quickly, others require more thinking and writing time. The questionnaire will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. You are free to withdraw at any time.

At no time in the survey are you asked to give your name so all your responses are anonymous. Your completed questionnaires will be treated as completely confidential.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

### **Format of the Survey**

*This survey is divided into 4 sections.*

*Please answer each section in order.*

**You are asked to answer some general questions and to react to a range of statements. You are also asked to describe in your own words your thoughts and feelings about issues associated with manhood.**

*Remember this is not a test: there are no right or wrong answers.*

**Section 1.** This section asks some general background questions and takes only a short time to complete. Please answer this section quickly.

*Remember all your answers are confidential. Do not put your name on this survey.*

1. Age in years ..... Year level in school.....

2. How long have you been at this school? (including primary) . . . years.

*Please circle one answer to questions below unless it specifies otherwise.*

3. Do you think CGS has been an influence on how you see yourself as a man?

Yes No

4. Do you live with both parents? Yes No

5. If the answer to 4 is 'no', which parent do you spend more time with?

A. Mother B. Father C. Equal

6. How many brothers do you have? (including step, half, if they live with you)

0 1 2 more than 2.

7. How many sisters do you have? (including step, half, if they live with you)

0 1 2 more than 2.

8. Which of the following descriptions do you think best suits your mother? *Circle letter.*

A. She is primarily a wife and mother and does not have paid work. B. She combines being a working mother with being a parent and homemaker. C. Other (please describe briefly).....

9. Which of the following descriptions do you think best suits your father?

A. He is the main or sole earner and likes his wife to be primarily a wife and mother. B. He works full time but shares parenting and home duties. C. Other term (please describe briefly) .....

10. Which description would fit best with your idea of a future wife/partner?

A. B. C. Other (please describe briefly).....

11. Which member of the family do you talk to most about school, friends, things in general?

A. Both parents equally B. Father C. Mother D. Other person (specify) ..... E. No-one

12. Who mostly does things with you e.g takes you to sports, helps with homework, shares your hobbies/interests? If you are a boarder think in terms of holidays, telephone contact, letters.

A. Both parents equally. B.Father. C. Mother D. Other (specify)..... E. No-one



13. Who do you feel closest to?

- A. Both equally    B. Mother    C. Father

14. Who is the man you most admire at the moment.

- A. Father  
B. Brother  
C. Other relative (please specify relationship)  
D. Class teacher  
E. Priest  
F. Sportsman  
G. Actor  
H. Rock star  
I. Other ( please specify)

15. List 3 positive qualities about the person you chose in the above question:-

- 1)  
2)  
3)

16. Do you see him as a role model i.e someone you would like to be like or copy?

Yes    No

17. Do you think manhood/being a man in our society is being discussed:-

- A. A lot.  
B. Enough  
C. A bit  
D. Not discussed enough  
E. Not discussed at all.

18. Is your idea of what sort of man you will be pretty clear to you?

Yes    No

19. Which statement best describes your family culture.

- A. Australian  
B. Australian/European  
C. Australian/Asian  
D. Other (please describe)

20. Do you watch the following on T.V for more than 1 hour per week on average?

- |                             |     |    |
|-----------------------------|-----|----|
| A. News and current affairs | Yes | No |
| B. Documentaries            | Yes | No |
| C. Drama                    | Yes | No |
| D. Soaps                    | Yes | No |
| E. Sports                   | Yes | No |
| F. Music videos             | Yes | No |

21. What is your favourite T.V programme at the moment?.....

22. Do you read the following for more than 1 hour per week on average?

- |                              |     |    |
|------------------------------|-----|----|
| A. Newspapers                | Yes | No |
| B. Current affairs magazines | Yes | No |
| C. Sports magazines          | Yes | No |
| D. Comics                    | Yes | No |
| E. Books-fiction             | Yes | No |
| F. Books- non-fiction        | Yes | No |

23. Choose from the list below the person/people you would talk to if you needed help with an emotional problem?

*Number in order of preference only those people you would talk to.*

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| A. Tutor         | H. Friend (male)                        |
| B. Class Teacher | I. Friend (female)                      |
| C. Mother        | J. Counsellor                           |
| D. Father        | K. Other relative (please specify)..... |
| E. Brother       | L. Telephone Helpline                   |
| F. Sister        | M. Other (please specify).....          |
| G. Priest        |   |

