Becoming a secondary English teacher: men constructing professional identities

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'Atticus was right.
One time he said you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.
Just standing on the Radley porch was enough.'
Harper Lee: *To Kill A Mockingbird*

Keele University

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Contents

List of tables and figures

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study of a small group of men on a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education programme based in a university education department, as they undergo the process of learning to become secondary English teachers. Contributing to research into men and masculinities, the study considers the discourse of English as a gendered curriculum space and that of teaching as a feminised environment. The subject is particularly worthy of investigation as this group of individuals seems to be moving counter to what research tells us are current trends of male performance in, and cultural affiliation with, English as a school subject. The study presents the factors that influenced the men to opt for this career choice and to have developed such an affinity for the subject in the first place.

Having embarked upon the journey of teacher education, the study reveals that these male student teachers of English report experiencing issues in learning to teach the subject that have come to be associated with boys' performance in schools, particularly in English. Once on placement in schools, these hitherto successful students of English often come to be perceived as 'problems' by mentors who are particularly critical of their planning and classroom management, judging them as lazy and overly relaxed in their relationships with pupils.

Often lacking an effective male role model, the men resort to developing a classroom persona that reflects the gendered performance of their female mentors. The study reveals

the men's interconnected adaptations and negotiations as they seek an authentic way of being a man, within subject and professional spaces that they come to see as feminised. Their experience means that the men must both reconsider their masculinities and renegotiate relationships with colleagues, pupils and the subject of English.

Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale

This study focuses upon a group of nine men training to become secondary English teachers on a one-year Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme, leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). The study is located in a department of education in a new university, Powick Bridge University (the fictional title used throughout for the university wherein the research was based), and in secondary schools in the north-west of England during the academic year 2007-2008, using a qualitative approach to explore a series of questions concerning the ways in which a group of men describe their experience of learning to become secondary English teachers. The research also seeks to explore the principal factors that had influenced the group of male student English teachers to opt for such a career choice and, indeed, to develop an affinity for the subject in the first place.

This topic is of particular interest as these individuals seem to be moving counter to what statistics tell us are current trends of male performance in, and cultural affiliation with, English as a school subject. The study begins by considering what the popular press have termed the growth of 'laddism' (the 'Men Behaving Badly' / 'Boys Performing Badly' effect), linked to issues of male under-performance in all school subjects but particularly marked within English. In relation to this, the study then goes on to consider the discourse of English as a gendered curriculum space and that of teaching as a feminised environment. This then leads into the research itself, which aims to explore the formative influences on a group of student teachers of English, examining how they developed an interest and achieved academic success in the subject before opting for this particular career path, together with a

focus upon the critical incidents in the journey towards becoming secondary English teachers. The study investigates the ways in which the men's perceptions of themselves, together with their relationships with colleagues, pupils and the subject of English undergo a series of interconnected adaptations involving their identities, both as men and as teachers. Having established the focus of the study in relation to masculinities, English and teaching, it also explores the interrelatedness of these three areas of their personal and professional lives.

1.1 Beginnings

In seeking to locate and establish the genesis of this study, it came in the spring of 2004. Over a number of years leading up to that time, I had developed a research interest in issues around boys' performance in English, first as a secondary English teacher and then a university tutor. Around that time, the university department began the process of analysing the student teacher journey in relation to particular groupings (principally gender, age and ethnicity) from recruitment to progression and finally to attainment. The information that emerged was stark: male students were less likely to succeed at application stage, more likely to be 'at risk', more likely to fail. Although this performance gap was evident in academic modules, it was particularly marked in professional modules and school placements. Other groupings or blends of groupings (for example, 'minority ethnic women') yielded interesting information; however, gender appeared to be the principal signifier, the element with the greatest significance. The figures led me to start to consider whether male student teachers of English actually experienced similar problems during the course of their

initial teacher education programmes to those of boys in the secondary English classroom? If so, it would have been somewhat paradoxical: these men had been successful as students of English, both at school and university, so why did they then struggle in the process of becoming English teachers? If the subject of English can be said to be feminised, then it is one in which they had been successful; they were accustomed to working effectively within predominantly female settings. So is it to do with the actual process of becoming a teacher, the particular kinds of skills and qualities required? Could it be a result of having to form professional relationships with powerful women, in the form of mentors? These were all questions that prompted me to focus upon the experiences of a group of male student English teachers.

At the outset, in attempting to find a visual representation for my proposed study which would aid my thinking and help me to conceptualise the shape of the study, my initial thought was of an equilateral triangle, each of the vertices labelled with one of the three key factors: men, English and teaching. I was drawn to this image as it depicted not only movement along the edges of the triangle, to show when one factor was particularly influential or important in relation to another, but also the degree of 'gravitational pull' of the third factor could be represented by a point within the face of the triangle.

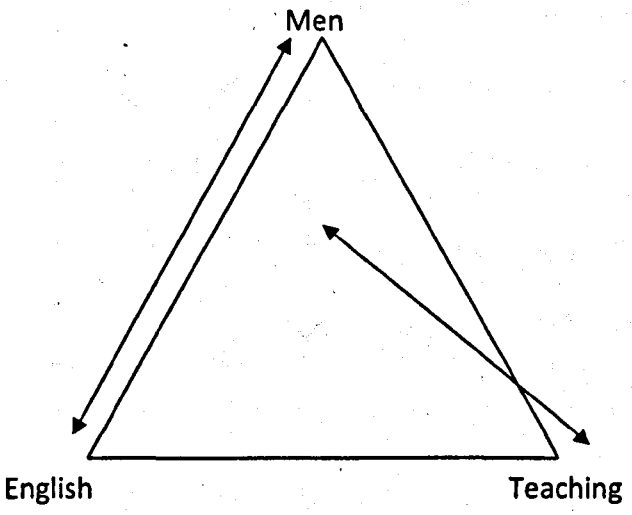

Fig 1: Initial conceptual diagram of areas of research interest (triangle model)

However, appealing though such a depiction was in the first instance, it still did not capture or present with sufficient clarity the interrelationship of these three separate but overlapping factors. Despite recognising and acknowledging the influence of one or more of each of the individual factors, it did not express the degree of overlap or inter-linking that existed between these three factors. Some months later, in conversation with my son, I came upon my eventual visual depiction of my research, creating a visual and conceptual construct that subsequently remained in place throughout the entire study, in the form of a Venn diagram. Not only did this demonstrate the three separate but overlapping factors, in addition, it also permitted a particular focus to fall either upon one aspect or upon an area where two overlapped; however, it also clearly portrayed the central area where all three factors overlapped, the area that was at the heart of my study.

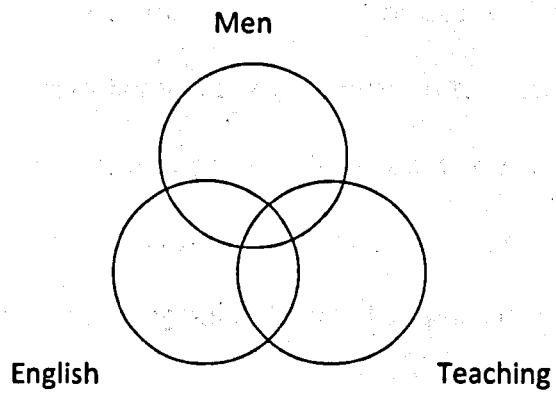

Fig 2: Subsequent conceptual diagram of areas of research interest (Venn diagram model)

1.2 Personal, professional and political

At a very early stage in my doctoral studies, and impressed by the potential of autobiography when researching masculinities (Jackson, 1990) and education (Abbs, 1974), I wrote an autobiographical reflection on the identified research topic. At that point, thinking and writing reflectively, historically and biographically was central to my search for an authentic research voice (Dadds and Hart, 2001). A narrative approach seemed not only attractive but essential to an understanding of the patterns of personal and professional relations in the aspects of 'the social' that I was researching. However, a potential danger from such an approach did become apparent: in striving to highlight connections and to explore interrelations, one can almost become tempted to take on the role of the omniscient narrator, imposing a regular and ordered narrative structure on a series of events that might more accurately be portrayed as picaresque even, at times, haphazard. Indeed, with the wonderful benefit of hindsight, and with the more detached judgements that the passage of

time permits, it is relatively easy to claim meaningful consequential links between events that simply coincided. What is rather less straightforward is to show that one event had an influence, either direct or indirect, on another. As a result, my writing approach shifted, becoming more discursive and analytical in style, although still informed by the understandings that the earlier autobiographical phase had yielded, which I now present.

I was born in December 1959 in a small, now-closed hospital in the north west of England, the only child of working class parents. Three and a half weeks later and I would have been a child of the 1960s, yet much about my early memories seems more closely aligned with the austere, conformist days of the 1950s rather than with the confidence and social change of the 1960s. With a more imaginative and passionate author, my life story might well have developed into a latter-day version of a D.H. Lawrence novel: my father the only son of a coal miner, my mother the younger daughter of a local coal dealer. However, there was to be no such drama; indeed, I remember my childhood days as being consistently secure, stable and happy times.

My parents were determined self-improvers, believing passionately that such self-improvement was possible only through two virtues: hard work and education. The way that this belief manifested itself was by my father working long shifts as a turner at the local glass works, working as much overtime as possible, in order to pay the fees for me to attend a local private school. Such a sacrifice, of both time and money, was their way of assisting me to get what they believed was the best possible start towards achieving a better lot than

that which they themselves had known. Thus it was that, in summer 1970, having passed my eleven-plus examination twelve months early, at the age of ten I moved to the local grammar school, and life at home became noticeably more comfortable. My father stopped working a rotating shift pattern and my mother took on a job as a nursery nurse at a nearby primary school.

My progress at grammar school was steady but unspectacular, indeed, decidedly shaky in one or two areas. As in primary school my particular strengths were in arts and languages: English, History and French; my weakest subjects Art, Woodwork and Technical Drawing. Unwisely, in selecting my O level options, I had chosen all three Sciences and Latin: at the time I had been determined to become a doctor. The next two years were very long, arduous and unrewarding, but did have the benefit of convincing me that the career I would eventually follow, whatever it might be, would be within the field of arts or humanities rather than the sciences. Therefore, in September 1975, with eight rather moderate O level passes in my possession, I began my sixth-form studies, with a timetable comprising English Literature, French and Government and Politics, but still without a clear idea of where this would lead in terms of eventual career. At sixth form, I was both happy and successful; incidentally, in all three subjects I had found myself in teaching groups with more girls than boys. Later, at university, where I studied English and subsequently at teacher training college, the majority of my peers were again women. As a result, the experience of learning in a predominantly female environment was one that was familiar to me prior to beginning this study.

By the autumn of 1976, in my second year of studying A level Government and Politics, I followed a Ruskin College, Oxford speech of the then Prime Minister, James Callaghan, six months into his premiership, with more than a passing interest. Having decided that I wanted to pursue a career as a secondary English teacher, at that stage I had no real ideas either of what sort of English teacher I intended to be, or even of what English teaching actually involved. The teachers whom I had experienced during my time at the grammar school had ranged from the adequate to the exceptional; however, my A level English teacher was probably the most inspirational teacher I had ever encountered, in any subject. At that stage, I felt that if I could somehow synthesise and blend the best elements of each of my teachers, I too might become such a remarkable and memorable teacher.

However, this romantic and individualistic notion was directly opposed by Callaghan's speech, which marked the beginning of an era of increasing centralisation in education. In fact, with the benefit of over thirty years' hindsight, it is remarkable just how much of a walled garden education had become at that time, to the extent that Callaghan (quoted in Batteson, 1997: 366) clearly felt the need say, rather defensively:

> 'There is nothing wrong with non-educationalists, even a Prime Minister, talking about education again'.

When he spoke that night about education, what he said sounds, at least in part, remarkably contemporary. He went on:

> 'Complaints from industry that new recruits from the schools sometimes do not have the basic tools to do the job ... There is concern about the

> standards of numeracy of school leavers. There is the unease felt by parents and others about the new, informal methods of teaching which seem to produce excellent results when they are in well-qualified hands but are much more dubious when they are not' (ibid).

Callaghan's solution, that autumn evening in 1976, was 'a basic curriculum with universal standards', and the need to instil what he called 'basic literacy, basic numeracy, the understanding of how to live and work together, respect for others, respect for the individual'. His speech launched The Great Debate about issues of standards, accountability and the relationship between schools, industry and parents. What was perhaps more important about the speech was that it also put the idea of a National Curriculum high on the political agenda for the first time. The influence of that night's speech has been far-reaching, spanning the entire length of my career and reflecting the importance of teaching not only personally and professionally, but also on a wider political level.

In addition to the particular perspectives yielded by my personal autobiography, this study is also informed by knowledge gained through my professional autobiography. I started my career as an English teacher in a mixed comprehensive school in the north west of England in September 1981, one of three men in a department of nine. Although at the time I had obviously not known this, I was to spend the next seventeen years on the staff of this school, moving from newly qualified teacher, to an established member of the English Department, to second-in-department, to acting head of department and finally to head of department. During the 1980s, work within the public sector became increasingly turbulent and

tempestuous, with Government policy, both explicit and implicit, seemingly deliberately designed to discredit and disempower the professions. It was not only teachers who found themselves in the firing line: doctors, lawyers and other public sector professionals came in for similar treatment, although none perhaps as vitriolic nor as sustained as that reserved for teachers. Public education in general and English teaching in particular came in for a battering, as first one public figure then another waded into the argument to present their view on What Was Wrong with the Teaching of English:

> 'English, after all, is the subject at the heart of our definition of national cultural identity. Since English teachers are the chief custodians of that identity we should not be surprised to find that revolutionaries intent on using the subject to transform society have gained a powerful foothold, attempting to redefine the very meaning of reading itself' (Phillips, 1996: 69).

Typical of the criticism made of English teaching and English teachers came from Norman Tebbit, then Chairman of the Conservative Party, who pointed out the causal link between the decline in standards of grammar teaching and the rise in street crime:

> 'If you allow standards to slip to the stage where good English is no better than bad English, where people turn up filthy at school... all these things tend to cause people to have no standards at all, and once you lose standards then there's no imperative to stay out of crime' (BBC Radio 4, 1985, quoted in Cameron 1995: 94).

Similarly, Prince Charles raged about standards in English teaching:

> 'We've got to produce people who can write proper English. It's a fundamental problem. All the people I have in my office, they can't speak English properly; they can't write English properly. All the letters sent from my own office I have to correct myself, and that is because English is taught so bloody badly ... The whole way schools are operating is not right. I do not believe that English is being taught properly. You cannot teach people properly unless you do it on a basic framework and drilling system' (28 June 1989, quoted in Cater, 1997: 7).

The popular press loved this battle, siding with traditionalists in their support for established values and standards. 'Baker will battle to save grammar', opined the Daily Mail on the day after publication of the Cox Report on English (17 Nov 88), in the process, both positioning grammar as a major element of what that report was about and announcing a state of conflict with the education 'experts' who had written the report. The headline also highlighted the writer's and, by implication, the readers' allegiance with those on the Education Secretary's side, who considered grammar a matter worth fighting to save.

The political skirmishes of the 1980s, unpleasant and difficult though they were at the time, had been a good grounding for me: in October 1991 I was appointed Head of English. Now there were new battles to be fought, first over the government's soon to be discredited back-to-basics campaign and then over the role of coursework in the GCSE English curriculum. However, the bloodiest of all was the two-year-long war of attrition (1993-1995)

over English teachers' refusal to participate in the proposed National Curriculum testing for fourteen year-olds. At its height, secondary Heads of English were described in the Daily Express as 'the spawn of Beelzebub' (19 March 1994), as both English teachers and their employers took on increasingly entrenched positions.

To conclude, what had become abundantly clear for me from the very outset of my career was that English as a curriculum subject was highly charged and emotive, personally, professionally and politically. As the pitched battles of the 1980s and early 1990s receded, new challenges emerged; the period of relative calm that followed was marked by the launch of an adversarial inspection regime, the introduction of performativistic targets and a relentless drive to improve standards, underpinned by increasingly detailed and fine-grained data analysis. Immediately, a key concern became apparent, the underachievement of boys, particularly in English. The evidence seemed to complement emerging research studies that had started to point to a 'crisis of masculinity', which became a particular area of interest for me.

1.3 The numerical context

Although my personal autobiography provides a contextual backdrop to this study, it is at the same time set within a quantified professional context, reflecting Strauss and Corbin's description of qualitative research:

> 'It can refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, emotions, and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social

movements, cultural phenomena ... Some of the data may be quantified as with census or background information about the persons or objects studied, but the bulk of the analysis is interpretative' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 10-11).

The following tables summarise the national percentage of boys and girls achieving each grade in English and English Literature over the six years immediately preceding the research phase (2007/08). In each case, the overall A*-C percentages have been shaded, in order to highlight gender differentials. Clearly, although such global figures are unable to reflect either individual achievement or the differences between particular sub-groups within each gender, there is a marked disparity in performance between boys and girls in both English and English Literature that demands further study.

English (Boys)											
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	A*-C	A*-U
2007	2.6	8.5	16.0	25.6	21.4	13.1	7.3	3.3	2.2	52.7	354119
2006	2.2	8.5	16.8	24.7	21.9	13.5	7.5	3.3	1.6	52.2	345355
2005	1.9	8.1	16.9	25.2	22.1	13.9	7.3	3.1	1.5	52.1	335902
2004	2.2	7.7	15.6	25.3	23.0	14.2	7.6	3.1	1.3	50.8	334932
2003	2.0	7.7	16.0	25.1	22.7	14.6	7.7	3.0	1.2	50.8	324169
2002	1.8	7.3	15.8	25.4	23.0	14.7	7.9	3.0	1.1	50.3	327783

English (Girls)											
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	A*-C	A*-U
2007	4.6	13.8	21.2	27.5	18.2	8.4	3.5	1.6	1.2	67.1	354041
2006	4.0	13.9	22.7	26.8	18.3	8.5	3.4	1.4	1.0	67.0	343083
2005	3.6	13.5	22.7	27.2	18.7	8.6	3.4	1.4	0.9	67.0	331574
2004	4.1	13.2	21.5	27.4	19.2	8.9	3.5	1.4	0.8	66.2	331861
2003	3.7	13.0	22.1	27.6	18.9	9.1	3.5	1.3	0.8	66.4	323267
2002	3.3	12.2	22.1	27.8	19.6	9.3	3.7	1.3	0.7	65.4	324375

English Literature (Boys)											
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	A*-C	A*-U
2007	3.1	10.4	19.5	25.2	17.8	11.6	6.3	3.2	2.6	58.2	277844
2006	2.8	10.2	20.9	24.8	18.2	12.0	6.0	2.9	2.2	58.7	271561
2005	2.7	9.7	20.3	25.3	18.7	12.1	6.2	2.9	2.1	58.0	263526
2004	2.7	9.2	19.6	24.8	19.2	12.5	6.9	3.3	1.8	56.3	259428
2003	2.7	9.2	19.7	25.0	18.7	12.8	7.2	3.0	1.7	56.6	245398
2002	2.6	9.0	18.8	25.6	18.7	13.1	7.5	3.1	1.6	56.0	243730

English Literature (Girls)											
	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U	A*-C	A*-U
2007	5.4	15.8	24.2	26.1	14.6	7.6	3.5	1.3	1.5	71.5	298718
2006	4.8	15.8	26.7	25.4	14.7	7.4	2.8	1.2	1.2	72.7	289234
2005	4.8	15.3	26.2	26.0	15.1	7.5	2.8	1.2	1.1	72.3	279935
2004	4.8	14.9	25.9	25.7	15.5	7.7	3.2	1.3	1.0	71.3	278928
2003	4.6	14.7	25.3	26.0	15.4	8.2	3.5	1.3	1.0	70.0	267174
2002	4.5	13.8	24.7	26.9	15.7	8.5	3.7	1.3	0.9	69.9	264266

Table 1: National percentage figures for GCSE grades

The study is situated within the discourse of the subject of English as a feminised domain, with a girl-friendly curriculum taught in the main by women teachers. In fact, perceptions regarding teacher numbers are borne out by statistics from Powick Bridge University, which show a significant gender imbalance between males and females entering the PGCE course to train as secondary English teachers : figures drawn from the ten-year period 1997-2007 clearly reflect a trend, in which males form less than 26% of the total intake, possibly a reflection of male educational underachievement; of a perception of English as a 'feminine' subject; or of society's view of teaching as a feminised profession.

	Male	Female
2007-2008	12	33
2006-2007	9	38
2005-2006	11	38
2004-2005	14	37
2003-2004	14	36
2002-2003	16	31
2001-2002	13	32
2000-2001	13	34
1999-2000	10	32
1998-1999	12	37
1997-1998	4	24

Table 2: Powick Bridge PGCE English intake figures 1997-2007

This is reflected by statistical trends (Smithers and Robinson, 2001) that have continued at Powick Bridge University in the years following the completion of the research phase: (11

men out of 52 in 2008-2009; 14 out of 50 in 2009-10). Anecdotal evidence from colleagues teaching on PGCE secondary English programmes at other universities suggests a similar pattern regarding consistently low numbers of male student teachers on secondary PGCE English courses.

Moreover, Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) statistics for the 2006-2007 recruitment cycle show not only that fewer men applied to PGCE programmes but also that a smaller proportion of these were offered places. This was particularly the case on secondary PGCE English courses, where 53 per cent of male applicants and 64 per cent of female applicants were offered places. In fact, figures for applications for PGCE courses during the years leading up to the study showed a consistent trend of more women than men being accepted on PGCE secondary English courses in England, as shown below:

	2004	2005	2006	2007
Male	403	409	437	449
Female	1493	1531	1607	1665

Table 3: Numbers accepted for secondary PGCE English courses 2004-2007 (GTTR, 2009)

Men were constantly in a numerical minority on PGCE secondary English programmes and their experience of the school-based training elements was in predominantly female English departments, where relatively few men were involved in their training. Consequently, in

planning the study, I did particularly want to explore the significance of the men's gender-perceptions on their training and on their development as English teachers.

1.4 A study of men

The study is positioned within the field of masculinities, in particular the work of Connell (1987, 1995) and Mac an Ghaill (1994, 1996) and relates to debates with regard to men researching men (Kimmel, 1987a). The emerging knowledge about men undergoing the process of training to become secondary English teachers is positioned within an anti-essentialist context, in line with Petersen's advice (2003: 57) concerning the need to avoid data collection and analysis that leads towards dualistic distinctions of men and women. Indeed, my principal aim in the study is to reveal a richness in the understanding of men and masculinities.

A challenge for any researcher electing to adopt such an approach is that of locating theory within the stories, opinions and perspectives expressed in the participants' own voices, identified by Coates (2003) as 'men talk'. This study places a lens on the intersection of three distinct but related areas: masculinities, the subject of English and becoming a teacher (Sabbe, 2003). It aims to capture how each of these areas alters during the process of overlapping, creating new perspectives on the changes and generating new questions to consider (Myhill, 2000). A discursive space is provided for the men to tell their own accounts of the changes they undergo, as the study focuses upon the negotiations and adaptations

involved in being a man in a feminised work environment, upon the development of professional relationships with young people and upon the subject of English.

A key attraction in choosing to pursue such a study was to allow the men to recount events in their own voices (Coates, 2003). Wolcott (1987) suggests a way in which stories can be used by the researcher using ethnographic approaches, with a focus 'not on recounting events but on rendering a theory of cultural behaviour' (p. 41). Analysis of the data and of the emerging themes allowed theoretical constructs to emerge. These constructs are the new knowledge that has emerged from this detailed study of a small group of men.

1.5 Thesis structure

This study focuses on the perceived experiences and adaptations of a group of men who are training to be secondary English teachers, on a one-year PGCE initial teacher education programme during the academic year 2007-2008. The research seeks to answer five principal research questions:

1. What dominant and subordinate discourses do the nine male English students use in defining and constructing their masculinities?
2. What were the principal influences that had affected them to develop an affinity for English and to opt for this career choice?
3. How do they experience their year of training, and how do these discourses contribute to the shaping of their experiences?

4. How do they construct particular forms of professional identification, and what is the role of gender in these constructions?
5. In what ways does their gendered subjectivity become challenged over the course of their training?

The study focuses on the experiences of the men, specifically in relation to their gender, their understanding of their masculinities, their relationships with teachers and their relationships with the subject of English. Hence, the study contributes to debates around gender and education, from the perspectives of masculinities, English as a curriculum subject and initial teacher education.

The significance of these teachers' gender on their experience of being trained to become English teachers is examined across three main theoretical constructs: masculinities theory, current perspectives on the subject of English, and models of initial teacher training. Through an exploration of the interconnectedness between these three areas, a series of insights into male English teachers at the beginning of their careers is revealed. Within the study, the data, analysis and conclusions are balanced against my own personal experience and professional knowledge of masculinities, teaching and English.

Within the thesis, an overview of relevant research literature is presented in Chapter 2, in order to locate the position and significance of gender and masculinities for these male student teachers, with teaching and the subject of English explored as gendered spaces.

Chapter 3 then describes the methodology employed during the study, with loosely ethnographic approaches shown to be particularly appropriate for a study of masculinities, initial teacher education and the subject of English. Chapter 4 presents the findings, analysis and interpretation of the data and reveals a set of theorised constructs regarding the processes of adaptation of male trainee English teachers, focusing upon the male student teachers' experience of entering a predominantly female profession and upon the adaptations they make in the course of their training journey. Chapter 5 presents an analysis, interpretation and consideration of the areas in which the three theoretical constructs meet, overlap and influence one another; it also presents a number of conclusions including implications for changes to practice, future research and policy within the arena of initial teacher education and secondary English teaching, with particular relevance for male student teachers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the main, research into men has tended to overlook the issue of men training to be secondary English teachers. My own particular area of interest is in examining the extent to which issues in relation to masculinity impact upon men's developing professional identities and pedagogical practices as English teachers, given the perception of English as a gendered curriculum site and, consequently, a feminised learning area (Francis and Skelton, 2001). The potential implications of such a gendered domain can then be considered, both in relation to male teachers' pedagogical practices and to their relations with pupils in the secondary English classroom (Myhill, 2000; Martino and Frank, 2006).

Through an exploration of the perception of English as a feminised curriculum domain, a discursive space will be created, within which the extent to which it shapes and impacts upon issues of masculinity for prospective male English teachers can be investigated. For example, an implicit association with the feminine can activate defensive practices of hyper-masculinity, with male teachers feeling compelled to reassert hegemonic heterosexual masculinity as a protective strategy (Skelton, 2001). Similarly, it may manifest itself through attempts to masculinise the English curriculum, in terms of topic and text selection, in order to ensure that male values and interests are represented (Martino and Meyenn, 2002; Martino et al, 2004). Such pedagogic strategies can then serve as a basis for understanding the negotiation of gendered subjectivities in the lives of a group of male student teachers.

Although considerable research has been undertaken into the lives of male student primary teachers and their particular perceptions of doing women's work (Thornton, 1999; Smedley and Pepperell, 2000; Francis & Skelton, 2001; Skelton, 2001, 2002, 2003; Carrington, 2002; Smedley, 2006), relatively little attention has been paid to investigating the ways in which masculinities impact upon male secondary teachers' professional identities and pedagogical practices, particularly within the context of the gendered curriculum (Roulsten and Mills, 2000; Martino and Frank, 2006). For example, Foster and Newman (2005) have focused upon the experiences of male primary teachers, in order to highlight the complexities of how they:

> 'made sense of other people's gendered perceptions of their professional identity' (p. 346).