24. Do you find it confusing when you think about masculinity/what it is to be a man in our society?  
A. Generally yes      B. Generally no

25. If the answer to the last question is "yes", do you discuss this with the following?

*Circle all letters which apply.*

- |                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| A Teachers       | D. Father                      |
| B. Peers (boys)  | E. Mother                      |
| C. Peers (girls) | F. Other (please specify)..... |

**26. Rank in order of importance to you who/what influences you most about how you see yourself as a man e.g *If your brother influences you most put a 1 beside brother etc.***

School

Peers

Media

Mother

Father

Brother

Sister

Girls

## Section 2

Trust your first response and answer each question as quickly as possible. Consider the following statements and circle the number that most closely represents your response to the statements from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

	Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree
1. It is important for a man to have a close relationship with his parents.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It is important for a man to have a well-paying job.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It is important for a man to have close friendships where he can share his feeling and concerns.	1	2	3	4	5
4. A man should spend a lot of time with his children.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Men are more admired if they are strong, rugged and athletic.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is important for a man to be married.	1	2	3	4	5
7. A man needs to show everyone that he is boss.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Girls/women like men who share their concerns with them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. A man should not show any soft emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Men are as caring and nurturing as women.	1	2	3	4	5
11. When I'm a man I expect to deal with physical or verbal abuse by myself.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Men keep their friendships with each other fairly superficial and 'matey'.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Men value the work of parenting as highly as they do their jobs/careers.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Agree			Strongly Disagree	
	1	2	3	4	5
14. Men should only undertake so-called men's careers and jobs (traditional jobs).	1	2	3	4	5
15. It is better to be entering manhood now than it was when my father was a boy.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Men must keep their problems to themselves as communicating their needs is a sign of weakness.	1	2	3	4	5
17. It is important for a man to be in a stable committed relationship with a partner.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Girls/women like men who keep their worries to themselves.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Men need to be aggressive and act superior in order to prove their masculinity.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Women are more caring and nurturing than men.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I don't get involved when I see a friend being verbally or physically abused.	1	2	3	4	5
22. To be 'manly' it is necessary for men to be dominant over women.	1	2	3	4	5
23. A man has to make long range plans for his life.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Men must succeed at all costs because they are the future breadwinners, providers.	1	2	3	4	5
25. It is best if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and family.	1	2	3	4	5
26. It is best if a man almost always hides his emotions.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Successful men have to be very competitive.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Its important for a man to spend a lot of time at home with his family.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree		
	1	2	3	4	5
29. Life is probably better when you're a boy than when you're a man.	1	2	3	4	5
30. Men have lost status over the last few years.	1	2	3	4	5
31. Men had more choices about what direction to take in their lives 20 years ago.	1	2	3	4	5
32. It was better to enter manhood when my father was young.	1	2	3	4	5
33. A woman has to make long range plans for her life.	1	2	3	4	5
34. Men have choices about what direction to take in their lives today.	1	2	3	4	5
35. Women have gained status over the last few years.	1	2	3	4	5
36. It is the male image that is important, not a man's personality.	1	2	3	4	5
37. In todays society it is usual for a man to feel confused about what being a man means.	1	2	3	4	5
38. It is usual for young men to feel optimistic about their future.	1	2	3	4	5
39. Our society sends out mixed messages about what is expected of men.	1	2	3	4	5
40. A man is free to adopt whatever type of masculinity he likes.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section 3

Please spend at least 20 minutes on this section which asks you describe how you see yourself in the future. Some things to think about as you write might be whether you are confident or confused about men's roles in our society and what influences you most in your perception of your role as a man.

There are many different ways of being a man and the following statements are just posed for you to react to. Quickly read them all bearing in mind that they are just prompts to get you writing.

My work will be my priority. I want to be a success and will need the support of a caring wife. So although I expect my wife will want to work I think she should be the parent most involved with the children.