Such an approach is particularly significant in undertaking an investigation into the experiences of male student teachers and the practice of masculinities within the secondary school setting. As Francis and Skelton (2001) suggest, what is required is a focus upon how discourses of gender and sexuality are employed by men in their professional lives as teachers and upon the ways in which these are manifested, both in terms of their pedagogical practices and their relations with pupils.

In line with Smedley (2006), this study aims to examine a group of men's negotiation of their professional identities and pedagogical practices within the particular context of a domain often perceived to be associated with the feminine:

> 'Looking closely at individual men's ideas and perspectives has shed light on assumptions about masculinity and men as teachers, highlighting a sense of not fitting in, disjunctions, and feelings of unease and conflict' (Smedley, 2006: 128).

It is at this cultural intersection, the point at which the gendering of the curriculum and the the negotiation of gendered subjectivities meet, that this study aims to make a particular contribution to the field, in exploring the issue of how gender regimes impact on male student English teachers, both in terms of their own emerging professional identities and also of their pedagogical practices in the classroom.

Despite often being seen as a reflection of a 'crisis of masculinity' in its colloquial sense, for example boys' attitudes to school and literacy, the gender of English teachers in secondary schools has largely tended to be viewed as unproblematic. However, in undertaking a study with a specific focus upon the identification and exploration of gendered subjectivities among a group of male student teachers of English, in order to develop a clearer understanding of the processes of gender identification that occur among particular groups of males, it is important to recognise the relevant educational and wider societal backdrop against which such a study is to be undertaken. In essence, there are currently three dominant discourses that relate specifically to the topic, each one separate but complementary: the discourse of male educational underachievement; the discourse of English as a 'feminine' subject; and the discourse of teaching as a feminist, and feminised, profession. If such discourses do have a currency or dominance, then a group of male

trainee English teachers becomes a particularly interesting focus for study: indeed, it would seem that they are 'generally assuming a position in many ways counter-cultural' (Knights, 2008: 3), 'bucking the trend' on all three counts, which in turn leads to two linked questions: why are they different, and in what ways do such differences manifest themselves.

This study will contribute to research in three principal areas: men and education, English within the secondary curriculum, and the development of professional identity, in order to gain a deeper understanding of a group of men training to be secondary English teachers. This chapter will demonstrate that the masculinities arena is the rightful home for such a study and explore the particular aspects of masculinities theory that are most applicable to the analysis. The aim is to position the study, first by examining the wider epistemological and theoretical landscapes and then by focusing on more closely related perspectives. In so doing, the intention is to seek to identify the theories that are most congruent and relevant, in relation to the data gathered.

2.1 Masculinity and masculinities

Much early research and theory with regard to men and women tended to be based upon an essentialist paradigm and, as a result, be conceptualised in binary form. However, such theorists as Chodorow (1984) advocated the avoidance of essentialism and biological determinism when researching men, rejecting any artificially constructed social pseudo-dichotomy between men and women. Similarly, Lorber (1993) challenged the biological determinism viewpoint of:

> 'Whatever a 'woman' is has to be 'female'; whatever a 'man' is has to be 'male'' (p. 568).

Her position went beyond what many feminists believe in terms of gender being a cultural overlay, acknowledging that whilst male and female bodies are different physiologically:

> 'they are transformed by social practices to fit the salient categories of a society, the most pervasive of which are 'female and 'male' and 'women' and 'men'' (ibid: 569) .

In approaching the study, it was important to avoid the potential problem of categorisation brought about by such binary opposition: gaining a clear understanding of men does involve looking at them in relation to women (Arnot, 2002) but more particularly understanding them, both in relation to other men and to themselves. Indeed, it is by going beyond biological, essentialist distinctions of maleness that a more subtle and nuanced understanding of men can be gained by considering the discourses of masculinity and masculinities (Skelton, 2001).

An examination of masculinity, in its singular form, arises in the main from biological and sociological models of men. Essentialist in nature and largely based on biological determinism, masculinity tends to embody or to concern itself with men's sex or their maleness. Such an understanding of men can be seen as relatively simplistic, presenting easy solutions based upon polarised and biologically determined views of males and females. Kimmel (2004: 2) provides a helpful distinction, defining the terms 'sex', 'male' and 'female'

as biologically framed, with 'gender', 'masculinity', 'femininity' and the social meanings of maleness and femaleness being more culturally defined. Butler's theory of gender performativity provides a particularly apposite way of looking at how male student English teachers 'do' their gender and how their gender is imposed upon them and is not embodied by being biologically determined. Such a study of student teacher socialisation from a gendered perspective and seen through the lens of masculinity was conducted by Thornton (1999), in order to look at the differences between female and male student teachers' adaptations and development. However, Whitehead (2002) warns that:

> 'notions of 'men and masculinity' are always likely to remain, to some extent, idealised products, representative of both the social conditions of the time and dominant ideological or discursive 'truths'' (p. 16).

It has become relatively widely accepted that all men ought not to be treated as belonging to one homogenous group and that the biological and sociological labels of 'male' and 'men' will apply to a complex and diverse set of human beings that vary across groups, cultures and time (Cohen, 1996). Indeed, Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) remark that:

> 'Essentialist interpretations of the male / female dichotomy are a major problem in comparative studies of gender [and that] notions of masculinity, like the notion of gender, are fluid and situational' (p. 3).

Similarly, Mac an Ghaill warns:

> 'we need to consider not only gender differences but also relations between young men and women and within young men's peer groups. It is important

> to see masculinity not simply as complementary to femininity ... Masculinities are also developed in specific institutional contexts in relation and against each other' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994: 61).

It can therefore be unhelpful to speak of masculinity as if it were a fixed, universal essence; rather, one might view masculinities as a dynamic and constantly changing grouping of associated meanings and behaviours. It is through such a focus upon masculinities in its plural form that a more complex study of men who are located in different times, spaces and cultures is able to emerge:

> 'a constantly changing collection of meanings that are constructed through relationships with themselves, with other men, and with the world. A social constructionist perspective understands gender definitions as neither static nor timeless, but historically articulated within and through people's interactions with their worlds' (Kimmell, 1987a: 223).

Major studies of men and masculinities have tended to emerge from countries with established traditions of men's studies, such as the United States of America (Brod, 1987; Kimmel, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 2004; Messner, 1993, 1997; Kegan Gardiner, 2002), Canada (Frank, 1987, 1996, 1997; Kehler, 2000) and Australia (Connell, 1987, 1995; Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Martino, 1999, 2001). In the United Kingdom an established body of work on masculinities has developed, which is pro-feminist in nature (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; 1996; Connolly, 1995b; Parker, 1996; Hitchcock, 1997; Whitehead, 2002). The term 'pro-feminist' signifies the work of men gender theorists who acknowledge and utilise feminist theory in

their research and analysis, critically engaging with dominant constructions of gender, sexuality, race, class, and disability, and pointing to the discrimination of those on the margins.

As a male researcher studying a group of men, I have acknowledged notions of both embodied masculinity and relational masculinities. The work of a number of feminist and pro-feminist researchers has been central to my thinking in these areas; in particular, Connell (1987, 1995), Collinson and Hearn (1996a, 1996b, 2001), Hearn (1987, 1992), Jackson (1990, 1998), Kimmell (1987a, 1987b), Lingard and Douglas (1999) and Mac an Ghaill (1994, 1996) have informed my study, in exploring the experience of a small group of men. Also important are studies that have examined gendered perspectives of teacher socialisation from a feminist viewpoint, such as Skelton and Hanson (1989).

The study has links with studies relating to perceptions of men and boys in society, for example men as role models for pupils, classroom relationships with boys and girls and pupils' attitudes to English (Swann, 1992). Cohen (1992) highlights the language used by teachers in school to describe boys. Also of relevance are modes of masculinities associated with boys, such as 'effortless achievement' (Aggleton, 1987: 73), the 'myth of effortless achievement' (Cohen, 1998: 28; Power et al, 1998) and 'cool masculinity' (Martino, 1999), all of which inform the study. I also explore the manner in which men training to be teachers are often perceived in stereotypical ways and the language used to describe them by mentors and colleagues and by the men themselves.

An indication of the multiplicity of masculinities to be found within school settings can be seen from the range of literature concerning the reproduction of pupil masculinities within the classroom. 'Cool guys, swots and wimps: the interplay of masculinity and education' (Connell, 1989) explores manifestations of hegemonic behaviour in relation to academic achievement, as does "Cool boys', 'party animals', 'squids' and 'poofters': interrogating the dynamics and politics of adolescent masculinities in school' (Martino, 1999), which brings in the added dimension of imputed sexualities linked to attitudes toward schooling. The identification in Mac an Ghaill's (1994) study of masculinities of the 'macho lads', the 'academic achievers', the 'new enterprisers' and the 'real Englishmen' suggests that it is through teenage boys' response to relatively recent neo-liberal curriculum reforms that their underlying assumptions in regard to educational values can best be gauged. In addition, there are the accounts of primary schooling, where Connolly (1998) compares the positioning of the 'bad boys' to that of South Asian boys, and Warren's (1997) naming of the 'princes of the park' and 'working-class kings'. Importantly, these studies do not discuss masculinity as something relating only to interpersonal relationships, but also highlight the interactions between masculinities and institutional life:

> 'It is not too strong to say that masculinity is an aspect of institutions, and is produced in institutional life: as much as it is an aspect of personality or produced in interpersonal transactions' (Connell, 1997: 608).

As a consequence, research into masculinities and schooling has tended to explore the ways in which schools have developed dominant images of masculinity and in which boys and men construct, negotiate and reconstruct their identities in regard to these through their own histories, intersected as they are by class, ethnicity, culture, religion and sexuality.

One of the central concepts in any study of masculinities is the discourse of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), which describes the underlying power perceived to be held by all males within social contexts. Hegemonic masculinity is a term used to describe the mode of masculinity which at any one point is 'culturally exalted' (Connell, 1995: 77): it refers to those dominant and dominating modes of masculinity that claim the highest status and exercise the greatest influence and authority. Hegemonic masculinity is a position which is achieved as a result of collective cultural and institutional practices, and asserts its authority through such practices, particularly through the media and the state (Kenway, 1997b). Of particular relevance is that hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation both to women and to subordinated masculinities, and is heteronormative (Epstein, 1998; Leck, 1999):

> 'the view that institutionalised heterosexuality constitutes the standard for legitimate and prescriptive socio-sexual arrangements' (Ingraham, 1994: 204).

Hegemonic masculinity is not 'fixed', though; it is in a constant state of movement and is achieved by dominating, rather than obliterating, alternative patterns and groups. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) have suggested that:

> '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' (p. 121).

Although not all men or boys aspire to, or even attempt to engage with the relentless demands of hegemonic masculinity, according to Connell, (1995: 79) all men do benefit from the 'patriarchal dividend', which is the advantage that men gain from the overall subordination of women without necessarily being in the vanguard of struggles involving hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity defines what it means to be a 'real' man or boy, and all other forms of masculinity are viewed in relation to this form. However, hegemonic masculinity is not embodied within individual personalities; rather, it is the public face of male power. For instance, while the construction and positioning of the 'lads', both by themselves and by the authors of 1970s research into schooling (Willis, 1977; Robins and Cohen, 1978; Corrigan, 1979) were based upon traditional, dominant forms of white, working class masculinity, it was not necessarily the case that the boys themselves lived out this way of being. Rather, it could be said that the 'lads' in these studies were, at the time, actually constructing and performing the masculine identities which would place them in what Connell (1995: 79) was to depict as 'the frontline troops of patriarchy'.

2.2 The lost boys

The issue of boys' underachievement has been one of the dominant issues in the field of education over the past two decades, affecting all phases of education and all subject areas, although none more so than English at secondary level (Arnot et al, 1999). An indication that the balance between male and female achievement was shifting first became apparent in the early 1990s:

> '... recent evidence ... suggests that the traditional female educational disadvantage has disappeared and been replaced by emerging male educational disadvantage' (Fergusson and Horwood, 1997: 84).

The evidence for this conclusion had emerged from the results of GCSE examinations and subsequently from A-level results. These showed that the attainment gap between girls and boys was widening in the girls' favour in arts and humanities subjects, whilst in the sciences the traditional advantage of boys over girls was narrowing. The publication of the Ofsted Report 'Boys and English' in 1993, came in response to the apparent underachievement of boys in English. Its opening paragraph was unequivocal:

> 'Boys do not do as well as girls in English in schools. There are contrasts in performance and in attitudes towards the subject. The majority of pupils who experience difficulty in learning to read and write are boys. Boys' results in public examinations at 16 are not as good as girls', and many more girls than boys continue to study beyond 16' (Ofsted, 1993: 1).

The report's conclusions challenged much of the then orthodox thinking among many teachers, a legacy of the still influential second-wave feminism of the 1970s and 1980s (Sharpe, 1976), principally the focus upon equal opportunities for girls across the curriculum, and the concern for girls' relative underachievement, particularly in Mathematics and Science (Delamont, 1999). Subsequent debates over boys' underachievement have sought to overturn such discursive configurations, representing the undifferentiated group 'boys' as victims, with 'girls' being relatively privileged. A significant feature of these debates involves reinforcing simple binary oppositions between, for example, boys and girls, femininity and masculinity, where the girls' success is seen as at the expense of that of the boys (Kenway, 1995; Yates, 1997). Some authors (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, Mills, 1997; Lingard, 1998) have since suggested that this spotlight on boys' achievement was a 'defensive reaction to girl-focused equality initiatives' (Harris et al, 1993: 14) or a 'discourse of derision' (Delamont, 1999); while the preoccupation with male underachievement that resulted was a form of 'anti-feminist backlash' (Martino 1999: 289). In similar vein, Kenway (1996: 448) describes it as 'partly a reassertion of masculinity'.

In the years since the publication of the Ofsted report, a 'globalised moral panic' (Epstein et al, 1998:3) has developed around what is often described as the 'problem' of boys' educational underachievement (Griffin, 1998). The rhetoric of politicians and newspapers has served to place schools and education at the heart of this moral crisis. The whole problematic of boys' underachievement has in many ways become the dominant issue within the education press and political speeches on schools and schooling. For example, the Times

Educational Supplement (TES) carried headlines declaring that school work was 'Not for wimps' (TES, 6 October 1995) and later asking 'Where did we go wrong?' (TES, 14 February 1997). Broadsheet newspapers similarly headlined articles which discussed 'The failing sex' (Guardian, 12 March 1996) and called for schools to provide a 'Classroom rescue for Britain's lost boys' (Independent, 5 January 1998: on the same day, that paper's Editorial was entirely devoted to this issue, under the headline 'Never mind theories, under-achieving boys need practical help'). On the face of the evidence, the boys-in-crisis discourse seems to present an overwhelming case for the existence of a 'boys' problem', sharing the characteristics of a much wider males-in-crisis discourse (Brittan,1989; Foster et al, 2001; Whitehead, 2002). Headlines such as 'Don't blame wimmin boys, blame your dad: Why the Frail Sex is Male' (Guardian, 19 September 1999), provide further evidence of alarm among the broadsheets at the shifting postmodern gender order. More recent reports have highlighted the focus on boy's behaviour and educational underachievement, particularly in respect of white working class boys' underachievement, such as 'Back of the queue: why poor white boys lose out at school' (TES, 12 January 2007) and '85% of poorer white boys fall short in GCSEs' (Guardian, 1 February, 2008), which have highlighted the manner in which the combination of class and gender have produced a situation where 'the vast majority of white working class boys are leaving school with too few qualifications. ... White boys in disadvantaged areas are the lowest performing group of pupils in schools after the small population of traveller children' (ibid).

In the media, the boys-in-crisis discourse has spotlighted boys as the new disadvantaged (Epstein et al, 1998; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Lingard and Douglas, 1999); competing victims, with boys' interests set against those of the girls (Cox, 1997 in Foster et al, 2001: 1). For example, each summer, the publication of GCSE results has brought forward a catalogue of alarming assertions, with leading figures in education, politics and the media reflecting on the failure of working class boys, and the media speaking out to highlight the need to address 'the crisis' of male underachievement (Bright, 1998), and to devise rescue 'rescue plans for the weaker sex' (Lee-Potter, 2003). Chris Woodhead's 1996 TES article, imbued with all the gravity and authority of his role as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, declared that, 'the failure of boys and in particular, white working class boys is one of the most disturbing problems we face within the whole education system' (TES, 15 March 1996). Similarly, politicians have argued that 'Many schools are already addressing the issue of boys' underachievement successfully – but too many schools are not' (Morris, 1996) and have called for schools to 'challenge the laddish anti-learning culture which has been allowed to develop over recent years' (Byers, 1998).

As a result of this emphasis, in popular and government debates, the emphasis has not been on the achievement of the girls or on the improved levels of performance of both boys and girls, but simply upon male underachievement, the failure of boys at all stages of the secondary school system to achieve similar levels of attainment to those of girls (Teese et al, 1995; Yates, 1997; Murphy and Elwood, 1998; Reed, 1998; Arnot et al, 1999). However, in reality, the picture is more complex than might be inferred from such stark headlines.

Although the gender gap did widen in English secondary schools in the years following the introduction of GCSEs (1988) and National Curriculum tests (1993), this does need to be contextualised against a background of steadily rising achievement levels in both boys and girls, at Key Stages 2 and 4. As Hatcher (1997) points out: 'raising levels of pupil achievement does not necessarily entail reducing educational inequalities – in fact, standards can rise while the equality gap widens' (cited in Hall and Coles, 2001: 216). Consequently, the emphasis of the debate about 'failing boys' and 'boys' underachievement' seems somewhat misdirected: the issue is not so much about underachievement but instead about differential rates of improvement, with the excitement actually generated by the fact that, over time, the trajectory of the trend line of achievement for girls has been steeper than that of boys. Given this year-on-year improvement of both girls' and boys' performances, it seems odd to talk of the underachievement of boys compared to girls; the term appears to be a misnomer for what has actually occurred.

However, whilst the view that the issue is to do with the underachievement of all boys, or even of most boys is too simplistic (Arnot et al, 1999; Lingard and Douglas, 1999), research has shown that there are typical patterns to which many boys do conform. For instance, Gillborn and Mirza (2000) demonstrated that, when the educational attainment of boys and girls is compared within social classes, or within ethnic groups, girls invariably do better than boys. It is recognised that, although boys are not an undifferentiated group, there are broad similarities within sub-groups that allow valid generalisations to be made. A number of research studies have been conducted, revealing that inequalities generated by race or social

class apparently have greater impact than those caused by gender (Gillborn, 1997). However, the Joseph Rowntree report, 'Tackling Low Educational Achievement' (2007) focuses on the crisis discourse and its implications for public policy in its unequivocal identification of educational failure, with gender highlighted as the decisive factor, rather than class or ethnic origin:

> 'Disadvantage of various kinds lies behind much of low achievement. But different groups in the population respond differently to their circumstances. There is very obviously a 'boy thing' ... The gender aspect shows that disadvantage is not a consistent factor in low achievement: the girls come from the same families and mostly go to the same schools, but do much better' (Cassen, and Kingdon, 2007: 6).

In spite of the concerns over boys and schooling from press and politicians, dominant views of masculinities have rarely been explored. In essentialist debates, little problematising has arisen of the seemingly implicit acceptance of the position of 'healthy idleness in boys', which suggests that healthy boys should not work at a subject they dislike (Cohen, 1998). Indeed, 'healthy' boys are often seen as those who do not necessarily take up the work of schooling, and therefore, by implication, those boys who engage in the process of working hard for good grades are by contrast, unhealthy, or 'other'. Furthermore, Mac an Ghaill (1994: 59) has shown that, for many boys, being seen to be working at acquiring academic credentials can be identified as a signifier of effeminacy. A number of studies (e.g. Walkerdine, 1989; Alloway, 1995; Epstein, 1998, 1999; Skelton, 2001) have argued further

that the appearance of working diligently at school work may be viewed as a 'feminine' practice, and that boys who work hard risk being seen as 'a girl', or worse still 'gay'. There are many examples in the literature of boys resisting working hard in order to avoid being seen as 'gay' or 'spoffs' (Connell, 1994; Measor, 1999). Such behaviour is evident as early as the early years of primary school, where no label is worse than that of being called 'gay' (Renold, 2001). As Epstein (1998: 97) points out, 'the rejection of the perceived "femininity" of academic work is simultaneously a defence against the charge of being gay'. Epstein (1999) and Ingraham (1994) theorise heterosexuality as a compulsory element in the social context of schooling and argue that many boys who are identified as feminine are often the targets of heterosexism, homophobic harassment and bullying (Sears, 1997; Epstein, 1998; Rofes, 1998; Skelton, 2001).

The influence of the peer group appears to be central to the roles that boys adopt in school; it is within the peer group network that masculinities are collectively contested, maintained and regulated. Each group attempts to impose its own definition of masculinity, thus reinforcing its members' own social position. In turn, this provides a context for the mediation of the pupils' schooling experiences. For instance, Redman and Mac an Ghaill (1996) highlight, in an English context, that to be a 'real' boy in schools is to be in opposition to the feminine and to 'feminised' versions of masculinity. At an institutional level, boys' identities are formed in relation to the formal curriculum and to the categories it makes available, including the academic/vocational, arts/science, and the academic/sporting polarities. For instance, the 'hard' scientific version of cleverness that is highly prized in

school exists in opposition to supposedly 'soft' subjects, like art, music and English, which are viewed as easier options, somehow lacking in due rigour and seriousness:

> 'English has battled from the beginning against being classified as a "soft" option' (Knights, 1998: 38).

They are, in effect, girlish subjects and not for 'real' boys. In similar vein, to be 'bad at games' can be viewed as implying a suspect lack of manly vigour and hints at effeminacy, while to be uninterested in the core aspects of 'laddishness' is to risk a charge of being 'gay'.

2.3 The gendered curriculum

At times, pupil cultures can emerge as a response to the perceived orthodoxy of the school curriculum. For example, the male pupils in Martino's (1999: 253) study of a secondary school who participated in a 'cool masculinity' were not academic failures; rather, they were involved in a middle class protest masculinity that rejected school work and high academic achievement. For them, adopting a high sporting and social profile constituted a particular 'cool masculinity' that was institutionally sanctioned, sport being a particularly highly valued aspect of the school curriculum. Earlier research by Aggleton (1987) had similarly suggested the emergence of a new kind of middle class, whose values do not necessarily align with education and training career pathways. These studies clarify the ways in which the relationship between masculinities and the curriculum does not work in deterministic ways; pupils can effectively negotiate curriculum agendas (Davies and Hunt, 1994). However, if the curriculum does operate as a resource through which masculinities are produced, it can

therefore be understood as a structure that closes off and opens up spaces for the formation of masculine subjectivities.

Rather than viewing pupil groupings in terms of a simple pro-school or anti-school dichotomy, Mac an Ghaill (1994) has suggested a more nuanced approach, in order to capture these new dimensions. In his study he identifies four groups of male pupil types to represent different styles of masculinity within the secondary school: the 'macho lads', the 'academic achievers', the 'new entrepreneurs' and the 'real Englishmen'. These pupil groups positioned their masculinities in relation to the school organisation and more particularly in relation to the curriculum. For instance, while the working class 'macho lads' rejected formal schooling, the 'academic achievers' legitimised and affirmed the schooling process, locating themselves firmly within academic subjects. By way of contrast, the working class 'new entrepreneurs' located themselves within high status technical and vocational subjects, as a resource through which to develop their masculinities. The final group, the 'real Englishmen' represented a group of middle class students who, like the 'macho lads', rejected the values of schooling but unlike the former remained ambivalent to its significance. The production of their particular masculinity included honesty, being different, individuality and autonomy, features which they claimed were lacking in the school's middle class culture.

Mac an Ghaill's research (1994) investigated notions of manliness and peer-group cultures, central to which was the culture of not being seen to work hard in order to achieve academically (Connell, 1989; Chaplain 1996; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Epstein, 1998;

Warrington and Younger, 1999). He argued that boys were not prepared to accept the conventional school ethos of striving hard for examination success and that their own masculine constructions of success actually inverted the supposed norms of the academic classroom. Similarly, Arnot et al (1999) highlighted a key motivating factor for many middle class boys:

> 'In perceiving themselves as positioned between the 'macho lad' and the sexless swot' (Aggleton, 1987: 72), they aimed for 'effortless achievement (1987: 81) – a reverse of the protestant ethicl' (p. 138).

2.4 Beyond 'The gender divide'

'Boys' achievement in secondary schools' (Ofsted, 2003) was a follow-up survey to 'The gender divide' (Ofsted, 1996), Ofsted's first investigation into gender differentials in educational achievement. In its summary of main findings, the 2003 report echoes much of the content of earlier surveys, stating:

> 'When boys enter secondary school they are already well behind girls in English, although they achieve marginally better than girls in mathematics. Except in a small number of schools, the gap does not close during the secondary years. Boys continue to achieve less well than girls in Key Stage 3 tests and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations' (Ofsted, 2003: 3).

Through its analysis of schools' inspection feedback, the report provides an analysis of the findings and makes recommendations for practice based on the data. The principal themes

that emerge from the report are 'performance gap' and 'causes of boys' underperformance'. Written in characteristically performativistic language, the report does acknowledge the complexity of the gendered practices that produce boys' educational underperformance. In summary, the report's key findings were that generally boys underperform across the curriculum, but particularly so in language-based subjects and in activities which require a level of 'reflection'. However, significantly, the report highlights evidence from examination results, that:

> 'even in a traditionally male area like resistant materials, girls have overtaken the boys at GCSE' (Ofsted 2003: 7).

Its suggested strategies for improving achievement are acknowledged as complex, requiring a combined approach based upon:

> 'a positive learning ethos, good teaching and classroom management, close monitoring of individuals and effective support for learning' (Ofsted, 2003: 3).

According to the survey, boys respond well to careful planning, pace, challenge, clear rewards, clear limits and boundaries. Humour and a consistent, fair-minded approach to rewards and sanctions are also identified as factors. It is, perhaps, worthy of note that the report does dismiss the notion of a 'boys' learning style' and highlights the problematic of privileging boys' educational attainment over that of girls, citing Suknandan's observations that:

> 'there is the danger that staff will be encouraged to exploit the differing areas of male and female strengths, rather than address their weaknesses ...

> secondly, given the current popular focus on boys rather than girls, there is a danger that staff will concentrate their efforts and resources into modifying the learning environment to address the needs of boys without necessarily making as much effort to address the needs of girls' (Suknandan, in Ofsted, 2003:11).

Significantly, the survey does report that, 'there is evidence that boys are rather less inclined than girls to learn from indifferent teaching' (Ofsted, 2003:3). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that boys' resistance and non-compliance toward less engaging teaching is a gendered response from adolescent males engaged in the normative performance of masculine identity and seeking confirmation of their masculinity through an anti-school display of non-conformity (Willis, 1977; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 2000). The report analyses data collected from GCSE and Key Stage 3 assessment results, which indicate a significant gap in attainment between boys and girls in subjects requiring higher-order literacy skills. The analysis concludes that in many schools, boys' underachievement is associated with:

> 'poor skills in the use of language, which is reflected in their performance in GCSE examinations in modern foreign languages, religious education and drama, as well as in English language and literature. Boys achieve notably worse results than girls in National Curriculum English tests at Key Stages 2 and 3' (Ofsted, 2003: 4).

The report highlights the work of Shipman and Hicks, noting that 'masculine' peer culture had a significant impact on boys' motivation:

> 'The most important factor that prevents the motivation of boys identified by the pupils and teachers alike was the boys' peer group culture. The presence of friends in the group made the boys work less hard. The peer group observed in school was not an anti-work but a pro-social group ... within the peer group the boys worked to establish their self-esteem through social interaction not academic performance' (Shipman and Hicks in Ofsted 2003:10).

Arriving four years later but continuing to reflect many of the findings of the 2003 Ofsted survey, 'Gender and education: the evidence on pupils in England' (DfES, 2007) provided a similar wide-reaching survey and analysis of quantitative data based upon records of examination results covering a period from the 1950s to 2006. This report concludes that whilst gender can be seen as a relatively stable indicator of educational performance, both social class and ethnicity also play significant parts:

> 'Whilst gender does independently predict attainment, the social class gap has greater explanatory power and for some groups, ethnicity is also a more important factor than gender' (DfES, 2007:5).

The report suggests that boys' anti-conformist gender performance is a major explanatory factor in differential achievement. However, in common with the perspectives of theorists such as Martino and Meyenn (2001), the report concludes that 'labelling' boys as

underachieving is too broad-brush and argues that the policy focus on boys' underachievement can shift attention away from the fact that many girls are also low attainers (DfES, 2007: 5). The report supports the arguments of feminist and pro-feminist theorists, suggesting not only educational practices that challenge images of hegemonic masculinity but arguing that:

> 'there is not a case for boy-friendly pedagogies - pedagogies which appeal to and engage boys are equally girl-friendly'.
>
> (DfES, 2007: 7)

The report stresses that strategies to raise the achievement of boys should not be applied in a way that could be detrimental to girls' social and academic progress. Similarly, it raises the crucial question of whether the debate of the underachieving boy has any relevance if the educational advantage gained by girls disappears on entry to the labour market. The report seeks to explore 'reasons for the gender gap' (DfES, 2007: 7) and finds them in the gendered behaviours of the male peer group. The construction of a dominant hegemonic masculine subjectivity through some boys' anti-school gendered performance is identified as central to the maintenance of identity and social standing within the micro-politics of the male peer group, becoming normative for a sizeable majority. Drawing from the research of Arnot et al (1999) and Forde et al (2006), the report asserts that academic work is devalued, conceptualised as feminine and therefore at odds with the normative expectations of youthful masculinity. It depicts a tension between the academic expectations of schools, where a discourse of performativity and accountability prevails, and the disengagement from

the curriculum of a sizeable proportion of male pupils. Indeed, Forde et al's (2006) research confirms the widely held view that negative anti-school strategies increase the self-worth of boys within their peer group and therefore become an identity resource. Behaviours such as procrastination, withdrawal of effort, poor presentation and disruption are practised in order to protect and project this 'male' identity.

2.5 Boys who like English are faggots

> 'English is a subject suitable for women and the second- and third-rate men who are to become schoolmasters' (Sanday, 1893, quoted in Palmer, 1965: 104–117).

From the its very beginnings, academics and English students have felt compelled to explain that what appeared to be a 'soft' subject was actually 'hard' if you looked rigorously enough. Indeed, between 1919 and 1921 the authors of the Newbolt Report: The Teaching of English in England were exercised by a charge that has been heard repeatedly since, and concluding:

> 'It is suggested that [English] is a 'soft option'. This is an accusation which affects the whole of our inquiry. If it were made good, it would go a long way towards providing a justification for denying English the place in our education system which we demand for it. Above all, it would be fatal to the claims of English at the university stage ... Our answer to it is that the charge is untrue and the danger imaginary ... [the] 'man who enters an English

'School' hoping for an idle or easy time should at once find out he has deceived himself' (Para 194).

Over 70 years later, with the publication of the 1993 Ofsted report 'Boys and English: Could do better', the realisation dawned that a sea-change had taken place within a relatively brief period. The report's conclusions overturned much of the then still prevalent thinking about English teaching. Rather than continuing to view the subject as a relatively easy option, teachers were now urged to consider ways of making English more accessible for boys, by choosing more boy-friendly, male-centred texts (as will be shown, in the case of my own department at the time, that would have been difficult indeed), by varying teaching styles within the classroom and by looking at the ways in which assessments were made. Consideration was made of the use of shorter questions, seeking factual information about chronology, plot and character (at which boys were felt to be more comfortable), at the expense of longer questions about relationships, emotions and the effects of language.

The report's focus upon English was particularly important because it marked a meeting place of 'two powerful signifiers [which] shape our current educational landscape; the 'underachieving boy' and the 'failing school'' (Reed 1998: 56). English, and Literacy at primary level, now came to be viewed as feminised (Moir and Moir, 1999), having adopted teaching styles and assessment practices that encouraged girls' skills, to the detriment of those of the boys (Pollack, 1998). At secondary level, the then-recent introduction of coursework was similarly felt to have benefited girls' performance at the expense of that of

the boys. Whereas attention had previously been focused predominantly on issues of girls' disadvantage within English, attention was now switched to the boys (Martino 1995a, 1995b; Alloway and Gilbert 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Davies 1997; Gilbert 1998; Gilbert and Gilbert 1998; Webb and Singh 1998). Within my own department at the time, consideration was being made of the perceived gender bias of the texts studied within the English curriculum. Without knowing it, the department had embarked upon an audit of the kind suggested by Stones (1983), Whyte (1983) and Baines (1985), who had shown that many of the books chosen for reading with English classes in schools were biased towards boys' lives, and suggested alternatives with positive role models for girls.

By and large, our analysis had revealed that the positive, proactive and, ultimately, interesting characters in the class texts studied predominantly tended to be male (e.g. Chas in Robert Westall's 'The Machine Gunners', Bill in Janni Howker's 'Nature of the Beast', Benjie in Betsy Byars' 'The Eighteenth Emergency', Toby in Michael Morpurgo's 'The War of Jenkins' Ear', James in Penelope Lively's 'The Ghost of Thomas Kempe'). Conversely, where female characters took centre-stage, they too were presented in conventional roles, often as carers (e.g. Carrie in Nina Bawden's 'Carrie's War'), disabled (e.g. Geraldine in Marlene Fanta Shyer's 'Welcome Home, Jellybean') or as an outsider (e.g. Perdita in Nina Bawden's 'The Witch's Daughter'; Martha in Robert Swindells' 'Abomination'; Kizzy in Rumer Godden's 'The Diddakoi').

The department was actively trying to seek out texts that would prove challenging to such stereotyped images. Gene Kemp's novel 'The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler' was one such text already in existence, but it was felt to be both dated and rather limited, revolving as it did around the 'unmasking' at the end of the novel when the reader realised that Tyke was in fact a girl, contrary to their expectations. In addition to these plot and character limitations, many pupils had already encountered the text at primary school, and often felt the urge to share the ending's secret with those who had not, which seemed rather to remove the entire point of studying the text.

The department was also seeking to broaden the scope of texts that pupils encountered, valuing and promoting the 'vernacular literacies' (Hall and Coles, 2001: 218) that are often underrepresented and underprivileged in comparison to the hegemony of fiction in the English curriculum, at all stages, from the early years of primary education through to the end of compulsory schooling at age 16. The intention here was not specifically to address issues of boys' underachievement; it was largely accepted that girls' reading of such texts is still broadly narrative-focused in comparison to that of the boys, and so would correlate more closely with that valued in formal tests of reading and writing. The aim was one of 'recognising and respecting' (ibid: 211) such choices, rather than viewing them as representing a literary under-class.

The years since the publication of the report have witnessed a number of strategies and initiatives, each aimed at bridging the gender gap in terms of boys and girls' performance in

English. However, although some of these might have had some slight effect on improving the boys' grades, this has usually at least been matched by similar improvements in the grades achieved by girls: little change in the grade differential between boys and girls has been recorded:

> 'Many interesting questions have been raised by examination statistics, not least why boys have failed to raise their performance levels over the last decade at the same, or an equivalent, rate to girls' (Arnot et al, 1999: 125).

These strategies and initiatives, often stylistic and presentational, have largely been based upon a series of gendered assumptions, deriving from and reinforced by anecdotal classroom experience and professional folklore, from teachers and wider professionals puzzled by such a sudden and dramatic change in emphasis and seeking practical answers. These gendered assumptions quickly became accepted as 'truths' by the English teaching establishment, although at the time there was little, if any, research-based evidence upon which to base these wide-ranging, blanket statements about an entire gender group. The new 'truths' were that

> '... girls had an advantage in: extended pieces; answers to open-ended questions; showing audience awareness; writing reflectively; writing empathetically; writing imaginatively; discussing character motivation; conversation/drama; writing about poems, about literary prose and about drama; preparing for assignments; discussing assignments with teachers, and listening' (Frater, 1997: 32).

As a school subject, English seemed to be based upon too many uncertainties to be comprehensible to the uncomplicated dominant masculine mind, which is attracted to notions of strength, muscularity, and beating opponents:

> 'It is a rare young man that can maintain his position as a heterosexual male, appreciate sport, and perform outstandingly in English' (McIvor, in West, 1996a: 77).

For the rest of the boys, apparently, English is 'enemy territory' (Alloway and Gilbert, 1998: 11): boys and reading and boys and literature were frequently mentioned by teachers as potential trouble spots in educating boys. Potentially hegemonic constructions of masculinity are not necessarily compatible with the constructions of the 'literate self' that are expected of students in the English or literacy classroom; in short:

> 'performances of masculinity may be at odds with performances preferred in English literacy classrooms' (Gilbert 1998: 22).

Odone (2003), writing in The Observer, links the numbers of men teaching English and the number of boys studying English at A level:

> 'The boy who believes that reading the Brontës will get him teased in the playground can only be disabused by a respected male role model waxing lyrical about Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights. But this figure is increasingly rare. Just as learning English is branded girly, teaching English – indeed teaching any subject – is stuck ever more in a pink ghetto of Miss Jean Brodie with only the odd (very odd, the rumour mill would have it) Mr Chips' (Observer, 12 October 2003).

Here, she links together two other elements relevant to a study of male English teachers: English as a feminised subject suitable for girls and the impact of representations of English teachers in literature and popular culture (Weber and Mitchell, 1995).

However, it was not only in the United Kingdom where the subject of English was felt to be undergoing some form of gender crisis. In Australia, too, the subject that showed the greatest gender difference was English: girls' results were on average of 25% higher than those of the boys (McGaw, 1996). Similarly, a report into achievement throughout Australia found that:

> 'Where boys can avoid doing English, they often do; and when they can't, they often fail. Only certain subjects are real subjects for boys' (Teese et al, 1995: 108-9).

There has been a tendency to construct the topic of boys' underachievement in English principally in terms of gender difference, and to investigate the issue almost exclusively from a gender (and gendered) perspective. A perhaps unintended consequence is that a

stereotypical construct of male achievement has emerged, and now dominates the way male underachievement is perceived. For example, Pugh (1995: 19) asserts that 'the underlying basic reason for boys' underachievement' is boys' view that English is a female subject. In similar vein, Reynolds (1995: 16) states that the subject of English is 'literature-based, privileging narrative and valuing personal, affective responses' and that 'these foundations of the subject can be fundamentally unattractive to boys.' An explicit link exists between identification with hegemonic or complicit masculinity and the rejection of traditional school literacy practices. In a widely cited example, Martino (1995: 354) found that not only were heterosexist practices connected to specific kinds of school performance, but also that students could clearly articulate the positioning of workers and achievers as gay, quoting one pupil who argued:

> 'English is more suited to girls because it's not the way guys think. This subject is the biggest load of bullshit I have ever done. Therefore, I don't particularly like this subject. I hope you aren't offended by this, but most guys who like English are faggots' (Martino, 1995b: 354).

More recently, a 2002 research report 'Addressing the educational needs of boys' (DEST, 2002) found that:

> 'a number of boys suggested that they or other boys would not want to work hard or to appear to like school, and especially subjects such as the humanities or English, in case they were perceived to be gay or called a girl' (Lingard et al, 2002: 128).

In similar vein, Casson and Kingdon (2007) question whether there is something about the nature of schooling itself which contributes to boys' disengagement. Their report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation argues that the pursuit of an anti-education culture is a refuge for boys who may have lost their esteem as learners in primary education. Peer group culture and the influence of hegemonic masculine identity practices are identified as particular barriers to boys' achievement. Lack of literacy and reading skills are identified as critical factors contributing to boys' disengagement:

> 'Boys may indeed identify reading as 'feminine' or an unmanly thing to do, at a time when they are forming their own identities' (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007: 21).

The authors conclude that whilst there is concentration on boys' achievement, 'it is because being boys constitutes a source of difficulty over and above that conferred by disadvantage' (ibid: 23). The idea that studying English is an inherently female process is also articulated by Frith:

> 'I am suggesting, then, that the idea that the 'normal' position of the reader as male is a very odd one. The required position of the reading subject, the reading process, conforms much more closely to the conventional prescriptions of femininity than those of masculinity. It is hardly surprising that most students of English Literature are women' (Frith 1991: 72).

It would appear from such studies that not only are some forms of masculinity at odds with academic achievement, but also that specific forms of achievement are at odds with

heterosexual hegemonic masculinities. Tellingly, in their report on the educational needs of boys, Lingard et al (2002), comment on gendered subject choices, noting that:

> 'boys' avoidance of humanities subjects ... steers them away from the very areas of the curriculum that have the potential to engage them in critical reflection on issues of gender' (Lingard et al, 2002: 21).

Miller (1992, 1996) considers the gendered construction of English alongside the wider feminisation of the teaching profession. She argues that English is not regarded as a rigorous course of study (1996: 193) because of its potential 'civilising influence' and perceptions of its female characteristics as 'domestic, parochial, consolatory and unthreatening'. Miller (1996: 193) suggests that this 'femaleness' of English is due to the large numbers of female students wanting to study English, to the subject's 'civilising influence' and to a suspicion about 'academicising' the teaching of reading, writing and literature. However, the situation is further complicated by the history of English as a curriculum subject that has been dominated by male legislators and academics in constructing a subject which, as Miller observes (1996: 190) promotes male hegemony but is staffed mainly by women. Indeed, because of the numerical predominance of female English teachers, pupils' experiences of male English teachers generally tend to be limited to men who are perceived as lacking economic power or being generally irrelevant and therefore are viewed as unmasculine.

Such studies of English as a gendered curriculum space can be seen as a key contributory factor in English as a university study being studied mainly by women – indeed, recent figures

(TDA, 2010) suggest that, in the United Kingdom, after several years when relative male participation in the subject was slowly rising (partly due to the increasing popularity of A level English Language, which attracts a higher proportion of male students), full-time intake now stands at around 75 per cent female. Therefore, male pupils who opt to study English are assuming a position that is in many ways counter-cultural (Millard, 1997: 81-82). As a minority group, men studying English tend to form homosocial bonds against other students; in spite of English being a field one of whose major concerns has been a critique of traditional assumptions about gender. As Knights (1998) has noted:

> 'The male student of English is going against the social grain ... As members of a minority within the student body, males have to negotiate their standing, and fend off the effeminacy that may be attributed to them by other students' (pp. 39-40).

2.6 Proper work for a man?

Arguments relating to boys' performance in schools, in particular to their underachievement in English and literacy, potentially risk perpetuating an essentialist view of boys, together with a deficit model of boys' achievement, as suggested by Myhill (1999, 2000). However, one of the principal strategies for raising boys' achievement in general has been the encouragement of more men to enter the teaching profession; a response to the perceived feminine culture of schools (Mills, 2000; Hayes, 2002). Headlines have asked: 'Are schools failing our boys?', 'Do boys need more male teachers?' and 'What about the boys?' (cited in Fine, 2001). Foster et al (2001) provide a perspective on the issue of men providing role

models for boys:

> '... it is proposed by supporters influenced by recuperative approaches that more men teachers should be encouraged into teaching to provide boys with male role models' (Foster et al, 2001: 6).

As Carrington and Skelton (2003) highlight, a number of such initiatives aimed at boosting male teacher recruitment have been presented within official discourses as a solution to the attitudinal problems of many working class boys in schools, together with their lower levels of achievement. However, the authors argue that there is no evidence to suggest that the fact that the teaching profession is predominantly female makes any significant difference to young people's achievement. Similarly, Smedley (1998a) in writing about 'the feminised culture of primary schools' warns against the dangers of naïveté in approaching the issue of boys' underachievement with a 'common sense' solution of recruiting more male teachers:

> 'It is too simplistic to assume that numbers of men can be recruited, work as teachers of young children and straightforwardly raise standards, in part by offering positive role models for boys in particular, or for girls' (Smedley, 1998a: 147).

In promoting these strategies, it appears that there has been little explicit consideration of the types of male role model to be recruited, although by implication these men should be macho, straight and able to identify with boys' interests (Skelton, 2001). However, a potential danger then is that such male teachers may encourage a particular type of bonding with boys, which will encourage laddish behaviour, further reinforce stereotyping and, at the

same time, marginalise girls. Furthermore, the evidence actually suggests that the gender of the teacher does not impact on the academic attainments of either boys or girls (Martin and Marsh 2005; Carrington, Tymms, and Merrell, 2008), nor that boys seek male teachers in order to provide them with 'role models' (Bricheno and Thornton 2003; Hutchings et al, 2007). Equally, it appears that whenever researchers have investigated the extent to which a significant improvement in boys' attitudes and achievements can plausibly be attributed to the influence of male teachers, the conclusion has invariably been that they are unable to do so (Ashley and Lee, 2003; Carrington et al, 2005; Thornton and Bricheno, 2002, 2006; Carrington et al, 2008).

Universities report higher failure rates and greater difficulties amongst male trainee teachers than with female trainees (Carrington and Skelton, 2003; Foster and Newman 2005; Thornton and Bricheno, 2006). However, despite such research findings, the Training and Development Agency (TDA) has funded a number of projects aimed at encouraging more men into teaching. Underpinning such initiatives has been a belief that the absence of appropriate male role models is a contributory factor in boys' underachievement. Indeed, the majority of arguments in favour of increased numbers of male teachers suggest that the teaching profession has become increasingly feminised and that, as a consequence, the education of boys has suffered because of the lack of male role models. Although teachers are clearly not the only role models for pupils, they are both powerful and strategically located (Connell, 1989). In public perceptions, the field of teaching is closely related to femininity (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989), and it has been argued that men might avoid

teaching because working with children is perceived as 'women's work' (Burgess and Carter, 1992), or a 'soft option' (Connell, 1985). In fact, such perceptions might well be reflected in statistics from Powick Bridge University, which reveal a significant imbalance between males and females entering the PGCE course to train as secondary English teachers. Figures over a ten-year period 1998-2008 clearly reflect a trend, in which males form less than 27% of the total intake, possibly a reflection of male educational underachievement; of a perception of English as a 'feminine' subject; or of society's view of teaching as a feminised profession.

2.7 Male role models for boys

However, achievement is not the only concern of those advocating male teachers to be teaching boys. There is a way in which there is an engagement with mythopoetic, or what Lingard and Douglas (1999) refer to as 'recuperative', masculinity politics (Lingard et al, 2002). Mythopoets frequently draw on assumptions about a natural or essentialised masculinity, which needs to be nurtured from boyhood to manhood by a father figure (Biddulph, 1994; 1997; Pollack, 1999). The theme of the missing father is a common one in the mythopoetic literature (Kimmel, 1995; Mills and Lingard, 1997; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998; Mills, 2003). For many mythopoets, the pressures confronting boys could be avoided if there were a greater proportion of men involved in their upbringing. Likewise, they highlight the fact that so many boys are currently being brought up by mothers in single-parent households. In the light of such domestic imbalance, it is suggested that male teachers can become influential father-like figures for boys:

'Men can show boys that reading, writing, music, art and learning is as much a

man's as a woman's world' (Biddulph, 1994: 145).

The importance placed on fathers is evident in some schools' programmes of fathers reading to sons or in 'dads and lads' evenings' that have been organised in order to bring fathers into their children's, or more specifically their sons', lives. A key role that such father figures are often expected to play is in the disciplining of their children.

Similarly, an aspect of teaching that can be seen as providing a context for the emergence of particular formations of masculine identities is that of classroom discipline. Howard (1991) has contextualised the ways in which historically, school discipline regimes have created particular kinds of men; for example, the schools that she investigated subscribed to the ideology that 'tough teachers make tough boys'. Likewise, Connell (1989) suggests that an inability to be powerful and authoritative is culturally reflective of an inability to be a 'proper man'; indeed, a lack of competence in a particular practice is frequently associated with signs of 'weakness' that align with popular assumptions in relation to femininity. In schools, teachers' awareness of the pedagogical styles other teachers, informed by notions of gender, creates an impression of 'good' or 'bad' teachers. Consequently, 'good teachers' can be seen as 'real men', with 'bad teachers' having 'problems' (Wolpe, 1988). Likewise, in Robinson's (1992) school, a competent teacher is one who can keep a class quiet: a quiet class was viewed as a class that could be managed (or 'tamed') and in which learning could be achieved. The implied suggestion that male teachers are better able to 'discipline' troublesome boys reinforces dominant impressions of masculinities at the heart of many of

the issues relating to the education of boys, in particular (Martino and Meyenn, 2001; Mills, 2001; Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003). Indeed, as Francis and Skelton (2001) suggest:

> 'Many students, teachers and parents see men as being 'natural' disciplinarians. And many male teachers may seek to perpetuate this construction of themselves in order to better achieve a construction of 'hard' masculinity' (p. 13).

The recruitment of male teachers is not without complexities and contradictions (Francis and Skelton, 2001; Skelton, 2001). 'Real' men are the desirable ideal, that is, those who are heterosexual and who engage in manly activities that mark them as heterosexual, activities that they can model as appropriate interests and pursuits for boys. This description of 'real' men, however, is in contrast with nurturing qualities so often situated as important for teachers (Epstein and Sears, 1999). In developing recruitment campaigns aimed at attracting more men into teaching, governments have not been clear about what kinds of men are required if boys are to be motivated to want to work harder at school. If the 'laddishness' of boys is equated with anti-school attitudes then presumably male teachers need to be the antithesis of such masculine constructions, but, if they do not draw on hegemonic forms of masculinity (such as 'having a laugh', being competitive, enjoying sport) then it is likely that boys will fail to relate to them (Francis 1999; Skelton 2003; Martino 2008). In order to emphasise their 'manliness' some male teachers rely upon gendered discourses or put-downs to male students in ways to control them (Mills, 1996; Roulston and Mills, 2000; Francis and Skelton, 2001). As Francis and Skelton (2001) argue, male teachers often:

'emphasise those aspects of teaching that are more compatible with conventional masculinity' (p. 12).

However, the suggestion that male teachers might be more likely to accept or tolerate 'boyish energy' does point to potential issues relating to complicity between male pupils and male teachers, particularly in relation to boys' gendered performances (Roulston and Mills, 2000; Francis, 2000; Skelton, 2001). Such notions of 'boyish energy' evoke an image of essentialised masculine behaviours, typified by the 'boys will be boys' approach to boys' behaviours, together with a view that schools should value such behaviours. The suggestion that 'normal' boy behaviours are not valued in school is often associated with the backlash perception of schools as feminised institutions that are not 'boy-friendly'.

2.8 A soft option?

The concept of teaching as a 'predominantly female' career (Sargent, 2001: 44) has been examined from feminist and pro-feminist perspectives (Deem, 1980; Miller, 1992, 1996). Traditionally, teaching has not been viewed as an appropriate career for men (Skelton, 2001). One potential explanation for this rejection of teaching as a suitable occupation for men is the interrelationship between hegemonic gender and heterosexuality; heteronormativity applies not only to pupils and their performance, but to teachers as well (Evans, 1999; Francis and Skelton, 2001; Skelton, 2001). For example, an interest in working with children is associated with 'the feminine' and 'womanhood'; therefore, a man who expresses an interest in teaching can be read as not a 'real man' (Sargent 2001). Moreover, the link between masculinity and sexuality is sometimes seen as carrying a further implication: that a

sinister sexual agenda must be part of the reason for wanting to teach young children.

The men in this study are seeking to enter a career where they will be outnumbered by women undertaking similar jobs (Goodwyn, 1999). Given that statistics suggest that more pupils are taught by female teachers than by male teachers (Thomas, 1990, 1991; Daly, 2000; Williams, 2005), then numerically, at least, teaching is not only a predominantly female profession but also one that arguably is becoming more feminised:

> 'A central theme of this new anxiety is also, of course, the feminisation of schooling: all the ways in which the increasing presence of women in teaching may have led to the sense of education itself being somehow an unmasculine business, inimical to the majority of working-class boys' (Miller, 1996: 135).

The qualities of caring and communication that women are generally perceived as possessing can be particularly associated with the role of the teacher. The term the 'feminisation of schooling' (Miller, 1992, 1996) is most frequently used to refer to the numerical predominance of women teachers; Sargent (2001: 44) deliberately uses the term 'predominantly female' rather than 'female dominated' to indicate the inequalities of power, where the majority of workers are women but the major policy makers tend to be men. It can also be used to imply that this greater number of women teachers has ensured that the climate of schools has become overly 'feminine', where classroom organisation and management, assessment practices, curriculum content are all sympathetic to girls and alienating for boys. As such, the 'feminisation of schooling' has negative connotations.

However, such a presumption that schools are 'feminised' in the sense they are 'girl-friendly' is in contradiction to the literature that indicates girls – and indeed boys – continue to be treated in gender stereotypical ways (Paechter 2007; Forde 2008).

The concept of the 'feminisation of schooling' (Miller, 1992, 1996) provides a useful way of approaching a study of male English teachers' entry to the profession. Similar to other men in studies of non-traditional occupations (Williams, 1992, 1993, 1995; Smedley, 1998b; Roulsten and Mills, 2000), the men in this study, were viewed as something of an anomaly. They were entering a profession where women were in the majority; their rarity value not only conditioned the ways in which they were perceived by men and women within a school setting, it also raised questions regarding pupils' preconceptions about them. Also of relevance is the notion of being an outsider entering an established community (Tinto, 1993). Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994: 4) address the assumptions that link masculinities and power in social interactions: these perspectives on masculinities and power inform this study, especially in relation to workplace relationships between male trainees and female English teachers and mentors.

A wide range of previous research has been conducted into the initial teacher education of secondary English teachers (Davies, 1996; Goodwyn, 1997; Turvey, 1997, 2000; Leach, 2000; Marshall et al, 2001). In the main, such research has tended to focus upon student English teachers' ideologies and upon their understandings of the subject of English; as such, it has relevance, both for higher education and initial teacher training and for the teaching and

learning of English in schools. However, the majority of this research has not concerned itself either with the gender of student teachers and the mentors with whom they train or with notions of the feminisation of English (Miller, 1991, 1996; Thomas, 1990; Daly, 2000). Similarly, the issue of gender has tended to be overlooked in research into English teachers' philosophies. Several writers provide useful perspectives on English teachers' relationships with their pupils, colleagues and the subject of English (Peim, 2003; Bousted, 2000, 2002; Marshall, 2000a, 2000b; Marshall et al, 2001) that are relevant for the current study; however, they do not specifically consider the role of gender. Similarly, research into pupils' gender and attainment in English (Thomas, 1990; Martino,1994; Millard, 1997; Myhill, 2000) has tended to omit the role of teachers' gender.