I see myself as wanting a relationship that is equal and involves sharing work opportunities, interests, child rearing etc. I think things other than work such as sports or hobbies might be important to me.

I think I'll probably have several jobs during my working life. I feel confused about what girls/women want from men nowadays. At present my thoughts seem to quite often be focused on what the future holds for me.

*Please use remaining space on this page and then continue on the back of this page.*

When I'm a man..... or, As a man I expect..... or your own beginning.

Did you have difficulty in deciding how to describe yourself? Yes great difficulty/ Some difficulty/ No difficulty. (*Please circle your response.*)

Have you ever thought about this before? Yes No

## Section 4

### Personal Description Questionnaire (A)

This task asks you to describe yourself. Below is a list of personality characteristics. Please use these characteristics to describe yourself. Indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 how true of you these various characteristics are. Please do not leave any characteristics unmarked.

Example: Forceful (ie assertive)

- Mark 1 If it is NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE that you are forceful  
 2 If it is USUALLY NOT TRUE you are forceful  
 3 If it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 4 If it is OCCASIONALLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 5 If it is OFTEN TRUE that you are forceful  
 6 If it is USUALLY TRUE that you are forceful  
 7 If it is ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE that you are forceful

Thus, if it is SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE that you are forceful (assertive) you should write a "3" next to forceful:      FORCEFUL     

	1 NEVER OR ALMOST NEVER TRUE	2 USUALLY NOT TRUE	3 SOMETIMES BUT INFREQUENTLY TRUE	4 OCCASIONALLY TRUE	5 OFTEN TRUE	6 USUALLY TRUE	7 ALWAYS OR ALMOST ALWAYS TRUE
Love children							
Firm							
Dependent							
Patient							
Tense							
Bossy							
Noisy							
Need approval							
Rash							
Show-off							
Interesting							
Appreciative							
Nervous							
Sensitive to the needs of others							
Aggressive							
Confident							
Self-sufficient							
Competitive							
Casual							
Timid							
Self-critical							
Logical							
Grateful							
Sarcastic							
Forceful							
Clear-thinking							
Weak							
Bashful							
Mischievous							
Responsible							
Emotional							
Resourceful							
Skilled in business							
Shy							
Childlike							
Anxious							
Devote self to others							
Feel superior							
Boastful							
Loyal							
Strong							
Carefree							
Absent-minded							
Rude							
See self running show							
Outspoken							
Worrying							
Gentle							
Silly							
Pleasure-seeking							

**THANK YOU!** Thank you for completing this survey.



## Letter to Parents of Year 10 and 11 boys.

I am at present engaged in research for a Master of Arts (Counselling) degree at the University of Canberra. My thesis explores the current debate about masculinity. There is a great deal of discussion in our society about what it means to be a man, how men should behave, think and feel.

As part of my study I need to conduct a survey to obtain the attitudes, perceptions and expectations about what it is to be a man in Australia today from boys in years 10 and 11. Research in this area has so far neglected to ask boys at a single sex private school what their views are on this topic, I think they should be asked! My survey is titled:- *HAVING YOUR SAY. A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man.*

Historically, in social research, schools have provided a wealth of data from which to both clarify attitudes and perceptions and to inform society, and I am very grateful to the Headmaster Tim Murray and his staff for supporting my study.

The questionnaires I am using are completely anonymous, no boy will be identified. The contents of the completed survey are confidential and only I and my Supervisor will have access to them for data analysis. All records will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University of Canberra for five years. Tim Murray has seen and approved the survey and I feel there is nothing in it that could offend or upset participants. All participants are informed on the front page of the survey that they can withdraw at any time.

Some interesting discussion may be generated by participating in this survey as year 10 and 11 boys prepare to enter adulthood. I am available for discussion about my research, any issues arising from the survey, and reading references on manhood. I can be contacted through my supervisor Dr. Marilyn Fleer, Associate Professor in Education at the University of Canberra on 6201-2438.

If you do not wish your son to take part in this survey please complete the attached form and return it to the Headmaster's secretary.

Anna Prosser



From the Headmaster

Canberra Grammar School

To parents of boys in Years 10 and 11

You will undoubtedly be aware of the increasing attention being given to the factors that determine the successful outcomes in the education of boys. Several of our own staff have been involved in this area, and the School is of course a member of the International Coalition of Boys Schools.