The conflicting perspectives on the gendered nature of secondary schools need to be considered. The study is rooted in secondary English, an area of controversy and debate, which has traditionally been a male-dominated subject in terms of its legislation and canonical construction (Marshall, 2000b), but has also become female-dominated in its delivery in the classroom (Reed, 1998; Darling and Glendinning, 1998; Williams, 2005). Typically, in an English Department, there may be one man to five or six women; indeed, quite frequently, the only man will be the head of department. Reed (1998) reveals a dimension that is particularly relevant for this study, by identifying the specific areas where female teachers dominate the teaching workforce, including English teachers:

> 'It is also of significance that the subject areas and teachers linked most closely with the problems of boys' underachievement are predominantly female:

English teachers, primary teachers and special educational needs teachers' (p. 62).

Mac an Ghaill (1994: 1) highlights the paradoxical nature of gender in schooling, which he refers to as a 'masculinising agency' (p. 23), with a teacher workforce dominated by females and where schools are managed by managerial systems that become increasingly masculinised. The paradox for this group of men training to become English teachers is a crucial one: as the men enter schools, they must negotiate their masculinities and professional identities within the predominantly female English departments in which female teachers deploy hegemonic behaviours. Davies (1992) warns of the potential dangers of contextualising dominant forms of secondary school management alongside masculinity. Bradley (1993), too, is helpful in identifying the issues in relation to the ways in which men entering predominantly female work contexts are perceived, in terms of invasion, infiltration and take over. This might possibly be a perception of the male student English teachers who are about to enter the profession by women currently performing the role well. There is possibly a similar suspicion, held by the women, of these men wanting to do their job, underpinned by a feminised vision of how the job of an English teacher should be performed.

2.9 Men learning to teach English

The professional standards for initial teacher education require all student English teachers to be allocated a trained school-based mentor, who will be an English teacher working in one of the university's training partnership schools. In this study the majority of mentors,

responsible for 'coaching, counselling and assessment' (Fletcher, 2000: 1) were female, as were most other English teachers with whom the students came into contact. As a result, the concept of the 'feminisation of schooling' (Miller, 1992, 1996) is central to the experiences of the men in this study. Miller's study provides a social and historical context for the male student teachers' experiences in joining a predominantly female profession with a history of low status. If, as suggested, education has become an 'unmasculine business' for pupils (Miller, 1996: 135), the extent to which teaching is also perceived as 'unmasculine' by the male trainees who, as pupils, will themselves have experienced a predominance of female teachers is worthy of exploration.

However, although the numerical superiority of female teachers is a key feature of such feminisation, it is by no means the only one. Teaching has been, and continues to be, perceived as 'women's work' (Williams, 1992, 1993; Miller, 1992, 1996), not only in the primary and early years sector but also in arts and humanities subjects in the secondary school. Where they do exist, male teachers in this sector or these subject areas are seen as 'minority men', something of a curiosity in a predominantly female-populated profession. According to Mac an Ghaill (2003), teaching has become more professionalised over the past twenty-five years, its functions seen as 'masculinised' despite being performed mainly by women, many of whom have taken on 'hard masculine' roles in middle and senior management positions (Hey, 1996; Coleman, 2001). He argues that, because teaching has borrowed managerial practices from the world of business and commerce, it has become more masculinised. However, paradoxically, whilst management and leadership structures

have been masculinised, teaching is increasingly managed and led by women. The men in the current study remarked upon their female colleagues' perceived power (Duncan, 2002) and achievement and commented on the ways in which they merged the managerial and caring elements of their role.

By investigating the experiences of the nine male trainees, an understanding can be gained both of their expectations in relation to teaching and of the production and performance of their masculinities in the classroom, in line with Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003). The men's experience is further magnified because of its setting within the secondary school environment. In secondary schools there are further layers of 'masculine' and 'feminine' subjects (Thomas, 1990). The feminisation of English as a subject in itself (Daly, 2000) exists in the perceptions of pupils and teachers, in addition to the workforce statistics of men entering a predominantly female profession. Here, the issue of men entering occupations that are regarded as 'women's jobs' (Williams, 1993; Miller, 1992, 1996) relates to a group of men entering the predominantly female workplace of the English department. In their ethnographic research study, Warren and Hackney (2000) have explored the issue of a female researcher's reception in a male-dominated field, using the concept of 'the honorary male' (Sexton, 1969). The concept of the 'honorary female' is relevant to the men in the current study, as 'honorary' gender status and feeling 'genderless' are part of the experience of male student English teachers.

2.10 English teachers are different

Pike (2003) claims that trainees are unaware that English is 'ontological' (p. 92) and that 'Being in English teaching transcends method and explication' (ibid: 98). Being an English teacher involves both conscious uses of methods and explications and an awareness of less tangible processes. The importance of a particular type of personality and a particular type of subject knowledge were noted by Mathieson (1975), whose study considered the relationship that English teachers have with their subject. English teachers do form a distinctive group and are aware of their difference (Goodwyn, 1997: 29), as they both see themselves, and are seen by others, as different from other teachers because their teacher socialisation is actually framed and informed by the subject. It is a distinctive way of teaching that is associated with the content and the processes of 'doing' English that is a creative, often organic amalgam of reading, writing and talk that utilises what pupils bring to the English classroom. As Dooley has pointed out:

> 'English is a subject more profoundly engaged with the processes of identity formation than any other. Every engagement with every text involves, at some level, the negotiation of our sense of self with external world. When that engagement takes place in a public space with a group of people, there is no telling how many personal stories could be circulating, how many narratives are being written and rewritten, challenged and affirmed' (Dooley, 2008, in Knights [ed.] 2008:73).

As Creber (1990) observed, good English teachers are often unable to articulate quite what they are doing, but understand how to shape a lesson in order to exploit good learning. Similarly, Clarke et al (2004: 2-3) characterise English teachers as being concerned with certain core values, ranging from valuing the sentient individual and linguistic heritage to generating responses steeped in individuality but founded on a shared unshakable ideology:

> 'Certain values central to English teachers' common ideological stock have looked on tempests and have not been shaken' (Clarke et al, 2004: 2).

However, at the same time Clarke et al acknowledge the 'permeability' of English, believing it to be a subject that is mutable in a way that Mathematics and Science are not. Indeed, the problem and the joy of English is that the subject defies definition and continues to grow and change (Davison, 2009).

In discussing the first iteration of the English National Curriculum in 1991, Professor Brian Cox (1991) identified a number of different views of English teaching:

- *The 'personal growth' view*, which focuses on the child; it emphasises the relationship between language and learning in the individual child, and the role of literature in developing children's imaginative and aesthetic lives.
- *A 'cross-curricular' view*, which focuses on the school: it emphasises that all teachers (of English and other subjects) have a responsibility to help children with the language demands of different subjects on the school curriculum: otherwise areas of the curriculum may be closed to them.

- *An 'adult needs' view*, which focuses on communication outside the school: it emphasises the responsibility of English teachers to prepare children for the language demands of adult life, including the workplace, in a fast-changing world. Children need to learn to deal with the day-to-day demands of spoken language and of print; they also need to be able to write clearly, appropriately and effectively.
- *A 'cultural heritage' view*, which emphasises the responsibility of schools to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language.
- *A 'cultural analysis' view*, which emphasises the role of English in helping children towards a critical understanding of the world and cultural environment in which they live. Children should know about the processes by which meanings are conveyed, and about the ways in which print and other media carry values.

Here, we can begin to see some of the philosophical standpoints underlying particular epistemologies of English teaching. Often, English teachers will have adopted such viewpoints instinctively, without entering into an inner debate on the relative merits of particular cases. Positions taken will be intimately tied up with individual teachers' personalities and areas of interest; indeed, some teachers may be unaware of their own natural inclination, never having questioned the rationale behind their own particular approach.

The teacher taking a 'personal growth' view considers the transforming power of literature, of pupils seeing their world in new and different ways as a result of explorations inside the

English classroom. The teacher who adopts a 'cross-curricular' view might consider the overlap between English and literacy, asking where one ends and the other begins and seeking to identify links between the literacies of individual subjects across the curriculum, perhaps looking for opportunities to design and implement integrated arts projects across a number of subjects. The teacher with an 'adult needs' view sees English very much as a transactional subject, one that prepares pupils for the particular demands of the workplace and of adult life in general, keeping an eye on changing technologies and seeking opportunities to utilise these within the English classroom, with life skills such as letter and report writing being paramount. In the 'cultural heritage' view, literature is at the heart of the curriculum, with classic poetry, prose and drama being studied in order to gain an understanding of our nationhood and as an exemplification of our national heritage. For the teacher with a 'cultural analysis' view, new media - TV, film, the press, the internet, blogs, wikis, podcasts and vodcasts are explored, both as texts for study and as vehicles for writing, alongside newer literary texts, often from non-English settings.

Of course, such distinctions are artificial; there is scope for overlap; they are certainly not mutually exclusive, nor is there an implied hierarchy with one particular viewpoint seen as the 'norm' or the most preferred. However, they are useful in summarising the range of standpoints within English teaching, and the majority of teachers will probably find themselves instinctively drawn towards a particular standpoint. In a sense, these artificial divisions are less evident in teachers' everyday practice now than they were at the time of writing, certainly since the establishment of the National Curriculum and the embedding of

the Framework for Teaching English. Today, English teaching is far less polarised. However, pre-National Curriculum, such distinctions were crucial, as teachers had the freedom to follow their own areas of interest almost to the exclusion of other areas.

In a recent straw poll survey with the PGCE English trainees at Powick Bridge University, by far the largest contingent (over 65%) identified themselves most strongly with the 'personal growth' viewpoint. Of the remainder, they were split almost evenly between 'cross-curricular' and 'cultural analysis' viewpoints, with 'cultural analysis' just shading second place. Significantly, not one of the trainees felt particular attracted to either the 'adult needs' or 'cultural heritage' viewpoints. Interesting though these figures are, it must be stressed that this was a relatively small sample (51 trainees) in a room together on one particular afternoon, and as such should not be seen as particularly representative of a wider group.

Importantly, for trainee teachers it is not just the subject that changes; they themselves change. How English should be taught in schools is informed by both what the legislators and the teachers think English is. Marshall et al (2001) observe that:

> 'student teachers have not only to negotiate between their own idealism and the turbulent realities of the classroom but between competing views of English teaching' (p.189).

The experiences of the male student teachers in the study are analysed within the changing context of initial teacher education and the subject of English. Chapter 4 will present the

men's experience of entering and being trained to teach in the predominantly female environment of the English Department. However, the next chapter outlines how in this case loosely ethnographic methods were used for the data collection and analysis in undertaking the study.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Research questions

The field work design was selected in order to explore the ways in which a group of male secondary English student teachers experience their initial teacher education programme and discursively construct their masculinity around a subject traditionally perceived as 'female'. In particular, it establishes the key questions driving the project:

1. What dominant and subordinate discourses do the nine male English students use in defining and constructing their masculinities?
2. What were the principal influences that had affected them to develop an affinity for English and to opt for this career choice?
3. How do they experience their year of training, and how do these discourses contribute to the shaping of their experiences?
4. How do they construct particular forms of professional identification, and what is the role of gender in these constructions?
5. In what ways does their gendered subjectivity become challenged over the course of their training?

My intention in this chapter is to examine the decisions that were made in designing a study appropriate to the investigation of these research questions, to discuss the nature of the decisions that were made and to explain the issues that arose in making those decisions. The chapter explores possible approaches to qualitative research methodology and specifically

considers how loosely ethnographic methods were used to yield insights into the experiences of a small group of men training to be secondary English teachers. The ethical and relational considerations inherent in such a study are explored towards the end of the chapter.

Working as a university tutor on the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) English programme at Powick Bridge University presented me with an opportunity to investigate a group of men becoming English teachers by conducting a study in of 'people in naturally occurring settings' (Brewer, 2000: 6). Such an opportunity to collect, analyse and theorise the contextual sources of knowledge generated on the programme on which I myself taught was appealing, as it enabled me to investigate an existing social totality (Ball, 1991). By exploring the 'social authenticity' (Duncan, 2000: 460) of a small group of men who were themselves examples of the phenomenon under scrutiny, the under-representation of men training to be secondary English teachers, I anticipated that the findings would not only benefit my own university education department but also have a wider relevance within the areas of masculinities, the subject of English and initial teacher education.

Since the mid-1990s, debates about masculinities in the media (Purves, 1999) had propounded the value of male role models for boys' academic achievement and for the place of men in a post-industrial society (Hey, 1996; Cohen, 1998; Connell, 2000; Delamont, 2001). In addition, at the time of the study and throughout the years immediately leading up to it, the recruitment and retention of under-represented groups, in terms of gender, ethnicity and age had been under close scrutiny in order to address a national teacher shortage in

England, a scrutiny that has continued to date and, indeed, now serves a major focus for Ofsted inspections of initial teacher education providers.

The focus of the research is an investigation of how this particular group of men's experiences of masculinity impacted both upon their self-perceptions and upon their identities as student teachers. Drawing upon Foucault (1977, 1982) and Butler (1993), I was interested to investigate the ways in which these men came to understand themselves as gendered subjects within the context of a dominant culture in which normalisation and gender hierarchies were endorsed. To what extent did these men demonstrate an awareness of their embodied practices of masculinity? In what ways did their own insights into 'doing masculinity' (Coleman, 1990) inform their understanding about their developing skills and pedagogical capacities as prospective English teachers? Did the signifying potential of English as a feminised learning area impact upon the performative and self-fashioning practices of masculinity, in terms of how these men talked about their own experience of schooling and initial teacher education? In short, in what ways did these men's self-perceptions as gendered subjects and, consequently, their experiences of doing or embodying masculinity mediate their pedagogical relations and practices in the English classroom?

In seeking to address such questions, I draw on a series of interviews with the nine men during the course of their training to become secondary English teachers. The men raise important issues about the performative dimensions of masculinity and the pedagogical

significance of this in terms of their developing understanding about the limits imposed by the 'regulatory apparatus of heterosexuality' and, consequently, a gender system built on the repudiation of the 'feminine' (Butler, 1993: 12).

The initial spark that had fired the study arose from research into boys and English, which had developed into an area of particular personal interest over a period of around fifteen years, first as head of a secondary English department and subsequently in relation to my roles within initial teacher education. The research topic was pertinent as, since the mid-1990s, debates about masculinities in the media (Purves, 1999) had expounded the importance of male role models for boys' academic achievement and for the place of men in a post-industrial society (Hey, 1996; Cohen, 1998; Connell, 2000; Delamont, 2001). By the early years of the twenty-first century, the topic of male teachers as role models had come increasingly to the fore, in turn leading to a consideration of the topics of male underachievement, particularly in English, of English itself as a gendered curriculum space and of teaching as a gendered profession.

It was towards the notion of 'becoming', focusing upon a sense of self-image and professional identity, that the proposed research design became drawn. It was clear from the outset that I was deeply involved and engaged in the proposed area of research, both as participant and as researcher; as such, it was perhaps natural at that point to feel predisposed towards reflection and observation, but as yet without either an articulated theoretical perspective or a methodology. The initial planning process began with an initial

interest in participant observation, possibly adopting an autobiographical stance, but with a keen awareness of my place as a potential locus of tension in the narrative. Early considerations also focused upon notions of truth and validity within both the research process itself and the eventual thesis presentation, especially in exploring the relationship between the researcher and the researched in a qualitative study of this nature. Over time, these questions, together with a sense of my situatedness, led to a decision to depart from the approach initially planned. Indeed, so intimately involved with the area under consideration did I feel, potentially so closely connected to the viewpoints of the participants, that the deliberate adoption of a rather more removed, non-participant research style was preferred (Cicourel, 1964), although one that would still allow both engagement and reflection.

The study involved researching a number of roles that I had previously experienced: English student teacher, secondary English teacher, curriculum mentor and university tutor. Burgess (1984) describes the ways in which he and other education researchers, Hargreaves (1967) and Lacey (1970), utilised their status as a former teacher as a base from which to conduct their research. In terms of non-participant observation I was, in Burgess's terms, an outsider to the schools where the students were on placement but equally an insider, not only working in the university's education department with the student teachers but also with personal experience of the issues involved in working as a man teaching in the secondary English field. Such an outsider / insider position was similar to that of Lacey (1977) in his study of teacher socialisation, which provides a number of insights relevant to this study

regarding the use of roles inherent in non-participant observation in order to generate new meanings about students' perceptions of their school experience. As a male researcher who was teaching male student English teachers, I had an intimate relationship with the study's subject (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). Both professionally and personally, I wished to treat the male research participants as a special group, worthy of investigation, rather than as a problem. My attitude was underpinned by writing about men that shapes the field of masculinities (Kimmel; 1987a, 1987b, 1987c; Mac an Ghaill, 1994, 1996; Connell, 1995) and was influenced by theories on teaching boys (Jackson and Salisbury, 1996; Epstein et al., 1998; Martino, 1999; Martino and Mayenn, 2001; Skelton, 2001b).

3.2 Research design

The initial focus in the planning process was in regard to the selection of an appropriate paradigmatic framework, within which such a study could comfortably fit. As part of such considerations, three key issues arose, regarding the nature of the knowledge sources that could appropriately be collected if the research questions were to be addressed; how such sources might be collected, and the ways in which they might be analysed. A close examination of the research questions themselves revealed two distinctive features of the research design: that it was the nature of the reflections upon professional identities that were to be explored and that this was a longitudinal study through which differences, changes and development in the student teachers' thinking during the course of the PGCE year were to be examined.

My own preference for qualitative research arises from an interest in people's lived experience (Van Manen, 1990), which is both part of my biography and of my work as an English teacher, reflecting Strauss and Corbin's (1998: 11) belief that: `Some persons are more orientated and temperamentally suited to doing this type of work'. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) similarly characterise such an instinctive relationship with a particular research methodology:

> 'Qualitative researchers self-consciously draw upon their own experiences as a resource in their inquiries. They always think reflexively, historically and biographically' (p. xi).

Strauss and Corbin (1998: 33) also suggest that 'a researcher's own preference, familiarity, and ease with a research mode inevitably will influence choices'.

As the study focuses upon uncovering and exploring developmental influences and critical incidents among a group of nine male student English teachers, a quantitative research framework was felt to be unsuitable. In contrast, a qualitative, loosely epistemological approach has the flexibility to meet the needs of a small-scale research project focused on seeking insight into a particular situation. It was therefore decided that such a qualitative approach would be appropriate, as it seeks to look: 'not so much for causes as for meanings based upon understanding of lived experience' (Finch, 1986: 7). Such an approach seeks insight and understanding, rather than statistical analysis. Indeed, as Johnson (in Bell, 1984) suggests, the principal requirement in qualitative research design is to give the researcher

the chance to become enlightened, and to avoid a research situation that rules out exploration and open-mindedness.

The data gathered were deliberately 'soft', relying upon the men's reflections upon their experiences, rather than the processing of a series of figures or statistics. This type of constructivist approach has an aim of exploring and displaying a multiplicity of constructed realities through a shared investigation of meanings and explanations in order to achieve understanding. It also implies the adoption of an interpretivist ontology, one that is concerned with understanding individuals' perceptions of the world. Interpretivist researchers are less confident of the existence of social facts, considering that reality is subjective and constructed, with both researcher and object (respondent) involved in the knowing process: 'The subjective researcher seeks to know the reality through the eyes of the respondent' (Olson, 1999: 3). Such an approach seeks insight and understanding, rather than statistical analysis. The main study was conducted in line with Shipman's (1985) position:

> 'The methods used are not only kept open-ended and opportunistic, but are often reported autobiographically. The one distinguishing feature that researchers of all persuasions should have is being frank and full about the methods that were used to collect the data' (p. 277).

3.2.1 A case study of male student English teachers

A case study approach was selected, as the principal intention was to explore and understand the nature of the gendered subjectivities and professional identities among beginning teachers, together with the ways in which their gender had impacted upon their changing self-perceptions. Similarly, because of the time-scale and the participants selected for study, it was felt that the case study method would be the most appropriate style of research for the study to be undertaken. According to Adelman et al (1980: 49): 'Case study is an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus an inquiry round an instance'. Nisbet and Watt (1984: 74) provide a similar definition: 'The case study focuses on a single instance and aims to identify the unique features of interaction within that instance'. The strength of such an approach is that it allows the researcher to concentrate on specific instances or situations and to identify, or attempt to identify, the various interactive processes at work.

In the current study, the single or 'intrinsic' case (Stake, 1998: 88-89) is the developing identity of secondary English student teachers, in relation to masculinity and the subject of English. It would have been possible to identify either the university training programme or the student teachers themselves as the case to be studied. However, the eventual decision that the case would be development of professional identity during the process of becoming a secondary English teacher reflected the focus of the research questions. Within such an approach, the institution would provide the bounded context for the case, with the individual student teachers being the units of analysis. Of particular interest were the students'

professional identities; the ways in which these changed and developed, and the ways in which these adaptations related to reflections upon gendered subjectivities.

The study matches the widely held definitions of a case study (Merriam, 1988; Hammersley; 1992; Ragin and Becker, 1992) in terms of its limits and boundaries. In line with Pole and Morrison (2003: 3) an intrinsic case in a discrete setting was selected, concerned with exploring developing identity through the experiences and reflections of a group of men during their training year. Case study here is understood to mean an 'approach to understanding' (Stenhouse, 1978: 24), in which the concern is with the 'situation as a whole'. The emphasis that Stenhouse gives to understanding the totality of the situation rather than particular aspects or variables is reflected in this study, and the boundaries are determined by what is seen as the 'potential for coherence and the development of interpretation' (Stenhouse, 1978: 26). The totality to be explored here is, for each of the nine beginning English teachers, their gendered subjectivity and professional identity and how these relate to wider ideas about male educational underperformance, the subject of English and teaching as a profession. Whilst the study uses existing theories and concepts as tools in framing and designing the research, they are not used either as constraints or as limitations to the terms in which the cases might be understood; they are not, for example, used in the way that Shulman suggests in his definition of case study:

> 'To claim that one is conducting a case study requires that an answer be provided to the question, "What is this a case of?' Not every description is a case study. It may be a description of a singular individual or event. To claim

> that something is a case study is to assert that it is a member of a family of individuals or events of which it is in some sense representative' (Shulman, 1981, in Wilson and Gudmundsdottir, 1987: 44)

The study matches the widely held definitions of a case study (Merriam, 1988; Hammersley; 1992; Ragin and Becker, 1992) in terms of its limits and boundaries. The study is bound by the confines and prescriptions of the academic year 2007-2008, when it took place, and is set against a particular contextual backdrop, most clearly represented by the numerical data regarding the number of men in initial teacher training and concerns about male educational underperformance. Though predominantly interpretative, the study takes place against the context outlined in Chapter Two, namely the numerical predominance of women, both on PGCE programmes and in secondary English departments.

The male student English teachers were studied in the settings of a university education department and the secondary schools where they were on placement. The construction and conduct of the research enabled the participants' behaviour to be studied in everyday contexts, rather than under unnatural or experimental circumstances. The data collection was flexible, in order to avoid pre-fixed arrangements that might have imposed categories on what the students said or did. The focus was on a single group in a single setting and was intentionally small scale, acknowledged by Cortazzi (1993: 1) as an inevitable feature of such studies. The only 'unnatural' circumstances were the interviews themselves, although these 'interviews as conversations' (Burgess, 1982:107) created a space where the contextual

sources of knowledge obtained through non-participant observation were followed up and triangulated.

3.3 Gathering the data

As Weber and Mitchell (1995) explain, there is now a growing recognition that the process of becoming a teacher actually starts long before people commence the process of initial teacher education (Britzman, 1986; Cole and Knowles, 1994; Goodson and Walker, 1991; Hargreaves and Fullan, 1992; Raymond et al, 1992). Indeed, as Britzman (1986) suggests, teachers bring to teaching not only their personal biographies, but also:

> '... their implicit institutional biographies – the cumulative experience of school lives – which, in turn, inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum. All this contributes to well worn and commonsensical images of the teacher's work and serves as the frame of reference for prospective teachers' self-images. But the dominant model of teacher education as vocational training does not address the hidden significance of biography in the making of a teacher, particularly as it is lived during student teaching' (p. 443).

Furthermore, in writing about different aspects of the culture of teaching, Weber and Mitchell (1995) point out that our stories are not only our personal accounts:

> 'we live embedded in biographies that are simultaneously personal, cultural, institutional, and historical' (p. 9).

In this way, our identities as teachers can be seen as stemming from both individual and collective life histories.

As the research focus became clearer, so too did the necessity for the creation of some form of logical and intellectual bridge between the two educational phases under consideration: the secondary school environment and the higher education field. An appropriate research model needed to be adopted, one that would allow the participants to explore their own personal and professional identities, reflecting and elaborating upon their own life histories and career journeys.

Having selected the case study style as being appropriate to the planned research, an appropriate and effective method of gathering the data needed to be chosen. It was decided that the principal method of data collection was to be the semi-structured biographical-narrative interview, following an introductory written reflection undertaken by each of the students, in order to gain as rich a picture as possible of the process and product of the students' thinking and the ways in which this had changed and developed. The semi-structured interview allows both the researcher and participants to investigate and share their understandings of meanings and explanations. Although recounting of experience was to form the basis for the construction of the interview schedules, my primary interest was in the way the participants talked about their experiences, about their discursive constructions of the experience and about their positioning of the 'self' within these discourses.

The intention was that participants would reflect upon their own career paths through English, and that their personal voices would explore and describe the critical incidents (or 'epiphanies') along that journey. In creating a unified whole from such a wide-ranging research focus, it was important to look for recurring themes, key critical instances and enlightening insights. In essence, the life story is a means of fashioning identity, in both public and private senses of the word, which aids an understanding of an individual's world and myriad identities (Ochberg, 1994). Here, with developing professional identities among male student teachers of English as the specific case, it was necessary to generalise to theoretical propositions, making statements about the nature of the formation of professional identity, in relation to masculinities, the subject of English and initial teacher education. However, generalisability was not a principal motivating factor in the study: the establishment of universal truths was not the aim of a study such as this. Rather, the aim was to present insights in the words of the participants about their personal experiences, in order to further knowledge of the process of developing as and becoming a male teacher of English.

Because much of the data collected was in the form of interview transcripts based around life histories and focusing upon critical incidents, a central feature of the research findings was the reporting and interpretation of the participants' words and actions, in order to assist in the telling of life histories (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Such a hermeneutic approach would also assist in creating a unified commentary from a series of potentially diverse and wide-ranging narratives. As Rundell (1995) suggests:

> 'It has now become a commonplace to say that we all interpret. However, hermeneutics – the critical theory of interpretation – is the only current in western thought that has made this issue its own ... Through hermeneutics, interpretation has become part of our cultural self-understanding that only as historically and culturally located beings can we articulate ourselves in relation to others and the world in general' (Rundell, 1995, in Crotty, 1998).

Indeed, over recent years, researchers have begun to use the method of biographical-narrative interview with increasing frequency. This process focuses on individuals whose personal life stories reflect their self-identity and culture (Bruner, 1986; McAdams, 1996). Such personal stories serve not merely as a means of telling about one's life; rather they provide a way by which identities may be fashioned, a key aim of this study. The biographical-narrative interview can help uncover a personal description of life course: the story of one's life or what one perceives as meaningful parts of one's life. As such, it is both a personal narrative and a story of personal experience (Denzin, 1989).

3.4 The research approach

Designing a study of nine male student teachers on a PGCE English programme necessitated careful planning to ensure that key data were captured. As the cohort year was only thirty-six weeks in length, with a completely new group of students arriving the following year, there was little room for error: indeed, it was important to ensure that sufficient opportunities to collect the necessary data were established. It was equally important that

the process of data collection neither burdened the participants nor hampered their progress. Through careful, appropriate and sensitive collection, the richness and quality of the data was ensured and any disruption kept to a minimum.

3.4.1 The pilot study (phase 1)

During the 2006-2007 summer term, I conducted the first phase of a pilot study at a large 'new' city-centre university in the north west of England. This small-scale study involved seven male PGCE secondary English student teachers, using an open questionnaire, student diaries and recorded semi-structured individual interviews. The recordings provided a rich data source, allowing me to listen carefully and repeatedly for possible areas of interest. However, what also became apparent was that the diary entries and responses to the questionnaires were brief and cursory, suggesting that the participants had regarded them as rather tedious and irrelevant, a source of irritation during a busy period in the programme. By contrast, however, the data from the interviews suggested that the participants had found them both useful and relevant to their current situation. A close evaluation of the written data suggested abandoning them, in favour of an approach whereby I would have access to a variety of more 'naturally occurring' (Brewer, 2000: 6) knowledge sources, with semi-structured interviews as the principal vehicle for data collection (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

Until this point, the research questions had been:

1. What dominant discourse do these men draw on to reinforce their sense of masculinity?
2. What subordinate discourses of masculinity are apparent within these individuals?
3. In what ways do these men recognise their gender as a factor in their experiences as a trainee teacher?
4. What discourses of professional identification are apparent with these men?
5. What changes in the gendered subjectivities of these men become apparent over the course of their training?

However, the findings of the pilot study did suggest that the initial focus of the research questions did risk highlighting the differences of a group of men who were already aware of their minority status. As a result, the research questions were refined, in order to create a specific focus upon the gendered implications of the process of becoming a secondary English teacher.

The key issues emerging from the evaluation of phase 1 of the pilot study were grouped into four principal areas: the men's influences and reasons for becoming a teacher; their relationship with English as a subject; their hopes and expectations about the training year, together with their anxieties and concerns, and other people's responses to their decision to train as an English teacher.

3.4.2 The pilot study (phase 2) and main study

The main study was carried out between September 2007 and July 2008, with a group of nine male student secondary English teachers studying for a PGCE in Powick Bridge University. These nine male students, out of a total of forty-five men and women, form the major data set. Most data were collected within the PGCE year, between September 2007 and July 2008. Additional sources of knowledge from the recruitment and selection process, which took place during the previous academic year, were collected between December 2006 and August 2007.

On PGCE programmes two-thirds of the overall time is spent in school, comprising two placements (Professional Placement 1 and Professional Placement 2) totalling 120 days, with 60 days of university teaching. Decisions regarding the study's location were made based upon both pragmatism and opportunity, as suggested by Rock (1978), its shape and design developing during the course of the research: 'the design, like the concepts, must be allowed to emerge during the research process' (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 33). A significant advantage of this form of research was the continued availability of access to the students, both individually and as a group.

During the early months of the programme (October-December), the student teachers' time was divided between school and university, three days a week in school (Monday-Wednesday) and two in the university (Thursday-Friday), with the programme providing a

clear framework and structure for much of their work related to English teaching for these joint weeks. In December, the student teachers moved into school full time, now having less frequent contact with either university tutors or the university itself. From this point, the programme had been constructed in the assumption that the student teachers' individual learning needs would come to the fore, especially in demonstrating their achievement of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), a common set of competence-based criteria for students on all initial teacher education programmes, and that the trained school-based mentors would take on an increasingly important role. Professional Placement 1 ended in mid-February, with two weeks of university-based planning and reflection before moving back to another school for Professional Placement 2, which ended in June, with only one subsequent week within the university before the completion of the programme.

Throughout the year in which the data were collected the student teachers spent much of their time engaged in work related to the development of National Curriculum and Secondary Framework English, and in experiences designed to meet their own particular needs and interests. As a natural part of the programme, all were engaged in a constant process of reflection and self-evaluation, articulating what was important to them as beginning English teachers and learning about ways of evaluating their practice in relation to these criteria. Within the specific context of the PGCE English programme, the students' individual reflections on gendered subjectivities and professional identities became the focus for the research. The programme addressed issues relating to learning about the classroom practice of teaching English. It was organised into four broad themes: subject knowledge and

understanding in English; planning, teaching and assessment in English; research and enhancement in English and professional values and practice.

Date	Activity
September 2007	Start of programme. On campus Monday-Friday. One-week primary placement
October 2007	Professional Placement 1 (Initial Phase) begins; in schools Monday-Wednesday; on campus Thursday-Friday
November 2007	Professional Placement 1 (Initial Phase) continues; in schools Monday-Wednesday; on campus Thursday-Friday
December 2007	Professional Placement 1 (Initial Phase) ends. Professional Placement 1 (Developmental Phase) begins; in schools Monday-Friday
January 2008	Professional Placement 1 (Developmental Phase) continues; in schools Monday-Friday
February 2008	Professional Placement 1 (Developmental Phase) ends; back to campus for two weeks
March 2008	Professional Placement 2 begins; in schools Monday-Friday
April 2008	Professional Placement 2 continues; in schools Monday-Friday
May 2008	Professional Placement 2 continues; in schools Monday-Friday
June 2008	Professional Placement 2 ends; back to campus for one week

Table 4: Powick Bridge University Secondary PGCE Programme Structure

From the overall total of 45 student teachers, 12 men potentially formed the major data set. During an initial meeting at the start of the year, the purpose of the research was explained to the entire English cohort and it was made clear that participation in the study was on a purely voluntary basis with neither expectation nor obligation to become involved. Students were also assured that anyone opting not to participate in the study would suffer no adverse consequences in terms of either academic or professional training outcomes. Subsequently, 3 of the male students opted not to participate in the study from the outset, leaving a total of 9 students who formed the basis of the study. Of these nine initial 'starters', all participated throughout the entire length of the study, with no withdrawals either from the project or from the programme itself.

Following the introductory outline of the research process, it was intended that the initial means of gaining access to these male student English teachers' reflections on their experiences and expectations would be addressed through an introductory written reflection, undertaken by all members of the secondary English cohort during the first week, as a natural feature of the training programme. This contextual source of knowledge was seen as an important part of the opening stages of the research, as it allowed each of the participants time for consideration and reflection rather than making hasty responses during the face-to-face interview. In addition, it was intended that this would help to provide participants with a sense of the possible directions in which the research might travel.

At around the same time as the second and final phase of the pilot study, two focus group interviews were held, one with the nine male student teachers who had agreed to participate in the study, another with a similarly sized group of female students from the PGCE English cohort. The focus group interview with the female students was carried out as a way of exploring the gendered elements of the training experience; however, here it was important not to focus on binary differences between male and female students' experiences and perceptions, which would have risked producing a comparative study, in danger of perpetuating an essentialist view of gender by polarising male and female sex roles, in ways widely rejected by gender theorists (Butler, 1990; Segal, 1990; Connell, 1995). The two focus groups were framed around the key topics that had emerged from the pilot study and served as an introduction to the research process: influences and reasons for becoming a teacher; people's responses to the decision to train as an English teacher; hopes and expectations together with anxieties and concerns about the training year. Through the focus group interviews, the student teachers were able to articulate their hopes and aspirations at this early stage, whilst working through anxieties and concerns, providing them with a place in which to reflect upon the process of becoming a classroom practitioner and on their socialisation as teachers (Lacey, 1977). Listening repeatedly to the comments emerging from the focus groups and evaluating them reaffirmed my belief that individual interviews would best provide the student teachers with a place in which to reflect more deeply on the process of becoming a classroom practitioner and their teacher socialisation (Lacey, 1977).

Because of the 36-week-long structure of the PGCE programme within which the study was located, a decision was taken to conduct the interview sets at three crucial points in the year. These interviews were regarded as the principal data source in addressing the research questions. The first nine individual student interviews were held in October, just before the start of Professional Placement 1, recognising the importance of capturing the experiences and perceptions of this group of students at the very start of the training process. Interview two took place in February, either during the final week of Professional Placement 1 or during the two-week period during which students were back in university. The final interviews were conducted in mid-June, towards the end of Professional Placement 2.

Date	Activity
Summer Term 2007	Pilot study (phase 1) of 7 male student teachers in a city centre, 'new' university
September 2007	Outline of proposed study explained to entire PGCE English cohort Pilot study (phase 2) - focus group interview of 9 male student teachers Pilot study (phase 2) - focus group interview of 9 female student teachers
October 2007	individual interviews with 9 male student teachers at the start of Professional Placement 1
February 2008	individual interviews with 9 male student teachers at the end of Professional Placement 1
June 2008	individual interviews with 9 male student teachers at the end of Professional Placement 2

Table 5: Pre-pilot and main study – interview schedule

The decision to conduct the first set of individual interviews either before or at the start of Professional Placement 1 arose from an intention of capturing the experiences and perceptions of this small group of male students at the very beginning of their training. This would then allow a comparison between their initial experiences and subsequent adaptations that might occur during the remainder of their training, in order to uncover

meanings. According to Delamont (1999: 7) 'the central method of ethnography is observation' and, although I observed the participants both as members of the university taught sessions and on campus, it would not have been logistically feasible to observe them in detail during the twenty-four weeks when they were on placement in a number of different schools. As a consequence, my opportunities for observation of the men were necessarily more limited than Delamont's 'central method' (ibid): my study of a group of men training to be secondary English teachers was influenced by the shape of the PGCE programme on which they were studying and being trained. Hence, this is a qualitative study that utilises the loosely ethnographic approaches offered by interview data and contextual sources of knowledge from the PGCE programme.

The individual interview process was divided into three constituent stages over the course of the year, during which a number of different issues were introduced, while recurring themes were explored. The structure and conduct of each of the rounds of interviews were different. The first round interviews (October 2007) were designed to gain access to two distinct aspects of the students' thinking: their initial preconceptions, values and aspirations, and their early thinking about their professional identity in a relatively abstract context. The guidance of Maykut and Morehouse was followed, in defining a semi-structured interview guide as:

> 'a series of topics or broad interview questions, which the interviewer is free to explore and probe with the interviewee in order to have a deeper

understanding of experience from the perspective of the participants' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 44).

Following Patton's (1990) advice, during the opening stage of the first round interviews, the interviewer and the research topic were introduced, together with an assurance of anonymity and a promise to provide a copy of the interview once it had been transcribed. At this stage, before the start of the interview process proper, my own interest in the interviewee's life-story was emphasised. The interviewee was asked to permit the recording of interviews, in order to facilitate the accurate and unobtrusive capturing of responses, whilst also assisting the subsequent transcription process.

This stage was the point at which the first individual conversations took place. These interviews (of 45 to 60 minutes duration, as were all the interviews) were the most open-ended and began by focusing upon the students' feelings, hopes and apprehensions about the training year ahead and exploring questions of why the students wanted to teach, together with what they saw as important in their role as a teacher. Probes were utilised, in order to seek further clarification or elaboration if a particular idea appeared to be central in the student's thinking. I also asked about their relationship with English as a subject, how this had developed and who their principal influences had been; about their experience of English as a pupil whilst at school; about English teachers who had affected them and how they would characterise them; about what kind of teacher they each wanted to become; about reading habits and about how their interest in English was perceived by friends and

contemporaries. The students were also encouraged to discuss and explore any details from their out-of-school backgrounds that they felt were relevant to their future development and interest in either English or teaching: friends and family, expectations, emotional experiences and anxieties. The participants were asked about the aspects of English they had most enjoyed during their primary, lower secondary and upper secondary years; how they would describe themselves as readers or writers at that time; who their favourite authors were, and if they could remember any occasions in that period as having been particularly memorable.

Upon listening repeatedly to the recordings of the first individual interviews and revisiting interview notes, emerging themes were identified, which in turn helped shape the areas of questions for the next stage of interviews (February 2008). This second round explored students' interpretations, opinions and feelings, building upon areas that had been introduced in the earlier interviews and focusing upon such areas as how the men felt they were progressing; perceived changes and developments; areas of tension; changes in the way they viewed themselves and their roles; critical incidents; relationships with mentors and other teachers; relationships with pupils; changes in their behaviour, and how they were adapting and learning to become a teacher. Towards the end of each interview, a check was made with the student, in order to ensure that what had been understood was correct and to allow them to clarify or refine what had been fed back to them. The purpose of this section was to assist in the identification of new areas of interest, not mentioned in the previous round of interviews.

Between the second and third round interviews, I once again listened repeatedly to the recordings. I revisited interview notes, noted emerging themes and created the areas of questions for the final interview sessions. In preparation for the final round of interviews, potentially emergent themes of masculinities were highlighted, signposted by such labels as 'male teacher', 'man in the classroom', 'role model', 'non-traditional work', 'women's work', 'predominantly female', 'relationships with male and female teachers', 'relationships with male and female pupils'.

In the third and final interview round, the students were presented with a series of questions aimed at clarifying and deepening understanding of some issues of particular relevance for the study that had been raised or emphasised in the earlier interview rounds. These included an exploration of the key critical incidents, turning points, and motivational drivers for each of the participants. The students were asked about their experience as men training to be secondary English teachers; in what ways they felt they had changed during the year; how they felt the pupils perceived them; whether they considered themselves as role models; what expectations female teachers (and particularly mentors) had had of them; what expectations other male teachers had had of them; how they would describe the culture of the schools and English departments where they had been training and whether they viewed the subject of English as a feminised subject. This building of the areas for discussion around the participants' own emphases was only utilised in the third interviews, in order to probe areas of shared interest. During the final interviews the men talked voluntarily about gender and masculinity issues, which I questioned more vigorously

following threads drawn from words and phrases they had employed in previous interviews as a legitimate means of entry into this territory. This more structured approach is similar to the description of the interview 'agenda' provided by Burgess (1984: 107).

For the nine participants I did also have access to a wide range of contextual sources of knowledge that formed the basis for the case study of the male students' adaptations as they trained to become English teachers: GTTR application forms; Powick Bridge University interview record forms and written literacy tests; tutorial records; observation records; weekly target and end-of-placement report forms, together with their comments during seminars at the university. These sources of knowledge were all naturally occurring, as part of the PGCE programme. Such professional knowledge existed as a backdrop to the entire data set, influencing the questions I asked and informing my reactions to the responses, as well as the analysis. By the end of the main study, I was satisfied that I had been able to capture the necessary breadth of knowledge sources; it had been successfully carried out within the ongoing PGCE programme, with any disruption kept to a minimum due to a detailed planning process, together with the knowledge I possessed regarding the rhythm of the year.

During the course of the main study, a total of 27 interviews took place: three sets of nine individual interviews. The table below presents an overview of the nine male Powick Bridge participants. Each of the participants in the study had met the university's subject knowledge requirement of having at least fifty per cent of their first degree in English, with

three having achieved first class honours degrees, five with a 2: 1 and one with a 2: 2. Four of the men had English degrees, two had English Literature degrees and one had studied English Language. Two of the men had gained joint honours degrees, one in English and Theatre Studies, the other in English and History. Three had higher degrees: MSc (Peter) and MA (Chris, Ben). Steve was a mature entrant to higher education having left school at age sixteen, returning to study for 'A' levels in his late twenties and gaining a degree aged thirty-three. Martin was the most dramatic career-change student, having previously been a town planner and deciding to study for a part-time English degree whilst working. Keith had worked for four years as an unqualified teacher of English as a Foreign Language in Malaysia. The other six participants had moved directly from university into teaching, after completing a first degree (Jonathan, John, Ian) or a Masters degree (Chris, Ben, Peter).

Name	Age	First Degree Title	Qualification
Ben	22	English Literature	1, MA
Chris	23	English	2.1, MA
John	21	English / History	2.1
Keith	29	English	1
Ian	24	English/ Theatre Studies	2.2
Martin	37	English	1
Peter	24	English Language	2.1, MSc
Steve	35	English	2.1
Jonathan	22	English Literature	2.1

Table 6: List of participants

This was a group of men with a strong academic profile and a confident view of their subject knowledge and abilities in English. From the outset, they brought to their initial teacher education a philosophy of English as a literary subject (Ball and Lacey, 1980) that correlates with Cox's (DES, 1989) 'cultural heritage' view and resonates equally with Marshall's (2000) 'old grammarians'. However, as a result of the challenges they encountered during their training programme, the men's notions of English as a subject and of English teaching in particular were to become subject to a number of shifts during the course of the year.

3.5 A man researching men

This case study of men carried out by a male researcher has foregrounded the special relationship between the researcher and the participants, in terms of masculinities. Recognising the plea within masculinities literature to study men's experiences in their own right (Hearn, 1992; Sargent, 2001), I have utilised the opportunities provided by a case study to reveal new insights into the experiences of a group of men training to be English teachers.

All such studies are gendered, and I am keenly aware of the implications of being a man researching men. Studies using ethnographic approaches involving masculinities are considered by Warren and Hackney (2000), who focus on the significance of the gendered relationship between researcher and participants. During the process of data collection, it was important to ensure that any professional or ethical conflicts inherent in the research methodology were acknowledged and considered. Kimmel (1987a: 290-91) provides an

explicit framework for research that contributes to the creation of a sociology of men, identifying 'four important and interrelated research and teaching tasks', principally that the actual content of the sub-discipline relating to the sociology of men needs to be carefully defined; that research into the sociology of men should go beyond the confines of sex-role research and should bring a wider set of methodological concerns; that a combination of the personal and the analytic should remain a central feature of the research and the teaching about the sociology of masculinity, and that the sociology of men must remain politically sensitive to, and supportive of, the sociology of women.

This set of guidelines serves as a useful check for my own research: my study is focused on an attempt to discover the experiences of a group of men training to be secondary English teachers, specifically in relation to their gender, masculinities, other teachers and the subject of English. I deliberately chose not to create a comparative study of the experiences of men and women. The data and contextual knowledge collected are from a combination of different sources: experience of English reflections, semi-structured interviews and written records. I utilised personal experiences and narratives, both before and during the data collection process, in order to make sense of my own motives and history as an English teacher and researcher. By deciding not to pursue the collection of a comparative set of data from the female participants I ensured that their experiences were not used in a cynical way, collecting their data simply to shed light on the experiences of the men.

3.6 Validity

Although my study acknowledges and recognises the influence of Willis' (1977) seminal research, his chosen method of participant observation was not selected for this particular study. Instead, in this case, I adopted a non-participant role, for a number of reasons. First, the clearly delineated time-scale available (less than ten months) rendered a detailed ethnological participant approach virtually impossible. Secondly, because of the power relationships between the researcher and students inherent in research undertaken in one's own institution, a participant approach was felt not only to be impossible but also undesirable, even if it were possible: as a researcher, one does not want to inadvertently create a situation where the participants are at risk of being manipulated as cultural puppets, simply for the sake of the research.

A process of 'studying the familiar by making it strange' (Burgess, 1984: 26) offered the potential for new insights but also demanded integrity. Attention was paid to thinking comparatively, comparing incident to incident in the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 43) and comparing the male student teachers with one another at key moments in their training and with those in previous cohorts. In line with Burgess (1984: 13), a variety of contextual knowledge sources were utilised by using written and interview data from the participants in the study. The recorded interviews were semi-structured (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) and were conducted as conversations, in line with Burgess (1982, 1984).

In such research, the issue of objectivity is clearly a consideration. 'Objectivity' refers to the absence of value judgements:

> 'Whenever possible, researchers should try to eliminate subjectivity from the judgments they make about the achievement, performance or characteristics of subjects. Unfortunately, objectivity is probably never attained completely' (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993).

This comment seems to suggest that absolute objectivity ought to be the aim of any research; that the researcher should attempt to be transparent, if not invisible, throughout the study and that, as a consequence, qualitative research can never be anything more than a poor person's quantitative study. Indeed, it seems to ignore any possibility that a subjective view might well be equally valid, given the scope and aim of the research.

However, whilst such an approach might be viewed as fitting and appropriate in some cases, it is also important to recognise that, at times, researchers must be open about their own roles in relation to their research, acknowledging that their own backgrounds and influences may well influence not only the results but also the interpretation of the results. Indeed, in a qualitative study such as this, an aim of validity would seem both more realistic and to offer deeper insights as opposed to striving for objectivity as an end in itself. However, the precise nature of validity is itself a highly debated topic, since no single or uncontested definition of the term exists. A number of qualitative researchers have argued that the term 'validity' is not actually relevant to their research, whilst at the same time accepting the need for some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research. As a result of this, many researchers

have come to suggest alternative approaches, which either adopt or generate terms that they consider more appropriate, such as 'trustworthiness', 'relevance', 'plausibility', 'credibility' or 'representativeness' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Hammersley, 1987; Wolcott, 1990). Indeed, some qualitative researchers have actually rejected any notions of validity, viewing them as completely inappropriate to their work:

> 'Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology. While they may have undoubtedly proved useful in providing checks and balances for quantitative methods, they sit uncomfortably in research of this kind, which is better concerned by questions about power and influence, adequacy and efficiency, suitability and accountability' (Watling, in Winter, 2000: 7).

Such researchers claim that the issue of understanding is actually more pertinent than that of validity (Wolcott, 1992). However, qualitative researchers do endeavour to achieve 'the trustworthiness of qualitative research' (Bradley 1993: 436) - that which Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

A helpful and often quoted definition of validity can be found in Hammersley:

> 'An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise' (Hammersley, 1987: 69).

I adopted this definition, ensuring that, at the end of each interview, the participants were provided with the opportunity to comment on or to refine any of the summarised points.

Similarly, once transcribed, copies of the interview transcriptions were provided to participants, again allowing them an opportunity for further comment, clarification or elaboration. Furthermore, following the completion of the main study, I have been able to maintain regular contact with six of the nine men, which has allowed a further means of verifying that it accurately represented the voices of the men and the views they expressed, both individually and collectively, in ways that they themselves recognised.

In many ways similar to the conflicting standpoints adopted in relation to validity, the range of attitudes toward bias, particularly toward bias introduced by the researcher, is affected by the researcher's underlying epistemic assumptions. As Mellon (1990) points out, an objective researcher will try to eliminate bias whilst more subjective researchers will both recognise and acknowledge it:

> 'Total objectivity is impossible for researchers who are, after all, human beings. The difference between the two research traditions is not that one has and one lacks objectivity. The difference is that naturalistic researchers systematically acknowledge and document their biases rather than striving to rise above them' (Mellon, 1990: 26).

Whilst such an interpretation might be considered rather simplistic, as 'objective' researchers will often admit to bias of which they are aware, the view of bias is completely different between the two epistemological traditions. Subjective researchers completely shift the focus, from attempting to eliminate researcher bias to developing the relationship with the participant, the approach that I elected to adopt. Given my own particular relationship with

the participants, as both researcher and tutor, together with my personal history as a male English teacher, it was important that my study sought to capitalise upon these multi-layered experiences in order to represent the voices of the men in ways that they themselves would recognise.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Qualitative research fieldwork, by its very definition, does involve interaction between researcher and participants in one form or another. Although some researchers might make rigorous and genuine attempts to minimise the extent to which they themselves might intrude upon the creation of authentic accounts, I quickly became aware that, by electing to carry out the research in my own institution for the very best of reasons (which did include both accessibility and convenience, it must be said), the nature of relationships between researcher and participants did come into consideration, involving issues relating to politics, position and power. A particular ethical tension anticipated was the relationship I had with the students as both tutor and researcher. Potentially, this was fraught with ethical challenges and called for sensitivity, integrity and a degree of objectivity. Duncan (2000) provides a clear explanation of what is involved in such an approach:

> 'Of ... importance is the integrity of the researcher in relation to what or who is being investigated. This integrity necessarily involves the observance of ethical principles in the conduct of the power relationships between the researcher and the researched as well as an ability to suspend personal and ideological agendas in a quest to render the familiar strange' (pp. 460-61).

It was this focus upon integrity in my research approach, together with an aspiration of seeking new ways to make 'the familiar strange' that together became my goals.

Generally, in constructing qualitative studies such as this, the sample tends to be purposive in nature, in order to ensure that it possesses particular characteristics relevant to the study. Therefore, random sampling is often neither feasible nor desirable. However, in terms of a sampling process, there are a number of issues that ultimately relate to the extent to which the research is intended to be generalisable, either internally or more widely. In order for the study to proceed, it was important that there were sufficient numbers of potential participants. However, making decisions on admission to the secondary PGCE English programme simply for the sake of creating a viable research group would have been completely unethical.

Within this study, the sample initially invited to participate comprised all the male students within the 2007-2008 cohort. Selection and recruitment process for secondary PGCE programmes at Powick Bridge University are in line with the standard procedures for selecting candidates for initial teacher education programmes described by Fletcher (2000: 198). This process was completely separate from my own remit and undertaken independently by the PGCE English Course Leader, who also functioned as admissions tutor, following the monitoring, evaluation and quality management and enhancement guidelines stipulated in the university's regulations, and operating within external public accountability procedures. Indeed, to reinforce and emphasise further the importance of scrupulously

following agreed systems, details of selection, recruitment, retention and progression rates are routinely reported as part of Ofsted inspections of initial teacher education providers; similarly, TDA Performance Profiles also record data on students' ethnicity, gender and age.

The PGCE English Course Leader, through her role as admissions tutor, initially screened all applicants' Graduate Teacher Training Registry (GTTR) forms, with those who met the admissions criteria as prescribed by the TDA (GCSE A*-C or equivalent in Mathematics and English Language and a degree with 50 per cent English, or equivalent) being invited for interview. Subsequent decisions with regard to admission to the programme were taken following these interviews, which were always conducted by the admissions tutor, together with a school-based mentor from within the ITT partnership. This standard procedure, which would have been in operation regardless of my research, ensured that there was no influence upon selection of candidates for the programme by any anticipated demands of my study.

In addressing potential ethical issues in research, there are four principal areas that tend to arise: informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, protecting participants from harm and protecting researchers from harm. In this particular case, as all the participants were adults, one of the most common issues in educational research - having to seek consent by proxy - became irrelevant. However, as in any research study, participants' informed consent was obtained (see Appendix). This involved providing them with information about the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and what participation would require

of them, for example the subjects to be discussed and the estimated amount of time required. Informed consent needed to be based on an understanding that their participation was voluntary, an issue that required particular emphasis in a study such as this, where the research was actually conducted by someone who also had a professional relationship with the sample members that might inadvertently have resulted in feelings of either obligation or gratitude (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996).

Anonymity involved ensuring that the identity of those taking part was not known outside the immediate research team. Given this case study approach, together with the traditional closeness of a training cohort, absolute guarantees of anonymity could not be assured, and the participants were made aware of anyone who would know of their participation. Confidentiality meant avoiding the attribution of comments to identified participants; therefore all participants were allocated pseudonyms, by which they are referred to throughout the formal written thesis. Both direct and indirect attribution were avoided, although indirect attribution did require particular care as it could have risked compromising the extent to which contextual detail could be given in reporting specific comments.