Nevertheless, there has been remarkably little research into the attitudes of boys as they turn into young men. What does it mean to them to be approaching manhood in the context of modern Australia? We now have an opportunity to be part of a fascinating study which will help to answer this question and others.

The research is to be conducted by a student of the University of Canberra completing a Master of Arts (Counselling). For almost the past twelve months she has been negotiating with the School the circumstances under which we would recommend to boys and their parents our wholehearted participation in the study, which consists of answering a questionnaire titled *Having Your Say, A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about Being a Man*. During this time the questionnaire has evolved to the stage where we are now ready to proceed. The student is a mother of boys at the School, and our cooperation with the study is to our mutual benefit.

The questionnaire is entirely anonymous; it has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Canberra; the results will be used only for data analysis; no boy will be identified; and all records of the survey will be kept in a locked cabinet at the University of Canberra. All participants are informed on the front page of the survey that they may withdraw at any time.

We will organise for all boys in Years 10 and 11 to do the survey in Week 5 of this term, that is, between Monday 17 August and Friday 21 August. It should be possible to complete the survey within one period. However, if you or your son do not wish to participate in the survey please fill out and return the enclosed form as soon as possible. Your son will of course be excused without any questions being asked. Overseas parents might like to use the School's fax number.

Please share this letter with your son so that he understands what we will be asking of him. (Boarders have been given their own copy of this letter and Mr Gilmour and Mr Welsh can handle their concerns.) We look forward to drawing on the survey results to deepen our understanding of the needs, attitudes and aspirations of the young men you have entrusted to us.

If you have any enquiries concerning the survey please address them to the Director of Studies, Mr Bill Maude.

Yours sincerely,

A S Murray  
Headmaster

## Appendix 8

Monaro Crescent  
Red Hill ACT 2603  
Australia

Telephone: Direct (02) 6295 7273  
Switch: (02) 6295 1833 Fax: (02) 6295 7734  
Email: Canberra.Grammar@cgs.act.edu.au  
ACN 008 559 322

Only return this form **if you do not wish** your son to take part in the survey titled:-  
**HAVING YOUR SAY. A Survey of Your Beliefs and Attitudes about being a Man.**

The Headmaster  
Mr A S Murray

Canberra Grammar School  
Monaro Crescent  
Red Hill ACT 2603

Or fax to +61 2 6295 2923

Dear Mr Murray,

I do not wish my son.....in Year 10 / 11, to take part in the  
above survey.

Parent's name.....Signature.....

Date...../...../ 1998

**Guidelines for the administrators of this survey.**

*This survey is to be conducted under exam conditions. No talking, no sharing of ideas etc.*

*It was established during pilots (trials) that respondents can complete this survey within 45 minutes.*

**Please could you:-**

- 1) Hand out the survey and ask boys to settle quickly, exam conditions etc. If needed please be positive and say this should be an interesting experience!
- 2) The administrator of the survey should avoid walking around the room so that participants feel free to write their answers without being observed.
- 3) Ten minutes into the survey could you suggest that participants complete section 1 soon and move on to section 2.
- 4) When a further eight minutes have passed suggest participants move on to section 3 soon. Tell them to take their time on this section as section 4, the last section, takes only five minutes to complete.
- 5) With five minutes left of the period suggest that boys move on to section 4.

***Thank you for helping to run this survey.***

**To the administrator**

**For the validity of this survey please**

**could you ensure that all forms,**

**completed, uncompleted and unused,**

**are replaced in the envelope**

**provided. Please seal envelope.**

**No forms may be taken away or**

**photocopied.**

## Summary of Data

**Section 1.** This section asks some general background questions and takes only a short time to complete. Please answer this section quickly.  
*Remember all your answers are confidential. Do not put your name on this survey.*

1. Age in years 14 - 0.3% Year level in school 10 - 46.0%  
15 - 32.2% 11 - 54.0%  
16 - 53.7%  
17 - 13.8%
2. How long have you been at this school? (including primary) years. 1-2 - 15.1%  
3-4 - 29.6%  
5+ 55.3%