Issues of protecting both researcher and participants from harm were less problematic in this instance, although they could not be ignored. The researcher and participants were all adult males, who had agreed to participate in the research. The one-to-one interviews took place privately, and were recorded with the participants' consent. The locations in which interviews took place were either teaching rooms within Powick Bridge's Department of

Education building (rather than in my office) or (more usually) a classroom in the participant's placement school, so as to be on relatively neutral ground for both parties. As the interviews took place at mutually convenient times, either during daytimes or early evenings, the situation never arose where the researcher and interviewee were alone together in the building.

As a member of staff of the institution, and a tutor on the programme that participants would be following, issues relating to deference, conformity and an unwillingness to share the full picture might have presented problems, and this was considered at the research design phase. What if participants had felt that there was a desired or correct answer and converged towards it? What if they had felt that, by answering in a particular way, they were ultimately disadvantaging themselves because of the impression it might create? How would the non-participants feel about their lack of involvement, and how might this manifest itself in the dynamics of the cohort as a whole? All these were valid concerns and, in a number of ways, were unanswerable until the research actually commenced. Indeed, in adopting an anti-positivist approach, one accepts the importance of subjectivity: human beings are each individuals; their behaviour cannot be constrained or predicted in particular ways. That is the beauty and appeal of this kind of research, untidy and messy though it is. It is important, however, that such potential drawbacks or problematic areas are foregrounded from the outset, so that readers are able to draw their own judgements in an informed manner.

A significant factor in designing and conducting the semi-structured interviews was my own dual role as both researcher and university tutor; this affected both the conduct of the interviews and their eventual outcomes. Throughout each of the interviews, I endeavoured wherever possible to seek clarification of what the students were saying by making few assumptions of what they might mean, especially when they used words or phrases whose meanings might be taken for granted. My over-riding intention was to achieve a balance between making use of the contextual knowledge available through the insider position afforded by my role, whilst at the same time not falling into the potential traps of that same position by assuming an understanding of the students' distinctive ways of thinking. In asking questions, I endeavoured to frame these in exploratory, open terms, particularly when clarification and elaboration were sought.

The students were assured that what was important was their understanding and their meaning; indeed, when requesting further information, every effort was made to do so in a spirit of enquiry rather than of challenge. However, it is acknowledged that potential dangers do still remain; consequently, the validity of the data collected had to be evaluated both initially through a consideration of the processes of data collection and subsequently through an examination of the plausibility and consistency of the interpreted data. In relation to these, it was possible to ask whether there was evidence of my having acted in ways that were likely to encourage the students to have responded to me as a tutor rather than as a researcher, for example by questioning or criticising their comments and judgements. Similarly, evidence was sought for the students having responded to me in the

role of their tutor, for example by seeking some form of validation for their views. The interpreted data was examined for any evidence of the students seeking to attribute their learning to what I had 'taught' them or, in a more complex way, if the most plausible explanation of what they were saying was that they were trying to please me as their tutor.

A final ethical assurance in relation to the interviews was that, both during the course of the interviews themselves and subsequently in teaching sessions, no reference would be made to the views the students had expressed. Although it might have been the case that my teaching was subsequently influenced by what I had learnt about these beginning teachers, there was no artificial attempt to forget what had been heard. Equally, there was no deliberate attempt to explicitly incorporate this knowledge in a clearly attributable way into my teaching agenda or that of any other member of staff.

As a non-participant researcher familiar with the field, I was able to pre-empt many potential ethical issues. Keen as I was not to disadvantage the men in the study, Munro's question was central to my enquiry:

> 'How do we carry out a collaborative, mutually beneficial project whilst working through issues of knowledge, power, control and privacy; how as a researcher can I contribute as much as the subject of my work is giving?' (Munro, in Hatch, 1995: 117)

As a tutor on the programme that the men were following, I wanted the men to benefit from their involvement, and not to feel compromised or at risk because of it. Reinharz (1979: 240)

uses the term: `the rape of the respondent' to warn against the exploitation and violation if participants are subjected to cynical and unethical research.

During the course of the study I was aware that ethical issues were complex because of the multiple relationships I had with the students as PGCE secondary English programme tutor, general professional studies tutor, personal tutor, link tutor and research student. In my university role, I was a member of the team responsible for the assessment and moderation of the students' performance throughout the secondary PGCE English programme and for their assessment against the Standards for the award of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). In order to avoid potential conflicts emerging as a result of this type of research (Burgess, 1984), I took the deliberate decision neither to observe nor to assess the men teaching during professional placements, thereby reducing the influence of my role and avoiding consequential damage to professional or research relationships. Indeed, as an unintended but acknowledged outcome, in research terms, this did reduce the number of opportunities for classroom observation. However, having chosen not to assess the participants in the classroom as teachers-in-training, I believed that the trust and openness of my research relationship with the men throughout the study was more likely to remain intact. Similarly, as a non-participant researcher I opted to conduct the individual interviews, wherever possible, in the placement schools, in order to reduce my power base by becoming a visitor in their professional space. Here, I was following the advice of Lee (2000) that research should not harm the subjects involved. These decisions regarding the research design arose from a concern to avoid any potential harmful effects on the participants, especially those

generated by clashes because of conflicting roles. In summary, the intention was that, as far as these male student teachers were concerned, I was simply a member of their English tutor team who was also researching their experiences as they trained.

As the study began, I had expected that the men would have had some relatively clear and forthright views in relation to identity, both about themselves as men and about how this might be subject to change as they began the process of learning to become English teachers. However, I soon realised that this was my research agenda rather than theirs. Indeed, at the outset, the men's principal concern was with finding a key to survival as a teacher, which they saw as completely separate from issues regarding the development of professional identities. It is here that my influence on the men over the period of the study, as both researcher and tutor, must be foregrounded. Had the research not taken place, the men may not have become as aware of their masculinities or their teacher socialisation: they might not have realised or considered the changes that were taking place in their thinking and behaviour as they learned to become English teachers.

As the focus for the study, the men contributed to the research through their increasing involvement as they themselves became more interested in exploring the links between their experiences and the emerging concepts. Woods (1985: 52) claims that ethnographic research is `particularly well suited to helping to close the gap between researcher and teacher, educational research and educational practice' and this was borne out in practice through the conduct of this research. Unsurprisingly, the students were actually more

concerned about their success on the PGCE programme than about their contribution to research into professional identity and teacher socialisation. I was conscious throughout the research phase that ethical tensions might potentially emerge if, as a result of their participation in the study, the students were to become resentful about helping me to complete my doctoral research. Integrity and openness needed to be exercised with a degree of diplomacy, in order to ensure the men felt valued and were treated with consideration. Each individual interview session invariably ended with informal and sometimes lengthy discussions regarding particular concerns or their progress to date, reminiscent of tutorials. For these men, part of the reward for being involved in the study was access to more tutorial time, demonstrating the mutually beneficial nature of the project.

By the end of the data collection process, I had gleaned a significant amount of knowledge about the participants. Some of this was acquired first-hand during the natural course of the university taught programme; further contextual knowledge was acquired by visiting other students on school placement; conversations about individual students with mentors provided additional perspectives. My knowledge was further augmented by the contact the students made during the programme: visits to my office, conversations after taught sessions or 'on the corridor', telephone calls and emails. These additional sources of knowledge provided the background to my enquiry. I have not attempted to hide behind a veneer of neutrality, aware that the particular knowledge I held as university tutor would inform both the collection and interpretation.

I was aware when listening to the recordings of the interviews and reading the student teachers' written pieces that my twin roles could influence what the students either said or wrote: I needed to ascertain whether the students were adapting what they said because of their uncertainty in regard to these differing roles. As a result, were my roles as university tutor and researcher compromised or my credibility improved? When writing about unobtrusive research methods, Lee (2000: 136) notes that: 'Participants often change their behaviour once they become aware they are being studied'. Would the participants in my study be even quicker to modify their responses? To overcome this potential problem Lee (ibid) recommends building the bonds of trust with those being studied. My own perception, partly based upon discussions with and feedback from mentors, was that these student teachers did trust me as a tutor. However, it was still important for me to signal that I could not negate the fact that the research was rooted in my relationship with the students as their tutor. This context of the study was explained on the initial consent forms (see Appendix). However, I do accept that, as students following a programme on which I was teaching, they were in a subordinate position (Davies, 1985) and therefore less likely to have refused to take part. Whilst requesting and securing their involvement avoided breaching important ethical principles, the process did create other possible conflicts, for example, putting additional and unnecessary demands on these male students, who were vulnerable as members of a minority group, during an already pressurised programme.

Research by Nicol (1997) focuses upon some of the tensions inherent in research into student teachers carried out by their teacher educators. In my own study there is evidence to contradict her view that conducting research into her own students reduced her credibility as a teacher. In the case of my study, the male students were the focus of my enquiry, clearly demonstrating my research interest in them; similarly, the study was not about my practice as their tutor, but about their experiences and adaptations.

3.8 From analysis to theory

The data and contextual knowledge sources were rich; the nine men took part in a series of detailed and thoughtful semi-structured interviews. The process of analysis converged and overlapped with that of data gathering at the start of the study and this continued during subsequent collection. It was important that the voices of the individual participants remained clear and vibrant during what was to become a close, analytical reading of the data. At this point, the particular challenge described by Alexiadou (2001) resonated for me:

> 'My search was for a set of theoretically informed procedures in analysing interview data, that enabled an understanding of 'lived experience' and the 'discovery' of the meaning behind the talk provided by the interviewee, while at the same time allowing the exploration of language as it performs a social function' (p. 53).

My approach was in line with that of Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 161), who acknowledge the interrelatedness between data collection and analysis that occurs `throughout the course of

a research project'. Such an approach allows themes and theoretical constructs to be created after the data have been coded (Duncan, 2000). Verification and theory development took place during the data gathering process, as well as during the post-collection analysis. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (1998), I believe that this richness of concept development or `conceptual density' depends on a deep knowledge of the data, as the emerging concepts are `checked out systematically with these data' (p. 161).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) encourage qualitative researchers to step back periodically and ask, 'Do I see what I am thinking in the data?' (p. 45). During the data collection process, I frequently applied their advice, pausing and taking stock to allow `the design, like the concepts to emerge during the research process' (ibid: 33). The more I got to know the students, the more I wanted to probe and check. For me, this provided an opportunity to give the participants a clearer voice and to involve them in interpreting `what is observed, heard or read' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 160). At this juncture, the research needed to move towards what Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 169) describe as being `embedded in a thick context of descriptive and conceptual writing', in line with Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss (1987).

3.8.1 Coding the data

The journey from data collection to theorising seemed long and tortuous, as at that stage I could not yet view the entirety of the process either as a whole or in a meaningful format. In order to address this, I constructed a schematic for the data analysis process and followed

this meticulously. During the transcription of the interviews, I began a process of 'open coding' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 101) by highlighting participant concerns, noting thoughts and particular links to pursue. The criteria for identifying these situated ideas were no more specific than open questions (ibid: 89-92), for example: What do the participants focus on? What do they want to talk about? What do they say they are enjoying? What are their concerns? What is interesting or surprising? What are they not saying? Such an approach is advocated by Woods (1977). The questions aided me in seeing their position on the general student teacher 'journey' and their specific development as English teachers. Strauss and Corbin (1998) term such an approach to generating initial categories 'microanalysis'. As I engaged in this 'line-by-line' analysis, words indicative of the participants' perspective, acted as triggers for the microanalysis, for example: 'English', 'teacher', 'pupils', 'women', 'enjoy', 'nervous', 'relaxed', 'confident', 'friendly', 'mentor', 'management'.

I rejected using available software packages, NVivo, Atlas.ti or XSight, after a brief period of experimentation during the early stages of working on the transcriptions. To have used computer software would have created a misleading impression of objectivity: moreover, in this study, the particular challenges in terms of ethics and the analysis were deserving of exploration rather than circumvention. As I was working with a large but manageable amount of data yielded by the nine men in the main study, a manual analysis was possible and, I felt, preferable; however, it is acknowledged that, with a larger number of participants, the use of software might well have become necessary.

The next stage in the process of data analysis involved transcribing situated ideas into columns, using the participants' own words as potential `in vivo codes' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 43), occasionally adding 'memos' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 110) or `waving the red flag' (ibid: 97), telling myself: 'Look out for this'; 'Check this'; 'Why is this?' 'What is being said?' 'What is not being said?' 'How does this develop?' 'Do other participants say this?' The result was that a number of situated ideas were grouped together over time in order to form emerging themes. This 'progressive focussing' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 22) was an important part of the analytical process, along with questioning of the other contextual knowledge sources (for example, application forms and written assignments) and comparison across the other interviews.

To assist verification of this procedure, I used a second grouping method involving a whiteboard and a series of post-it notes labelled with situated ideas that were then grouped together into larger sets, where there were broad similarities, in order to form the emerging themes. In both methods the names of these emerging themes changed, and continued to change, as the situated ideas were brought together into themes. This progressive focusing process moved towards the stage of conceptualising a set of five emerging themes at similar levels of abstraction:

- perceptions of the subject of English;
- awareness of the process of becoming:
    - a teacher
    - an English teacher

- a male English teacher;
- relationship between masculinities and being an English teacher;
- relationships with pupils;
- relationships with:
  - female teachers
  - female mentors
  - male teachers

These were used as a set of concepts and applied to the entire data set, including all the transcribed interviews and written data. These concepts were then reconceptualised and classified. To assist this procedure, a number of possible models were created. This allowed me to see the findings afresh before engaging in a second microanalysis of the data, during which further potential meanings materialised. The emerging theoretical constructs (for example relationships with colleagues, pupils and the subject of English) were subjected to a final process of selective coding as the categories were refined and integrated. The coding revealed sequences of adaptations and developments over the period of the research, for example: the deliberate adoption of a non-hegemonic teaching persona; a preference for teaching particular elements of the English curriculum; aiming for an appearance of effortlessness and the linkage between perceived sexuality and subject choice.

The creation of the theorised constructs was consistent with Strauss and Corbin (1998: 19): 'So although description of those experiences clearly is not theory, it is basic to theorising'.

My way of structuring the findings and analysis of the case study, which uses loosely ethnographic approaches has much in common with Strauss and Corbin's (1998) in attempting to:

> 'depict the perspectives and actions of the portrayed actors, combined with an explicit ordering of those into plausible non-fictional accounts. The final presentation is organized around well-developed and ordered themes, but the themes are not connected to form an integrated theoretical scheme' (pp. 20-21).

The theorised constructs were connected and a structure formulated by which to formulate a logical, explanatory and theoretical scheme. Applying definitions offered by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 32-34), the resulting theories are 'substantive' in that they are applicable to the group but are also 'formal' as the theories are more widely applicable.

The next chapter presents an analysis of the data gathered, in light of the naturally occurring contextual knowledge sources located within the PGCE English programme. At the initial stage of planning the project, it had been my intention to have had three separate data analysis chapters, each one focusing on one of the main drivers of the original study: men, English and teaching, which would in turn, have been seen as the principal theoretical constructs shaping the research. However, I abandoned such a planned approach early in the design phase: to have adopted such a structure would have risked imposing my own shape and structure on the research. What was far more important, I felt, was to allow the theoretical constructs to emerge from the words of the men in describing their experiences.

Such an approach is far more consistent in relation to the research design and rationale, avoiding potentially artificial divisions arising from an externally imposed design that had been selected prior to commencing the research.

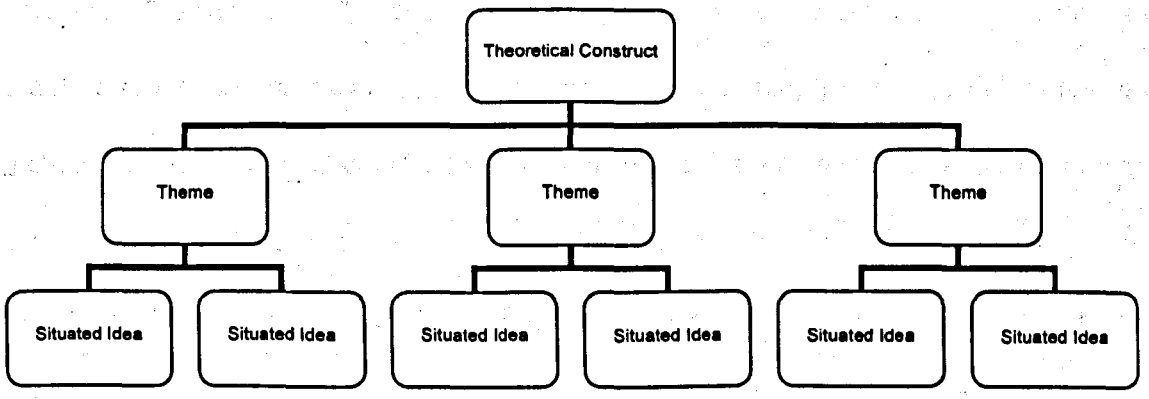

Fig. 3: Tree diagram to represent order of analysis of data

This order of analysis informs the organisation of the next chapter, which focuses upon an analysis of the findings. The chapter is structured and shaped according to the emerging theoretical constructs, each arising from linked or connected themes, in order to represent authentically the voices of the nine participants in presenting and describing their experience of the process of becoming a secondary English teacher.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

This chapter presents the various negotiations and repositionings in relation to masculinities, the subject of English and the development of professional identity that the nine male student teachers in the sample undertake as the course of their teacher education progresses. The theoretical constructs that emerge from a deep and systematic analysis of the data are used in order to frame the discussion. In outlining the shape and structure of the chapter, the theoretical constructs, together with the themes from which they emerge, must not be viewed either as exclusive or self-contained; there is a degree of overlap and connection; at times, a situated idea will appear in or contribute to more than one theme. This is to be expected in a study that focuses upon change and adaptation among a group of nine individuals engaged in the process of becoming secondary English teachers.

The intersections and correlations between masculine identity and the role of the English teacher will be explored as the participants become increasingly aware of the implications not only of being a teacher but more specifically of being a male English teacher. The chapter will focus upon the men's shifting perceptions of the nature of English as a subject and of the kinds of English teachers they themselves wanted to become. It will also reveal the participants' encounters and interactions with mentors, other teachers and pupils, and the ways in which these experiences work to reinforce or challenge previously held gendered assumptions in relation to professional identity.

4.1 A process of reinvention

The theoretical construct of 'reinvention' comprises two core themes emerging from the interview data: 'memories', relating to the participants' own recollections of studying English themselves and, linked to this 'expectations', involving the men's thoughts and understandings regarding the kind of teacher they would want to become. A detailed analysis of their properties and dimensions suggests that the two themes are closely connected, each one both informing and being informed by the other.

From the outset, each of the participants had brought to the process of training to teach English their own particular history and relationship with the subject of English; often complex individual journeys that had contributed to the construction of their identities, both as teachers and as men. These helped formulate and shape their initial approaches to school cultures and the formation of effective relationships with pupils (cf. Woods, 1995), and would continue to develop as the PGCE year progressed, shaping and in turn being shaped by their experiences. This process reflects Mitchell and Weber's (1999: 8) concept of the 'pedagogy of reinvention', the student teachers reflecting upon their school experiences in order to find ways of seeing themselves as teachers. Mitchell and Weber (ibid: 48) describe both beginning and more experienced teachers as 'seasoned travellers' because their attitudes towards their work are informed by the autobiographical journeys of their own schooling and teaching.

Paradoxically, although the men's attitudes at the outset towards becoming secondary English teachers were overwhelmingly positive, their memories of their own experiences at school were predominantly negative ('brutal and brutish' [Steve, Interview 1]), with the early years of secondary schooling in particular characterised by ineffectual teachers ('the most boring man alive!' [Jonathan, Interview 1]) and personal feelings of isolation ('just wanting to be accepted' [Martin, Interview 1]; 'never part of the 'in-crowd'' [Peter, Interview 1]; 'treated as a non-person' [Ian, Interview 1]). Their teachers were often remembered as having been unable to manage pupils' behaviour and as subjects of ridicule (Chris, Jonathan, John, Peter), frequently burdened with insulting or demeaning nicknames by which they were known: 'Butch'; 'Piggy'; 'Rocky'; 'Dopey'; including nicknames of a more sinister sexual nature: 'Paedo'; 'Gaylord'; 'Boner'.

When asked to explain their atypical decision to study English at A-level and later at university (Thomas, 1990) the participants were critical of other subject pedagogies they had experienced at school. Mathematics and the Sciences were 'boring and too teacher-focused' (Chris, Interview 1), while the Humanities subjects 'were just about how to write essays and learn exam techniques, nothing more' (Ian, Interview 1) at the expense of fostering a love of the subject. Steve, who had returned to English as a mature student, remembered his own secondary school English lessons as having failed to capture his interest, identifying a need for context and motivation that had been influential in shaping his own approach to teaching:

'Studying one single text in such depth can get a bit demotivating at times. Looking back on my own English lessons, I think that what I really wanted was fewer texts and less writing but more context and more action, which would have made the subject more relevant to me and where I was at the time' (Steve, Interview 1).

Similarly, Keith's recuperative approach to English teaching (Biddulph, 1997) was typical of a number of the participants (Steve, Jonathan, Martin, John), whose decision to train as English teachers had been influenced by a determination to provide a better version of English teaching than that which they themselves had experienced in their own secondary schooling, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4:

'I felt that my own passion for the subject basically developed in spite of my experience of English lessons at school. It doesn't have to be that way, though. I genuinely believe that pupils can really be turned on to English by encountering a teacher who can make the subject come alive for them. If you can't make a subject like English interesting, then really teaching is the wrong job for you' (Keith, Interview 1).

Although, for all the participants, English in the early years of secondary schooling had seemed barren and lacking in purpose, their perceptions of the subject of English and of male teachers in particular altered radically during the sixth form years. Goodwyn (1997: 31) points out that student teachers will often identify enthusiastic and passionate teachers of A-

level English Literature who went on to became principal motivating factors, acting as catalysts in their decision to become English teachers. Indeed, in my own personal journey toward becoming a secondary English teacher, it was an encounter with one such inspirational sixth form teacher that was a significant factor in my decision, first to study English at university and then to train as an English teacher. Jonathan (Interview 1) articulated the significance of a male English teacher in his own decision to teach, a man whose influence had continued well beyond the A-level years, developing into a central tenet of Jonathan's own 'personal growth' approach to teaching English:

> 'If it hadn't been for Joe, I certainly wouldn't have chosen to study English at degree level. I'd probably have chosen law or accountancy instead' (Jonathan, Interview 1).

For a number of the other men (Keith, Peter, John, Ben), an influential male English teacher emerged during the first round interviews as a significant factor in their subject choices at 'A' level and university (Goodwyn, 1997: 31) and on their eventual decision to train as English teachers. The importance of such influential role models for these men matches what Mac an Ghaill (1994: 25) identifies as 'memories of significant others ... [which] were important in shaping male teachers' subjectivities'.

Through remembering their own male English teachers in this way, male student teachers are provided with an effective masculine scaffold of 'doing' English (Eaglestone, 1999), which frequently acts as a model for the version of English that they themselves want to teach. Indeed, for the participants, the importance of such influential sixth form teachers emerged

from the interviews, when the men spoke about the possibilities offered by English and the sorts of teachers they themselves wanted to become:

> 'My A-level English teacher always gave the impression of being really chilled and relaxed in his approach to his classes, but at the same time he was interesting to listen to and amazingly knowledgeable about the subject. He was a really gifted communicator: for him, English wasn't just a means to an end, but something that could actually change our outlook and expand our imaginations, something that had the potential to be life-changing' (Ben, Interview 1).

At the outset, the participants had come to the PGCE programme with clear views and expectations about English as a subject, which had been influential in their decisions to want to train as secondary English teachers. During the first round of interviews, the participants were asked to articulate their feelings, preconceptions and aspirations about English teaching as a career on the basis of their experience of English, both at school and at university level (Thomas, 1991) and their knowledge of the world of work (Reid and Caudwell, 1997; Smedley, 1998; Reid and Thornton, 2001). Such terms as 'passion', 'love', 'excitement', 'pleasure', 'engage', 'privilege' and 'transform' featured repeatedly. However, during the course of the PGCE programme, the men's experiences forced them to re-examine their relationship with the subject of English; indeed, through working with pupils and teachers on school placements they were challenged to reprocess and reposition both their beliefs about and their approach to English as it is constructed and presented within the secondary curriculum.

The participants' comments broadly aligned with Goodwyn's statement (1997: 1) that the majority of applicants to English PGCE programmes allude to a love of reading as a primary influence upon their decision to train as teachers. However, although a passion for literature had motivated their decisions, a number of the men had also wanted to 'make a difference' (Jonathan, Chris, Martin, Ben, Keith), as noted by Ball and Lacey (1980: 174) and to have a role in the pupils' development as individuals (Bousted, 2000: 24). A natural tendency towards Cox's 'personal growth' model of English teaching (DES, 1989) and Dixon's 'growth model' (1967) was also evident from their interviews throughout the study, reflecting the philosophy of the majority of English teachers (Pike, 2000). For this group of men, the decision to pursue a career in teaching had been founded upon a desire not simply to teach, but more specifically to teach English.

4.2 The right subject knowledge?

The theoretical construct relating to 'subject knowledge' comprises two themes that emerge from the data: 'preferred versions of English', focusing on literature and the affective nature of the subject and 'knowledge and expertise', involving the men's reflections upon the appropriateness and relevance of their own particular brand of English subject knowledge in relation to that required to undertake their classroom role effectively. The two themes do become interlinked, as the men articulate their feelings in relation to English as it is currently shaped within the National Curriculum.

The journey towards becoming secondary English teachers involved the participants in undergoing a series of complex and, at times, seemingly contradictory shifts in identity and self-image. The hitherto stable relationship between the subject of English and their own individual identities became exposed, with each of the men being forced to explore, clarify and reposition his private relationship with English, whilst at the same time publicly learning to teach the subject to classes of pupils. As the participants worked to acquire the necessary subject knowledge in English, at the same time they also needed to develop the professional identity of an English teacher and to reposition themselves as men, reminiscent of the 'private troubles' and 'public issues' described by Mills (1959). The process of negotiating their relationship with English involved an increasing awareness of how to operate within a subject they came to see as feminised: at times this led to difficult and uncomfortable questions about how they saw themselves, not only as teachers but also as men.

One unexpected feature for this group of men, who had previously always regarded themselves as being 'good at English', was that much of the subject knowledge they needed to acquire and teach was both new and unfamiliar (Goodwyn, 1997: 29). Although, in the first instance, this was viewed as an interesting and exciting feature of the process of initial teacher education, the actual content of the secondary English curriculum (DfEE, 1999) seemed remote and far removed from their university English degrees (Daw, 2000). John (Interview 3) gave the example of 'writing to persuade, argue or advise' as something he had been aware of in general terms but had never studied or given a great deal of thought to, either at sixth form or at university. He found such transactional features of English 'tedious'

to teach and much preferred teaching the more familiar literature from the canon, together with more recent teenage fiction. However, as he pointed out, with curriculum mentors and other English teachers being completely immersed in National Curriculum English, such lack of knowledge and interest in particular aspects of English was frequently viewed as a serious subject knowledge gap.

Without exception, the participants did enjoy encountering the world of teenage fiction and described the pleasure they had gained from having discovered new titles ('Holes', 'Millions') and authors who had also become popular with adult readers (Philip Pullman, Eoin Colfer, JK Rowling). However, Keith (Interview 2) did point out that he had envisaged teaching Shakespeare to top set classes and had been disappointed to find that this was not to be the case. Although the participants expressed no overt or explicit criticism of the quality of teaching in primary schools, a number of them (Steve, Keith, Martin, John) were dismayed at some pupils' ability levels, particularly in writing.

> 'I was really surprised at how much they [the pupils] couldn't do. It was real back-to-basics stuff. I'm not talking about middle-order literacy skills. It was things like sentence structure: capital letters, full stops, that kind of thing' (Steve, Interview 2).
>
> 'I didn't think I'd be teaching them word-level skills. I'm not criticising what's gone before. They've obviously covered these things, but it's as if it's all been forgotten. It just makes you wonder if there's any point to teaching it at all' (Keith, Interview 2).

In similar vein, Martin expressed his surprise at finding he was teaching phonics to Year 7 pupils; he had certainly not envisaged having to teach the basics of reading and writing. He therefore found a sense of security and familiarity in teaching older pupils, especially A-level English Literature:

> 'It's what I envisaged when I imagined myself as a teacher. I actually feel like I'm teaching them something and that it's worthwhile, whereas with some of the younger classes it feels more like I'm filling time for them' (Martin, Interview 2).

Peter (Interview 2), in spite of his very secure grasp of grammar and linguistics from his first degree, was suspicious of what he saw as low-level, reductive and decontextualised approaches to linguistic analysis of non-literary texts and was uneasy with the amount of non-literary material he was required to teach at Key Stage 3.

> 'If you take everything out of context, all you have is a series of sound-bites and nothing is connected to anything else' (Peter, Interview 2).

Jonathan (Interview 2) commented that, for him, the presentation of English as a set of key skills in the National Curriculum (1999) served to reinforce the view 'that English is simply a service subject'. Such a comment reflects the demands and expectations of the Cox (DES, 1989) 'adult needs' model of English and has more in common with the Framework for Teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfEE, 2001) than the more traditional and established subject of literary English with which these men had previously been comfortable and successful, either as school pupils or as university students.

A common feature in their development as teachers was the way in which all the participants had to renegotiate and reposition their relationship with a subject that had changed significantly since they themselves had studied it as pupils and which they had often viewed through a specific lens, according to their particular area of interest. English, particularly in its current guise of Literacy, now seemed far more functional and prosaic than most of the men had either recollected from their own schooling or anticipated in their training as teachers. At a number of points during the PGCE programme, this led to the paradoxical situation of this group of highly qualified men being seen as having inadequate or inappropriate subject knowledge to teach in a secondary classroom (Daw, 2000). This came as a shock to the participants, who had not previously considered the possibility of such a situation arising; indeed, at the start of the PGCE programme the participants had expressed the view that their strong subject knowledge would be useful in effectively countering and managing the workload demands. Keith and Martin, in particular, had not anticipated being caught by gaps in their subject knowledge.

> 'I'd thought that I would need to focus on getting the behaviour management side of things right, or on elements of teaching and learning, but I'd just never considered that subject knowledge would be an issue at all' (Martin, Interview 2).

Jonathan's view of classroom practice in English in which 'the majority of questions used by teachers are open questions, because they leave so much more scope for discussion and development of ideas' (Interview 1) was shared by John (Interview 2): 'English often encourages an empathetic response to a text and, because of this, the questions asked are

hardly ever purely factual'. However, the participants did acknowledge that the demands of both the National Curriculum and, in particular, the Framework for Teaching English: Years 7, 8 and 9 (DfEE, 2001) required a significant number of closed responses, with the result that English was not necessarily as open to interpretation as it had been when they themselves had studied it at school.

Indeed, over the course of the study, the participants' relationship with the subject of English, as defined by Ball (1987), was challenged by its relatively recent transformation into Literacy. The Key Stage 3 Strategy was viewed as having encouraged a more didactic, teacher-led approach (Goody, 2002); however, such an approach to teaching and classroom management, with its inevitable consequence of potential struggles around control and power, was not favoured by the men in the study. Moreover, not only were there issues with the style and format of lessons; the men reported feeling no real sense of affinity with or affection for the more formal aspects of grammar or English language. In fact, the need to acquire and develop new subject knowledge seemed to have drained some of the men of their confidence in and enthusiasm for English; Martin (Interview 2) felt that he had 'had to learn to speak English in its secondary school format from scratch'.

It was during the process of training to become teachers of English, that the participants became increasingly aware that their practices in relation to the subject were actually manifestations of their own private and public masculinities. Although as students they had been accustomed to performing private roles as consumers and creators of English, the

familiar and comfortable practices of speaking, listening, reading and writing took on completely different meanings and implications, each with the potential to threaten or challenge their masculinity when observed publicly, questioned or criticised by others. In effect, their engagement in an initial teacher education programme had required the men to undertake a complex and public course of action to acquire not only a new identity as teachers but also a new understanding of the subject of English. Ben commented that the PGCE programme had developed in him:

> 'a fresh understanding of a subject that I love but also more of an awareness of myself as a man and my relationship with that subject. Becoming aware of and sometimes having to confront other people's attitudes to the subject makes you consider your own relationship with it' (Ben, Interview 3).

4.3 English as a gendered curriculum space

The theoretical construct relating to 'gendered approaches to English' is made up of three closely connected core themes: 'boys and English', which relates to the ways in which boys view their work in English; 'gendered approaches to English', which discusses the way in which the subject of English is viewed as feminised, and 'male student teachers of English', which concerns the men's perceptions of the ways in which their own approaches and working styles are themselves gendered, reflecting those of the boys they encounter in schools.

From their own histories as successful pupils and students of English, the group of nine men did understand that to perform well at English is to be able to express oneself clearly and thoughtfully in speech or writing about what one has read, seen or heard. However, the premise that girls are good at emotion and therefore good at English was one of the central tenets of Ofsted's (1993) report into boys and English. The men in the study frequently mentioned the emotional and empathic nature of English as one of the major surprises about the process of learning to be a teacher: because it was not a problem that they themselves had ever experienced, they had neither considered nor anticipated that boys would have faced such difficulties in dealing with the subject's emphasis on personal feelings. They found that they were having to deconstruct and then rebuild an aspect of learning that had always come quite naturally to them:

> 'I really can't get it. I mean, all you have to do is think about what has happened and then consider why it might have happened or what might happen next, but the boys just can't see it. It's as if they're hard-wired into just thinking about what has happened: like things happen for random reasons; one thing, then another, then another, but nothing's linked or connected. There's no motivation, no reasoning, no emotion, just a series of actions or events' (Peter, Interview 2).

Indeed, as the study progressed, the expectation for pupils to empathise in order to be successful at English was cited by all participants as a crucial factor in explaining why boys are less attracted to English and less successful in it. Peter (Interview 2) explained that he had started approaching textual study as an exercise in literary detective work, deliberately

asking the pupils to surmise and explain why certain events might have happened or why particular words had been said, in an attempt to engage the boys in such conjecture. However, as Ian commented, for many boys it was as if they saw such activities as nothing more than idle and pointless speculation:

> 'Like one of them [the boys] said to me last week, "If it happened, then it happened. It's pointless thinking about why it happened. It's not as if that's going to change anything"' (Ian, Interview 3).

Indeed, it was these emotional and affective aspects of the subject that the participants saw as being at its very core, and of particular importance to male pupils, emphasising the potential for English to be an agent for social change. Such an approach aligns closely with Cox's 'cultural analysis' model and with Ball's (1987) orientation towards critical literacy, the oppositional and the radical, as expressed by Chris:

> 'One of the most interesting things about English is that, all the time, you are considering and discussing what people have done – relationships, motivation, tracking how things have developed, looking at situations from different viewpoints – I think that by doing that it helps the pupils to stop, stand back and evaluate what they themselves are doing' (Chris, Interview 1).

Such an approach seems to echo that of recuperative masculinists, who often promote the teaching of English as a key tool in addressing and tackling male disengagement, both educationally and socially:

'by specifically tackling English, it tackles the key life skills of self-expression, self-awareness and communication - the very things men traditionally lack. These are the skills that make boys into better fathers, partners and workmates' (Biddulph, 1997: 3).

Over the course of the study, the participants did not view boys as being particularly resistant in English, but equally they did not perceive them to be powerful actors in a subject in which they were significantly less likely to succeed than girls. By the time of the final round of interviews, John had reached the conclusion that the affective nature of the subject, together with the numerical predominance of female English teachers had contributed to boys simply becoming attuned to a notion of academic achievement in English being feminine in nature, with the result that the boys then reject it and, as a consequence, become still less engaged in lesson activities:

'I have come to believe that there really is a gender bias in English, and that in many circumstances this actually affects the way that it is positioned culturally in the minds of the pupils' (John, Interview 3).

John's conclusion with regard to the feminisation of English as a central factor impacting upon boys' underachievement in the subject was closely aligned with that of Daly (2000):

'The relative performance of boys and girls has been attributed to the 'feminisation' of English as a subject, which is populated by women teachers offering a curriculum which validates emotional and subjective response, where girls feel at home' (p. 230).

The participants had become accustomed to occupying positions of being atypical and in a minority, both at school as boys good at English (Millard, 1997) and at university as students of English (Thomas, 1990). This was a situation that the men had learned to adapt to over time, some finding it more natural or comfortable than others. Some had deliberately adopted traditional hegemonic behaviours as an outward demonstration of their heterosexual credentials (Duncan, 1999): John had become a committed rugby player, seeing his sporting prowess as a means of validation as a man (Newsome, 1961). Peter had deliberately distanced himself from the 'English crowd', instead preferring the company and friendship of other men studying science or technology based subjects, and at school had been particularly scathing and critical of other English pupils. Ben and Chris had been far more comfortable, both in female company and in studying arts-based subjects:

> 'I don't know why the others [male pupils] didn't see it. Because of the subjects I had chosen, I was spending my time with the best looking and most intelligent girls in the school, while they were all hanging around outside the science labs gazing at one another's pimples. To me there was just no contest' (Chris, Interview 1).

In spite of their backgrounds at school and university and of the ways in which they tended to view themselves, at the beginning of their programme of initial teacher education, the male student teachers did bring their embodied masculinities into the PGCE course and were performing hegemonic masculinities. Some of the participants were aware of this, remarking

about how disproportionately they were contributing and drawing comparisons with the behaviours of boys in school:

> 'Even though there is a much smaller number of male PGCE trainees in the English groups, I have noticed that we are exactly like the boys in school: we contribute and participate disproportionately' (Martin, Interview 3).

This observation aligns with the findings of Penn (1998), who remarked that 'men do not necessarily modify their masculinity on coming into a woman's profession; they bring their masculinity and male assumptions with them' (p. 246). Thus, from the outset, the men both saw themselves and were seen as a numerically small but powerful and vocal 'significant minority' whose dominance of interactions in university sessions was out of proportion to the actual size of the group. They also noted that they had different working practices during university sessions:

> 'Even though we've become used to working in the environment of the English class, we do work differently. Like last week, when we were doing that sorting activity in groups, we had fifteen minutes to get it finished, but our group was done in half that time. When we'd finished, there was never a possibility of going back to revisit what we'd done, to see if we could approach it from another angle; it was done, and that was that. But the other groups were all working right up to the last minute, and some didn't finish at all' (John, Interview 1).

At this stage, the participants did not articulate the significance of their gender in their teacher development and socialisation (Sikes, 1991). Similar to Bell and Yalom's

observations (1990), they did not perceive gender to be an organising influence or force in their professional lives. Jonathan explained how this male subject sub-culture (Lacey, 1997) had manifested itself at this point in the year:

> 'You just get used to it. In sixth form there were always loads more girls than boys in the English classes. At uni, it was even more pronounced. The boys always tended to gravitate together as a group, but it was never really a case of 'us and them', it was just that you find a social grouping that you feel comfortable in. It's the same now in our seminars – there's always a table with most of the men on it. It's not exclusive; sometimes there's movement in or out. It's quite fluid, but that's always 'the boys' table'' (Jonathan, Interview 1).

Being part of a gendered minority was familiar to most of the participants, given their relatively recent experiences of being male English undergraduates on predominantly female degree courses:

> 'You can't escape from the fact that you are a significant minority. The departments we've been in have been full of female teachers and nearly all our mentors are women too' (Ian, Interview 2).

Initially, on professional placement in school, Jonathan had reacted positively to being in an evenly balanced English department:

> 'It's about 50: 50 men to women. It's nice.'
>
> (Jonathan, Interview 1)

However, it soon became apparent that, even in such a seemingly balanced department, the whole ethos of the department was feminised: the English departmental office had become 'a female dominated room', its walls dotted with family photographs, thank you cards and letters from former pupils and organisational rotas for various duties, but with male colleagues 'who you don't see very often' (Jonathan, Interview 2). By the end of the placement, Jonathan had become very aware of being in the minority, culturally if not numerically, and of how he had changed the manner in which he constructed and performed his male identity in relation to the women he found himself working with every day.

> 'The department has been female-based, I know. I've enjoyed it though. I quite like being in the minority in some ways. I think I have become a bit more 'macho' (laughs). I mean, I would never have said that I was a 'man's man'. I'm very used to being around women and working with them, but my sense is I have become a bit more 'butch' in my outlook and approach, a bit more - not laddish or loutish - but my type of sense of humour has become more overt, louder, a bit more male ... Maybe it's because we are outnumbered ... I like being outnumbered, but you want your voice to be heard' (Jonathan, Interview 2).

In fact, the strategy that he was adopting was one of hyper-masculinity (Whitehead, 2002), together with a reversion to hegemonic behaviours. Jonathan's adoption of such overtly 'male' behaviours could be viewed as an attempt to establish and emphasise his own heterosexual masculinity (Kehily and Nayak, 1997). In order to cope, he had consciously

adapted or exaggerated the way he behaved as a man. In part, this was a type of resistance or 'coping' strategy (Duncan, 1999); to resist the dominance of and criticisms from his female colleagues he had consciously become more masculine (Newsome, 1961) and made more overt use of 'male' humour.

4.4 Finding the balance: entering the gendered workspace

The theoretical construct of 'entering the gendered workspace' is drawn from two of the themes highlighted in the data. First, 'search for a persona' explores the men's need to develop a comfortable and appropriate way of 'being' in the classroom, and the extent to which their preferred, more relaxed way of 'being' can be seen as gendered. Secondly, 'teacher-pupil relationships', examines the men's reflections upon classroom management, particularly in relation to establishing affirming and appropriate professional relationships.

On the Powick Bridge University Secondary PGCE English course, male student teachers were clearly in a numerical minority: 12 out of a cohort total of 45, corresponding to Howson's findings (2000) and reflecting the typical male/female ratio in placement English departments within the Powick Bridge initial teacher education partnership. The majority of curriculum mentors, responsible for the student teachers' 'coaching, counselling and assessment' (Fletcher, 2000: 1) were also female, as were the majority of other English teachers with whom the participants would come into contact. In entering such a predominantly female workplace as the secondary English department, the experiences of

the participants mirror earlier studies of men entering occupations regarded as 'women's jobs' (Allan, 1993; Williams, 1995; Miller, 1996; Owen et al, 1998; Cameron et al, 1999).

At the start of the first professional placement, in line with Furlong and Maynard's (1995: 12) 'survival stage', the areas of concern at the forefront of the participants' minds regarding the transition into the role of a teacher related to managing and controlling classroom behaviour. Until this point, the participants had tended in the main to rely upon their own personal recollections of the classroom culture of secondary schools in order to develop a hypothetical strategy of how to manage pupils' learning effectively. However, for all the participants, initial observations soon highlighted the extent to which schools had changed in regard to pupil behaviour since they themselves were pupils at school, in some cases relatively few years. Their early concerns about classroom management became further exacerbated when the student teachers discovered the disjunct between their individual subject ideologies and some of the classroom management strategies that they witnessed. Indeed, the shock they reported was not so much at any perceived deterioration in pupils' standards of behaviour but, rather, at the tactics they saw employed in addressing and countering such behaviour.

Principally, what they experienced was a cultural clash between the need to manage pupils' behaviour effectively and the seemingly more relaxed English pedagogy that they saw as the desired norm. Chris' aspiration at this stage was typical:

'I just hope that I'll be able to find a kind of happy medium between getting the behaviour and classroom management right while at the same time still keeping a sense of approachability and a relaxed and friendly atmosphere' (Chris, Interview 1).

Indeed, throughout the entire course of the study, the men used the term 'relaxed' to characterise their intended and preferred classroom relationships with pupils. In aspiring to achieve a productive, conflict-free classroom environment, it appeared that the men were seeking to achieve an outward validation of their masculinity, an impression that discipline and order were achieved as a matter of course (a possible unexpected and unintended manifestation of 'effortless achievement' (Agglestone, 1987)). Keith was able to attribute his natural feeling of ease in the classroom to his prior experience (albeit very different) of teaching English in Malaysia. He prided himself on his relaxed style when dealing with his classes:

'What I'm aiming for, I suppose is a feeling of being at ease - an environment in which I am not on edge, worried about the classroom management, worried about my teaching, my agenda, where I keep having to stop or constantly having to make sure that the pupils are on task. A situation where I am relaxed enough to let the pupils get on with their work, and one where they feel comfortable with me, so that they trust me and want to work for me' (Keith, Interview 3).

All the participants expressed a strong dislike of silent classrooms, instead preferring pupils to express their own opinions and to challenge interpretations. Ben's view was typical:

'I'm lucky to be based in one classroom all the time, but it's right next door to the head of department. Every lesson, she has the classroom door wide open, and there's never the slightest sound coming out of her room. It's like an outward sign for all the teaching staff of her classroom control. The thing is, though, that's not the kind of learning environment that I want to achieve' (Ben, Interview 2).

The men did not feel comfortable with a didactic style and preferred instead to facilitate and manage group learning tasks that involved a lower teacher profile. For Chris (Interview 3), his version of feeling comfortable with the pupils involved 'allowing some classroom noise, within reason, letting the pupils talk while they work'. His intention was to create a purposeful learning space where pupils would have the freedom to express themselves in a group and the confidence to talk to him individually.

Utilising group work in this way freed the male student teachers from having to adopt more dominant and didactic classroom personae and released them from having to use hegemonic control of the lesson. However, some mentors and English teachers viewed the student teachers' use of group work with suspicion; their efforts to foster relationships where they felt comfortable and relaxed with pupils repeatedly received negative comments from female mentors, who viewed such approaches critically as an overly laid back style of teaching, which they tended to associate with ineffective and unchallenging teaching. To their mentors, the men's rejection of more hegemonic styles of classroom management was often viewed as 'ducking the issue' or 'taking the easy option'.

Here, the men were subject to what Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (1996: 54) describe as the 'legitimation' of teaching styles associated with the power, authority and competence of masculinity and the incompetence, failure and weakness of femininity. Paradoxically, a group of males in a predominantly female environment, they were seen as weak and incompetent by their (usually) female mentors. This was further exacerbated as they were at the same time involved in activities that pupils perceived as gendered, especially reading poetry and novels, that are associated with feminine subjects (Deem, 1980; Thomas, 1990) and English (Thomas, 1991; Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998), especially in relation to other more 'masculine' subjects, such as mathematics and science (Thomas, 1990). They realised that adopting the practices of masculine hegemony in a school setting (Lesko, 2000) was difficult:

> 'I think it is really difficult to be a very masculine teacher of English and to take what might be considered a masculine approach' (Martin, Interview 3).

Before the participants took over the teaching of classes, the first professional placement began with a period of lesson observation, moving gradually over the course of a few weeks into a supported teaching role. At this stage, much of the early focus was upon formulating and projecting an effective and appropriate classroom persona. During the 'early idealism' stage identified by Furlong and Maynard (1995: 76), the effectiveness of teachers' relationships with pupils was seen as a crucial factor. Jonathan (Interview 1) expressed his admiration for male teachers who showed they were relaxed by being immersed in English, but was extremely wary of those teachers who tried to be 'cool and hip, which the kids see

through straightaway and never works'; 'the trendy teacher: one of the most tragic sights known to man'. However, in contrast, John (Interview 1) regarded being liked by his pupils as a key factor in the teacher-pupil relationship and an indicator of his success as a teacher; this led to later criticism from his mentor for being 'too nice' and was a contributing factor in his ongoing problems with classroom management throughout the programme.

When discussing gendered classroom management strategies, Ben's experience was typical:

> 'Most of the observations that I have made of other teachers have been of female teachers, simply because they have been in the English department. So much of my experience has come from watching female English teachers. It's been helpful in developing my application of subject knowledge, but it's not really helped me pedagogically in my role as a male English teacher' (Ben, Interview 2).

Keith described having been impressed at the ruthless efficiency of a female teacher, who had reinforced her discipline at the start of lessons and had then directed the lesson by following a staged series of outcomes. However, despite this, he had actually been more attracted to a male teacher's more fluid start to a lesson, which had developed from an opening discussion with the class. Keith took on the approaches used by this male teacher himself, as they felt appropriate, safe and comfortable. Other student teachers who had been able to see men teaching English reported significant differences in their teaching styles from those of the women they had observed:

'The female teachers are completely different. They tend to have more things like Strategy starter activities and lots of short activities. They don't just go in and talk and let things build from there. There is just a really big difference between their styles and their attitudes towards teaching. I think the male teachers I've seen are more traditional' (Peter, Interview 2).

Ian described his own difficulty in finding an appropriate teaching persona, highlighting female teachers' more maternal manner of interacting with pupils:

'The female teachers that I have taken over from are very chatty, quite touchy-feely and almost maternal in the way that they talk to the pupils and deal with them' (Ian, Interview 2).

Ian's comments echo the link between mothering and teaching drawn by Walkerdine and Lucey (1989). Jonathan, too, believed female teachers were 'more motherly' (Interview 2). However, Peter (Interview 2) believed that not only was English 'seen as a feminised subject; teaching in general just seems more natural for women' and that women seemed more successful when handling groups of children. Peter's comment matched the stereotypical views of one of Reichert's (2001: 41) participants who saw female teachers as maternal figures, in contrast with male role models who were the 'intellectual giants of the community'. Peter viewed women as better teachers because the job lent itself to being maternal (Duncan, 1999). However, the physical proximity that some of the women teachers adopted was a concern to some of the student teachers:

'They're not afraid of touching the pupils, putting an arm around them, calling them "love", giving them a hug to calm them down. I'd be terrified of doing anything like that. It's like, as a man it's drummed into you from an early age: do not touch, do not go too near, and that creates a wariness, a distance between you that's always there' (John, Interview 3).

4.5 Real men are good teachers: order and discipline

The theoretical construct relating to 'men and discipline' comprises two themes that emerge from the data: first, 'establishment of order', which examines the men's experience in relation to discipline and classroom management. Arising from the men's preference for a more relaxed classroom style discussed in the previous section, the issue of gendered manifestations of classroom control is also explored, questioning whether some of these performances are inappropriate or even impossible for men student teachers to replicate. The second theme is 'being Sir', involving the men's reflections upon their developing relationships with and acceptance by the pupils they teach. The two themes are connected, as the men present their feelings in relation to English as it is currently shaped within the National Curriculum.

The female teachers' more maternal style, as perceived by the male student teachers, was not simply about caring and nurturing. Women teachers were frequently described as using more forceful ways and being stricter than the male student teachers felt they could be:

> 'I am nowhere near as strict as the female teachers I have taken over from, put it that way. They are really strict, some of them' (Jonathan, Interview 2).

However, female strictness involved a confusing mixture of shouting and physical proximity, 'like their mum', as Ian described:

> 'She goes right up to them and leans down next to them and just shouts at them, right up, really close. She starts off slowly and builds up louder and louder - the kids just sit there, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. You can see it in their faces' (Ian, Interview 2).

Ian was disturbed by the women teachers' 'in your face' approach, which he felt he could not replicate because of his size and his gender, even had he wanted to. Like the other male student teachers, Ian resisted deploying his 'real man' masculinity (Sargent, 2001) as a classroom management device and consequently risked being perceived as an ineffective and weak teacher.

The participants' clear rejection of a controlling classroom persona and the adoption of gentler, quieter approaches conflicted with the expectations of some mentors, creating tensions at times, but became for the men an indicator of emerging confidence and success in classroom management. The interview data reveal that visiting tutors were more likely than mentors to value such quieter approaches. Rather than utilising male-orientated, hegemonic teaching styles, 'reliant on patriarchal authority and power' (Arnot, 2002: 155), as relatively experienced feminist and post-modernist readers of literary texts these nine men were gentler, not merely skilled readers of literary texts but also of men and women (Frith,

1991). Both as men and, more particularly, as English students the participants had been exposed to gender theories and to the gender lexicon, which often feature on university English courses. They had espoused the idea of the sensitive, anti-sexist 'new man', as summarised by Haywood and Mac an Ghaill (2003: 47) and were pro-feminist in ways described by Lingard and Douglas (1999). They combined this knowledge and experience in order to read female teachers, identifying teaching styles ranging from maternal:

> 'When she talks to them it is like they are being talked to by their mother' (Martin, Interview 1)

to disciplinarian:

> 'I felt that some of the classes were a bit too quiet and subdued because the teachers were too keen to be in charge all the time' (Keith, Interview 1).

By taking responsibility for maintaining the balance, the male student teachers sought to promote this mutual respect by asserting their masculinity in alternative and non-hegemonic ways. For instance, Peter, a Territorial Army officer cadet, might have been expected to wear the badges of hegemonic masculinity more openly. However, he was a particularly quietly spoken, gentle teacher who avoided using aggression with pupils and felt uneasy around shouting teachers.

The nine men developed teaching styles that fitted their changing masculinities. All nine regularly said they wanted to feel 'comfortable' in the classroom and to be more 'relaxed' than the female teachers they had mainly observed. In line with Sargent's study (2001), they felt that they could not replicate the more forceful discipline strategies utilised by some

female colleagues. John highlighted the frequency of female teachers shouting at disruptive pupils, who then became marginalised and discouraged (Lingard and Douglas, 1999). When asked about the shouting culture in the school, he acknowledged:

> 'There is an awful lot of shouting. That is not necessarily always a reflection on the way that the teachers work, though. It is just that some of these kids will not shut up. Whenever I start shouting, though, it sounds different – my voice is louder, deeper, stronger – to me it feels like it's bullying. It doesn't feel right' (John, Interview 2).

Believing English to be a subject with 'the potential to effect social change' (Thomas, 1991: 121), the men (Chris, Martin, Keith, Steve) were genuinely surprised that the teaching of English involved so much shouting and aggressive discipline strategies. All the men had expected pupils to be familiar with shouting in their home lives but were surprised to have seen so many English teachers shouting:

> 'There are some genuine screamers here, although I'm sure that there are screamers in every school. I do think these kids get shouted at a lot at home, though. It is that kind of environment around here, so I don't think it's particularly effective' (Ben, Interview 1).

Often, the men felt that the advice offered by mentors was based on the impossible task of replicating women's styles:

'She said, "Make your presence felt from the start. Fill the room with your personality. Hit them like a whirlwind." In some ways, I'd love to be able to do that but I can't try and ape her' (Steve, Interview 3).