*Please circle one answer to questions below unless it specifies otherwise.*

3. Do you think CGS has been an influence on how you see yourself as a man?  
Yes 74.3% No 24.8% Not answered 0.9%
4. Do you live with both parents? Yes 87.1% No 12.9%
5. If the answer to 4 is 'no', which parent do you spend more time with?  
A. Mother 57.5% B. Father 12.5% C. Equal 30.0%
6. How many brothers do you have? (including step, half, if they live with you)  
0 41.8% 1 39.9% 2 13.2% more than 2 5.1%
7. How many sisters do you have? (including step, half, if they live with you)  
0 37.9% 1 45.3% 2 13.2% more than 2. 3.5%
8. Which of the following descriptions do you think best suits your mother? **Circle letter.**  
A. She is primarily a wife and mother and does not have paid work. B. She combines being a working mother with being a parent and homemaker. C. Other (please describe briefly).....  
A 13.2% B 78.5% C 7.1% Not answered 1.3%
9. Which of the following descriptions do you think best suits your father?  
A. He is the main or sole earner and likes his wife to be primarily a wife and mother. B. He works full time but shares parenting and home duties. C. Other term (please describe briefly) .....  
A 11.6% B 76.8% C 10.9% Not answered 0.6%
10. Which description would fit best with your idea of a future wife/partner?  
A 6.8% B 83.9% C Other (please describe briefly) 7.1%  
Not answered 2.3%

11. Which member of the family do you talk to most about school, friends, things in general?

- A. Both parents equally B. Father C. Mother D. Other person (specify) .....  
E. No-one

A 27.7% B 6.8% C 34.6% D 16.9% E 14.1%

12. Who mostly does things with you e.g takes you to sports, helps with homework, shares your hobbies/interests? If you are a boarder think in terms of holidays, telephone contact, letters.

- A. Both parents equally. B.Father. C. Mother D. Other (specify)..... E. No-one

A 48.2% B 23.6% C 15.9% D 4.2% E 8.0%

13. Who do you feel closest to?

- A. Both equally 61.1% B. Mother 27.3% C. Father 10.6%  
No-one 1.0%

14. Who is the man you most admire at the moment.

- A. Father 34.4%  
B. Brother 4.8%  
C. Other relative (please specify relationship) 9.3%  
D. Class teacher 1.9%  
E. Priest 1.6%  
F. Sportsman 15.1%  
G. Actor 4.8%  
H. Rock star 5.8%  
I. Other ( please specify) 12.2%  
J. No-one 6.1%  
K. Not answered 3.9%

15. List 3 positive qualities about the person you chose in the above question:-  
(3 most frequent)

- 1) Caring
- 2) Successful
- 3) Confident

16. Do you see him as a role model i.e someone you would like to be like or copy?

Yes 62.7% No 26.4% Not answered 10.6%

17. Do you think manhood/being a man in our society is being discussed:-

- A. A lot 6.8%  
B. Enough 18.3%  
C. A bit 44.7%  
D. Not discussed enough 19.3%  
E. Not discussed at all 10.9%

18. Is your idea of what sort of man you will be pretty clear to you?

Yes 73.3%      No 25.4%      Not answered 0.3%

19. Which statement best describes your family culture.

- A. Australian 55.3%
- B. Australian/European 23.8%
- C. Australian/Asian 13.2%
- D. Other (please describe) 7.1%
- E. Not answered 0.3%

20. Do you watch the following on T.V for more than 1 hour per week on average?

A. News and current affairs	Yes	79.1%	No
B. Documentaries	Yes	32.5%	No
C. Drama	Yes	53.1%	No
D. Soaps	Yes	42.4%	No
E. Sports	Yes	65.6%	No
F. Music videos	Yes	46.0%	No

21. What is your favourite T.V programme at the moment?... (3 most chosen).....

South Park  
Seinfeld  
Simpsons

22. Do you read the following for more than 1 hour per week on average?

A. Newspapers	Yes	55.9%	No
B. Current affairs magazines	Yes	21.2%	No
C. Sports magazines	Yes	33.4%	No
D. Comics	Yes	8.0%	No
E. Books-fiction	Yes	59.5%	No
F. Books- non-fiction	Yes	43.1%	No

23. Choose from the list below the person/people you would talk to if you needed help with an emotional problem? (chosen by %)

*Number in order of preference only those people you would talk to. (order of preference)*

11 A. Tutor 19.0%	1 H. Friend (male) 70.4%
12 B. Class Teacher 10.6%	3 I. Friend (female) 53.1%
2 C. Mother 67.2%	8 J. Counsellor 25.1%
4= D. Father 61.1%	9 K. Other relative (please specify) 10.9%
4= E. Brother 25.7%	13 L. Telephone Helpline 5.8%
6 F. Sister 27.7%	7 M. Other (please specify) 5.1%
10 G. Priest 10.3%	N. No-one 1.6%
	O. Not answered 0.6%



24. Do you find it confusing when you think about masculinity/what it is to be a man in our society?  
A. Generally yes 28.0%      B. Generally no 71.7%  
Not answered 0.3%

25. If the answer to the last question is "yes", do you discuss this with the following?

*Circle all letters which apply.*

A. Teachers 15.7%	D. Father 24.1%
B. Peers (boys) 55.4%	E. Mother 21.7%
C. Peers (girls) 20.5%	F. Other (please specify) 12.0%
	G. No-one 19.3%

26. Rank in order of importance to you who/what influences you most about how you see yourself as a man e.g *If your brother influences you most put a 1 beside brother etc.*

School	3
Peers	1
Media	5
Mother	6
Father	2
Brother	7
Sister	8
Girls	4

## Notes on scoring the Australian Sex Role Scale

### Form A

### Form B

#### Feminine Positive items (F<sup>+</sup>)

Loves children  
Patient  
Appreciative  
Sensitive to the needs of others  
Grateful  
Responsible  
Emotional  
Devotes self to others  
Loyal  
Gentle

Helpful  
Humane  
Gracious  
Soft-hearted  
Sensitive  
Forgiving  
Considerate  
Understanding  
Courteous  
Eager to soothe hurt feelings

#### Feminine Negative items (F<sup>-</sup>)

Dependent  
Needs approval  
Nervous  
Timid  
Self-critical  
Weak  
Bashful  
Shy  
Anxious  
Worrying

Dreamy  
Fussy  
Hurried  
Changes mind easily  
Mild  
Gullible  
Religious  
Reserved  
Cries easily  
Excitable in a major crisis

#### Masculine Positive items (M<sup>+</sup>)

Firm  
Confident  
Competitive  
Casual  
Forceful  
Skilled in business  
Strong  
Carefree  
Outspoken  
Pleasure-seeking

Athletic  
Mechanical ability  
Defends own beliefs  
Not timid  
Brave  
Adventurous  
Daring  
Acts as leader  
Willing to take risks  
Independent

**Form A**

**Form B**

**Masculine Negative Items (M<sup>-</sup>)**

Bossy  
Noisy  
Show-off  
Aggressive  
Sarcastic  
Mischievous  
Feels superior  
Boastful  
Rude  
Sees self running show

Big-headed  
Swears  
Crude  
Rebellious  
Selfish  
Hard-headed  
Abrupt  
Uses harsh language  
Loud  
Arrogant

**Social Desirability (S<sup>+</sup>)**

Interesting  
Self-sufficient  
Logical  
Clear-thinking  
Resourceful

Lively  
Determined  
Interests wide  
Relaxed  
Has good sense of humour

**Social Undesirability (S<sup>-</sup>)**

Tense  
Rash  
Childlike  
Absent-minded  
Silly

Inefficient  
Complicated  
Hasty  
Flashy  
Shortsighted

Each scale is scored by summing the individual item scores of all the items on the scale.

The scale for each item is:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never or almost never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always or almost always true

Three further scores can then be derived from the six scales already scored. They are:

**Masculine Total:**  $M = M^+ \text{ plus } M^-$

**Feminine Total:**  $F = F^+ \text{ plus } F^-$

**Social Desirability Total:**  $S = S^+ \text{ minus } S^-$

**John Antill**