Indeed, the participants reported being confused at seeing female teachers operating a strategy that, as men, they felt unable to replicate. The men reported anecdotally from their peer group discussions that female mentors, upon advising female student teachers on classroom management and teacher persona, had urged them to dominate and control classroom interactions. Indeed Ian (Interview 2) reported that a fellow-student had been advised by her mentor to 'Just get in there and play the psycho-bitch from hell'. For the participants, the sub-text of such a comment was that in the 'real world' of school, this was an effective strategy in a female teacher's repertoire of pupil management strategies. The men in the study understood that their female colleagues used gendered manifestations of their authority; however, some manifestations were simply inappropriate for men to exercise. For example, even had they wanted to, they were unable to locate a masculine version of being a 'psycho-bitch'.

Similarly, Steve (Interview 3) remarked upon the seeming contradiction between his mentor's advice that effective classroom management was aided by communicating with pupils 'in a polite and respectful manner' and observing her 'overly forceful' approach to discipline. He spoke about not wanting 'to go in too heavy-handed', as he did not think it could work for him as a male teacher. In describing this tension, he attempted to distinguish between power and authority:

'Authority is achieved through respect, but power just relies on fear for its right to lead. An environment of mutual respect is essential in a classroom and must constantly be asserted by the teacher' (Steve, Interview 3).

John explained how pupils positioned him as a man (Askew and Ross, 1988), expecting him to use his size and natural male authority to control them with force. In being unable or unwilling to take on such a role, he believed that he had failed as a man:

'Last week they absolutely drove me round the bend, they just drove me mad - I thought that was it. I thought if a bunch of Year 7s won't behave for me then I'm just useless as a man' (John, Interview 2).

Unable to control a class of schoolchildren, he was unable to conform to ideologies of dominant masculinity. This confirms Wolpe's (1988) research into pupils' perceptions of teachers, where 'good teachers' were 'real men' and 'bad teachers' had 'problems'. Such tests of male strength and aggression contributed to the participants' belief that men and women control pupils in different ways, simply because of their physical power, demonstrating Weber and Mitchell's (1995) analysis of the gendered enactment of power: the implication being that men, because of their size, strength, and their very maleness, are not afraid, and have less difficulty controlling and maintaining order in a classroom than women do (Weber and Mitchell, 1995). In fact, they reported that they felt at times they were being deliberately tested to show that they could handle the boys' challenging behaviour. As Keith explained:

'One of the reasons that I got some of the classes was that my mentor thought that it would be a good challenge for me to have to deal with them' (Keith, Interview 2).

Indeed, the mentors' expectations of the male student teachers revealed the misconception that they would be able to exert forceful power simply because of their gender. However, it became clear that the men did not want to deploy forceful power as a teaching strategy and were resistant to sharp, aggressive management strategies, preferring instead to be more relaxed in their approach.

In fact, for mentors and pupils alike a paradox emerged: in spite of their physical size the participants were not particularly strict. Without exception, all the men rejected authoritative or aggressive approaches to classroom management, especially when they involved public displays of reprimanding pupils. Steve (Interview 2) was typical of the group when he observed a number of female teachers, whose strict policing of speaking and listening activities in class was, in his view, counter-productive to pupils' learning, their interactions becoming confined to 'shouting, stern words and discipline'. Steve's preference for a 'quiet word' was typical of the preferred approach of the participants.

During the course of their training, a number of the participants (Keith, John, Steve, Peter, Ian) expressed their increased awareness of their physicality when working with pupils, who had often commented on the male teachers' size which they associated with dominance. Indeed, all nine participants quite deliberately adapted their physical stature in the classroom.

For instance, Ian and Keith who were both very tall, began to crouch or kneel beside the pupils, so as to address them at eye level and so that the pupils did not have to look up at them. Being male and older conferred on some of the participants the impression of being more experienced teachers, as described by Keith:

> 'It is an advantage being 6ft 5in and a mature trainee, as the pupils don't see me as a student' (Keith, Interview 2).

Keith also believed that being a man gave him the physical confidence not to feel 'too threatened' in a disruptive classroom (Interview 2).

The initial experience of being addressed as 'Sir' often came as a pleasant surprise to the participants. Martin (Interview 2) realised that, although he could not replicate the kinds of relationship established by female colleagues, he found that the pupils' use of 'Sir' helped as it was an outward and tangible sign of developing rapport. The men's expectations at the outset had been that, through their training, they would learn how to adopt and act out the practices of performing the role of English teacher by observing and mimicking its successful techniques. However, in actuality, they had to learn to take on the persona of the English teacher, which frequently had more in common with being a proxy carer rather than a deliverer of the curriculum. Therefore, their adoption of the persona of 'Sir', with its rather outdated implication of a patriarchal role model figure was conflated with the expectation that the possessor of the title would have a positive influence on pupils in terms of behaviour.

Rather surprisingly, given their comments with regard to appropriate classroom management strategies and teacher personae, the men were not particularly concerned about implications of power and control in the use of such a term. In fact, the men actually commented on the validating and positive effect of being called 'Sir' both around the school and in the classroom, seeing this as denoting belonging and acceptance from the pupils. It also served to create a safety barrier in the relationship between the men and the pupils. The men enjoyed pupils using the term of address, especially as part of positive feedback:

> 'There are some who say as they are walking out of class, "Thanks, Sir" or "See you, Sir". That sort of thing and that's nice. I enjoy it' (Chris, Interview 2).

4.6 Influence beyond the classroom

The theoretical construct relating to 'wider influence' comprises three closely connected core themes: 'role models', which relates to the men seeing their influence with pupils as extending beyond the classroom; 'boys' attitudes', which concerns the men's views in regard to teenage projections of laddishness and 'real English', which explores the men's work in presenting versions of classroom English that boys will both relate to and find relevant.

Over the course of the study, all the participants realised that they had developed an interest in working with boys in particular ways, as noted by Nayak and Kehily (2001):

> 'We believe that teachers can play an important role in helping boys to reflect on and understand these practices of masculinity.... What can be achieved at the

local level of schooling, therefore, is an attempt to help boys to problematise their social practices of masculinity' (p. 122)

Steve identified the lack of a male figure in the pupils' home lives as providing him with a particular role to play:

> 'I don't want to take it too far and make it something that it's not, but you have got a lot of kids these days who don't have a male figure or role model in their lives. If they come from single parent families, then perhaps having a male teacher will be good for them and they will respond well to that' (Steve, Interview 3).

Keith, one of the older student teachers, married and with children of his own, similarly became aware of and interested in exploring the impact of the role he was playing in the lives of his pupils, many of whom came from single parent families with an absence of male role models. However, he was also mindful of the fact that taking on the role of a substitute paternal figure could potentially be problematic, as it could lead to discussions about emotions and relationships with pupils who were not used to having such discussions with a man (Keith, Interview 2). In contrast, early in the first school placement John, the youngest of the participants, elected to cultivate an elder brother persona simply because he could not find an authentic replication of the maternal role adopted by his female colleagues, particularly his mentor:

'When she talks to them it is like they are being talked to by their mother. When I talk to them I feel it is like they are being talked to by their big brother' (John, Interview 2).

Indeed, the male student teachers were unable to find a way of replicating the female teachers' motherly or `personalised' (Arnot, 2002: 31) authority, which was markedly different from the more formal or `traditional' style used by the men they observed.

As a result of his experiences on professional placement, Martin became interested in exploring and addressing the underlying 'laddish' culture (Willis, 1977), which he felt had led to boys turning against academic work and to the consequent underachievement of boys:

'Laddism definitely does reinforce certain gender stereotypes. This then has a negative effect on the attitudes that boys bring into the class and also tends to have an effect on their behaviour and concentration levels' (Martin, Interview 3).

Ben, too, became aware that many boys lose interest in schooling simply in order to reaffirm their masculinity:

'The girls see academic success as important, but the lads just want to dick about. You can see it in the way they act: they don't act that way because they particularly want to. You can actually see their eyes scanning the room, seeking approval. That's what's at the heart of it. Until you get to that point where they see success as important, nothing is going to change' (Ben, Interview 2).

Jonathan was equally mindful of the discourse of peer pressure, with accusations around academic success in English being rooted in the language of homophobia (Epstein and Johnson, 1994):

> 'When you look at boys' lack of success in English, and think about its focus upon feelings and emotion, you can see why for a boy to be good at English is to risk being called 'gay', which is a universal term of abuse for anything that's to be hated or despised' (Jonathan, Interview 2).

Ian (Interview 3) firmly believed that English had to be packaged and presented as 'masculine' in order to be attractive to boys and that it must not be effeminate. Unable to construct for himself a workable or meaningful expression of Millard's (1997: 166-7) 'boy-friendly' curriculum, he did not know how to 'masculinise' English although he did have clear ideas about some texts and why they did not alienate boys. John was unequivocal in his view that poetry was feminised and 'a bit girly' (Interview 3). His avoidance of teaching poetry can be attributed to his view of poetry as a possible place of threat to his masculinity and the cause of questions from pupils about his sexuality. John's attitude to poetry conforms to Thomas's view of certain subjects embodying qualities of masculinity and femininity:

> 'Not only are certain subjects (for example Physics, Mathematics) considered more suitable for men than for women, but also these subjects in themselves seem to embody qualities which are closely linked to our ideas about masculinity and femininity' (Thomas, 1990: 19).

In contrast, however, Keith (Interview 3) was suspicious of the continued prevalence of traditional and canonical texts and the way they seemed to derive from and perpetuate hegemonic masculinities. Referring to the predominance of female teachers and the way English is taught, he called secondary English teaching 'a system that is female-dominated', yet noted that 'the whole curriculum is male-dominated and weighted in favour of male authors', reminiscent of Connell, who describes the subject-matter taught in many English classes as:

> 'a dominant, or hegemonic, curriculum, derived historically from the educational practices of European upper class men' (Connell, 1994: 137).

For Peter (Interview 2), the principal challenge was in meeting the needs of those boys in his class who did not take readily to English and found it difficult, yet who had to negotiate the subject being taught principally by female teachers who expected them to participate in activities that they found uncomfortable. In essence, for him, boys were mainly turned off English because of its reputation for 'being about girls' things and taught principally by women'. Such a conclusion reflects Mac an Ghaill's view of macho boys rejecting academic attainment and undermining it for others, and of the role played by male teachers in dealing with boys' behaviour:

> 'Male teachers, in neutralising young men's behaviour, failed to acknowledge the institutional power invested in masculinity with the accompanying social positioning of femininity' (Mac an Ghaill, 1994: 129).

4.7 Male teachers as role models for the participants

Arising from the previous section, similar in approach but different in practice, the theoretical construct of 'male teachers providing role models for the student teachers' is made up of two closely connected themes: 'male models of English teaching', which relates to the ways in which the men describe having been mentored or advised by more experienced and senior male teachers of English and 'men working together', which presents the participants' accounts of having sought opportunities to find examples of other men with whom to discuss the production and projection of an effective and authentic male classroom persona.

Over the course of the initial teacher education programme, all the participants spent at least one placement based in English departments with male teachers. However, rather than seeing these few male colleagues and male department heads as valuable role models or as resources to aid them in their development, as noted by Allan (1994), a number of participants (Steve, John, Peter, Jonathan) reported that it appeared that their mentors seemed to feel that male English teachers had been promoted more easily, in line with the findings of Williams (1992).

The participants did not report feeling that they had benefited from what Williams characterised as closer guidance from these men; indeed, although the number of male English department heads was disproportionately high (Darling, 1992), their actual contact

with the male student teachers was limited at best. Male heads of department were frequently reported as demonstrating evident status and power:

> 'I've only seen Mike [the head of department] teaching once, but he carries a lot of weight in the school, you can tell' (Steve, Interview 3).

However, these male department heads seemed to be seen, both by their colleagues and by the students themselves, as having benefited from the 'glass escalator' of male privilege (Williams, 1992), displaying the 'laziness and caprice' noted by Hills (1995: 54) and were generally considered as undeserving of the status they held:

> 'The only male English teacher in the department is actually the Head of Department. He is seen as being really lazy and disorganised, and the rest of the English Department just tend to work around him. Everyone knows that it's the Second-in-Department who really runs things. ... I think their initial expectation was that, as another male in the department, I was going to be lazy from the start' (John, Interview 3).

Somewhat paradoxically, the experience of those student teachers with male heads of department was consistently felt to have been negative, as they had seemed remote figures who did not provide either professional or personal support (Hills, 1995: 53). Seidler (1997: 8) uses the term 'cultural homophobia' to explain the notion that males do not feel that they need to support other males, as the necessary emotional link behind such support is culturally positioned as feminine. It was apparent from the men's comments that these male heads of department did not regard the pastoral and nurturing roles of training to be any

concern of theirs. Steve (Interview 3) reported having spoken to his head of department 'a few times', while Peter (Interview 2) noted that his male head of department 'made a point of keeping as far away from the rest of the department as possible'. He identified a lack of contact and felt somewhat slighted that he had not received the professional nurturing he had expected:

> 'No, he certainly didn't take me under his wing or anything like that' (Peter, Interview 2).

John too had limited contact with Jim, his male head of department who had allocated the mentoring to female colleagues:

> 'Jim is completely out of the department, as far as I can see. He is the one I engage with the least and the one that has nothing at all to do with my development' (John, Interview 2).

Jonathan had a male head of department on placement one and a male mentor on placement two. However, his male mentor was unsupportive in his mentoring; this lack of male support led him to position talk about problems as a feminine practice:

> 'He is my mentor, but actually I don't see him very often at all. ... I don't see him during the day. It is the girls I talk to if I have a problem' (Jonathan, Interview 3).

Similar sexist language was used by several of the men (Peter, Ian, Steve) when describing how their training was carried out by female colleagues, as expressed by Peter:

> 'My professional development has been handled by the girls' (Peter, Interview 3).

The pejorative term 'girls' can be seen as both reducing and undermining the authority of the female mentors, a possible indicator of women being perceived as lacking in professional authority because they were taking on the caring and nurturing role of being a mentor.

Given the apprentice model that the student teachers were following in schools, it was notable that the participants were rarely presented with an effective model or scaffold in learning how to perform and function as men in the classroom, either from males or females. They reported that they saw female teachers teaching English in ways they found unhelpful because they could not import such a feminine teacher persona. Perhaps because they did not see many male English teachers in action, some of the men developed an idealised mental picture (Mitchell and Weber, 1995) of being and performing as a man in the classroom, constructed by television ('Waterloo Road', 'The Inbetweeners', 'The Law of the Playground'), film ('Fever Pitch', 'The Class' ['Entre les Murs']) and literary ('Teacher Man', 'The Wave') representations. Martin (Interview 2) noted how John Keating, the teacher played by Robin Williams in Dead Poets Society had been a significant influence upon his decision to become an English teacher and believed that all male English teachers 'deep down want to be charismatic mavericks'.

Keith did describe how some of the qualities he admired had been displayed by male teachers whom he had seen:

> 'The male teachers that I have observed ... are more relaxed and are prepared to let a bit of initial disturbance go without making a massive issue of it. They

seem to be saying: 'Come on lads,' being more `onside' in terms of how to deal with, say, a group of disruptive boys than perhaps a female teacher would' (Keith, Interview 3).

The men did not have the opportunities to `read' (Frith, 1991; Miller, 1996) a range of male English teachers. It was therefore important for men to observe and talk to other male teachers, often outside the English department, in order to consider and internalise a range of different ways of being a man in the classroom:

> `It's helping me, just from a purely observational point of view seeing different men teach English. I have got different models now I can refer to... Jeff is very quiet, controlled and calm and he's an excellent teacher. Charles is not an angry teacher; he has just got a very powerful voice. Just seeing the different techniques, I don't know why it is different to a woman. It just is. Women are different' (Jonathan, Interview 3).

Having observed a young male Music teacher's style and technique, Chris (Interview 2) reported seeking out other younger male teachers to watch. Steve too believed that watching other men had enhanced his learning:

> `I think it is difficult in a way when you watch women teach because you don't learn as much as when you watch men teach, and I have watched an awful lot more women teach than I have men' (Steve, Interview 3).

Similarly, Ben reported that he had found it useful to meet and talk with a newly qualified male History teacher:

'He told me that the stress in teaching is low-level stress. If today's a bad lesson, it's OK; no one dies, or anything. The stress is constant but it's not at a high level. It's like it's an everyday thing' (Ben, Interview 2).

Ian commented that he had realised that he had different conversations with the only other male English teacher from those with either his mentor or the other English teachers. Some of these conversations were about being a male in a predominantly female department and about dealing with some stereotypical perceptions. When talking about the other male teacher and himself, Ian used the term 'we', suggesting recognition of shared characteristics:

'We are not dominant, disciplinarian types - we'd sooner do it another way, if it's at all possible. I suppose sometimes, two males in a female department - we talk about it. We have got fairly similar attitudes to how we would like to be and behave as a teacher' (Ian, Interview 3).

4.8 Effortless achievers: male student teachers as problems

The theoretical construct of 'male teachers as problems' comprises two core themes emerging from the interview data: 'relaxed, laid back and lazy', in relation to the participants' perceptions of how they were seen by mentors and other teachers and, linked to this, 'private planning', involving the men's over-preparation and scripting of lesson plans, unbeknownst to their mentors. Analysis of their properties suggests that these two themes are interlinked, with actions in one often having consequent reactions in the other.

As the men in the study learned to become English teachers, their gender was perceived as an issue, perhaps for the first time in their educational careers. They saw their work as teachers as different from that of their female colleagues. They reported experiencing an initial loss of power upon entering into a predominantly female working context and having to find new ways of performing their roles as men. Some of these changes were brought about by their encounters with mentors, other teachers and pupils. They were subject to stereotyping and prejudgement on the basis of their gender. They developed creative strategies in relation to planning and consciously adopted a more relaxed and laid back approach. Their journey from students of English to teachers of English involved the acquisition of a clearer and more vivid sense of their masculinity. They repositioned their masculinity by experimenting with both hyper-masculine and softer ways of being a man (Whitehead, 2002):

> 'At first, I saw my role as a teacher as being reliant upon projecting a real sense of the power and force of my personality across the classroom, but now I've realised that it's about building up relationships and establishing trust, so I've become a lot quieter, less forceful and driven in my approach' (Peter, Interview 2).

Often in the position of being the only man in an otherwise all-female English department, the participants were not only viewed as an anomaly, as noted by Allan (1994), but also had relatively few role models to demonstrate and exemplify work patterns. Some of the men developed 'coping strategies' (Duncan, 1999) in order to manage the work / life balance:

staying late in school to complete work before leaving (Jonathan); working after the children had gone to bed (Steve); working throughout the weekend (John). A strategy frequently adopted by the participants as the placements progressed was to reduce the length and detail of written lesson plans. Principally driven by pragmatism and necessity, such an approach was frequently viewed by mentors as an indicator of laziness and a lack of professionalism, rather than as a manifestation of growing confidence and skill. As a consequence, lesson plans developed into sources of conflict between mentors and trainees, as found by Apple, 1985.

Cohen (1998) has explored the way in which the discourse of male underachievement and 'typical boy' laziness can manifest itself in the workplace. Jonathan (Interview 3) reported that he was treated like a boy, as he had no real status at the workplace, felt outnumbered and was made to feel 'like the office junior. I started to feel they'd be asking me to make the tea next'. In part, the student teachers attributed their sense of being made to feel younger and less experienced than female colleagues of a similar age to the feminised atmosphere of the school and to a lack of the 'normal' position of male power and centrality (Tinto, 1993):

> 'Basically, it is the school world. I felt boyish and immature quite a lot during the course of the placement' (Jonathan, Interview 3).

Jonathan reported being viewed with some suspicion because he appeared to be up-to-date with his work whilst continuing to maintain his social life. When he mentioned having gone to a football match on a Saturday afternoon with friends, the response from his female colleagues was that they had worked all weekend (Jonathan, Interview 3). The implication of

their reaction was that by maintaining a social life he had signaled a lack of dedication to his professional training. This became an ongoing source of conflict: through focused and efficient work in school Jonathan felt that he had achieved a satisfactory work-life balance; he was happy and relaxed, yet perceived as lazy by the other teachers in the department.

The participants explained how important it was for them to 'get it right' with deadlines and assignments (Ian, Interview 2). Keith was particularly keen to be seen to get things right:

> 'I don't want to get things wrong, which is why I do the work' (Keith, Interview 3).

Similar to the other men in the group, Chris also spoke of wanting 'to get things right' and how things played on his mind if they were going badly (Chris, Interview 2). However, somewhat ironically, it seemed that in actuality the mentors rarely saw the male student teachers getting things right (a clear contrast to Turvey's 'good girl', 1996) and that the mentors' judgement was influenced in general by negative stereotypes regarding men and male teachers in particular. During the course of the year, the male student teachers were also subject to accusations of laziness, even idleness. Jonathan, on being described as lazy by his female colleagues, attributed it to his gender:

> 'I just think that it's a man thing. I think they assume that, because I am a young man, I'm a bit of a lad and I enjoy myself far too much, without even knowing me that well. I think their natural assumption is that I'm just a lad who enjoys life a bit too much and that I should do more work' (Jonathan, Interview 3).

However, he did comment that he felt his female colleagues were rather surprised when he was teaching well:

> 'I think they think that I am better than they thought I would be' (Jonathan, Interview 3).

The attitudes towards lesson planning displayed by the men in the study had been formed before they had even commenced the programme of initial teacher education. Analysis of the first round interview data reveals how their approaches to planning were based upon their beliefs about how English should be taught. At the start of the first professional placement, having previously observed only female teachers, Steve believed that lessons should be:

> 'tightly structured and meticulously planned, with the teacher continuously leading the class from one activity to the next in a very neat and ordered way' (Steve, Interview 1)

However, by the end of the programme, this view had shifted significantly:

> 'Yes, planning is obviously important but the lesson plan should never be slavishly followed if there is another force in the classroom leading towards a more fruitful and relevant place' (Steve, interview 3).

For Steve, the key principle here was the acknowledgement that discussion is a more interesting and worthwhile activity where learning will take place. Indeed, he acknowledged that lesson plans need to be flexible because 'learning is always a work in progress, always changing and evolving' (Interview 3).

Studies confirm what teachers say they know about boys in school, that they engage in the cultivation of 'effortless achievement' (Aggleton, 1987; Mac an Ghaill, 1994: 67; Cohen, 1998: 28). All the male student teachers preferred to signal such effortless achievement. Keith said he disliked using a fully scripted lesson, although he paradoxically admitted that he had at times meticulously scripted his delivery in advance, so as to sound 'off the cuff', particularly in preparing for a formal observation. Chris was a dedicated student who planned lessons in detail and attributed any failures to poor planning and all successes to good planning:

> 'I think that the key to it is planning and structure of the lesson, if you know exactly where you are going, then you are so much less likely be knocked off course' (Chris, Interview 2).

Chris was able to adapt and improve his lesson-planning skills by planning jointly with his mentor, adding a necessary degree of flexibility. However, not all of the mentors and teachers found time to do this and most had only a cursory glance at lesson plans. Some mentors had expected that from the start the student teachers would be able to plan effective lessons with minimal help for classes they did not know well. However, lesson planning for the early survival stages required a different level of skill from planning lessons taught towards the end of the course. Experienced mentors knew this; less experienced mentors and other teachers often did not. Teachers' demands for lesson plans were inconsistent; however, the men tended to be viewed as lazy and poor planners. The men

preferred to plan in secret and then keep their plans hidden. This was a conscious strategy that was part of a creative resistance to the obsessive burden of paperwork. Also, the male student teachers saw detailed and meticulous lesson planning as being one part of a staged approach to learning to teach during the PGCE programme. They wanted to demonstrate to their mentors that they were beyond the developmental stage of needing to plan and script lessons in detail. However, they did carry out detailed planning in private and felt embarrassed to share this with experienced teachers, as they saw it as a symbol of their inexperience and a source of criticism that was best avoided.

The men wanted to be seen by pupils and colleagues as calm and quietly confident, a mark of their growing confidence and success as a teacher. However, such calmness and confidence in the stressful situation of the classroom was often interpreted by mentors as being too relaxed. Martin was accused of having a laid back style on first school placement, but as he explained:

> 'In fact, this was precisely what I was looking for - to give the impression of being fairly laid back while at the same time being clear about the standards I set' (Martin, Interview 3).

In Martin's view, men wish to be seen as 'laid back' or relaxed as that is how they are socially constructed, suggesting effortless achievement. In his previous employment, this same description had been used of Keith as a masculine compliment. However, he considered that its being used of him in teaching was largely due to his calm demeanour and evenly paced

language, which he contrasted with the female teachers' classroom talk which he characterised as: ` relatively highly charged emotionally' (Keith, Interview 2).

Chris explained that he had perceived a `laid back' description as a compliment when given by a male university visiting tutor, who was recognising his attempt to demonstrate effortless achievement. He had aimed to be relaxed with the pupils, believing it `promoted a positive environment' (Chris, Interview 3). However, he also revealed how such an informal approach had confused the pupils, who had at times interpreted his manner as overly casual, which had eventually led to Chris' decision to change his manner:

> `It's something that has changed me from being someone who has a professional kind of happy-go-lucky attitude, quite light-hearted and friendly to ultra-professional and deliberately distant, which I just haven't found natural at all' (Chris, Interview 3).

Often the men wanted to be `relaxed' and `comfortable' in the classroom and disliked didactic styles: `Taking a formal role at the front of the class just feels unnatural'. (Steve, Interview 2) The men had deliberately aimed to be more relaxed than the highly organised female teachers:

> `It's difficult not to get involved in sexist dissections of these things but I have found that the most planned and to some extent uptight English teachers I have met have been women. Most of the more relaxed ones have been men' (Jonathan, Interview 2).

Keith, too, felt that from the few male English teachers he had observed, he wanted to emulate those who were most relaxed.

John was of the opinion that, whilst his female colleagues had enjoyed the change of having a male student teacher, they were also worried about his perceived laziness:

> 'I think that their initial worry was that I was going to have a sort of laziness, but now that I'm coming to the end of placement I'm getting a bit brassed off with the whole department thinking I am not doing what I should do' (John, Interview 3).

John reported that he felt that English departments cultivated a particularly hard-working culture. However, he did still admit taking some short cuts with lesson preparation, falling back into the panicky and unhelpful study habits from his own schooldays, such as using internet-based chapter summaries rather than re-reading 'Lord of the Flies' (John, Interview 3). There was a clear difference between John's corner-cutting approach and the resourcefulness shown by Jonathan (Interview 3), who brought in his own university essays to deconstruct, discuss and use as revision models with his A-level students. Although at times himself accused of laziness, John did believe that lazy teachers stood out in 'such a hard working profession that is predominantly female' (John, Interview 3).

The physical, mental and emotional demands of the PGCE programme are widely reported (Youds, 2002), but for the men in the study some of the exhaustion they reported was attributable to the routines of work, as identified by Williams (1993, 1995) and confirmed the

expectations of teaching voiced by friends and family. Martin explained his experience of change and adaptation, as the course had affected both his lifestyle and his personal self-image:

> 'I certainly feel older. Like the fact that I have to go to bed by 11.15 at the absolute latest ... We were all talking about how early we have to go to bed now and how it is taking over our lives. We are starting to feel really old and decrepit because we go to bed so early. The whole persona I have to take on is a lot more adult' (Martin, Interview 1).

As might be expected in an apprentice model of training, the male student teachers tried to develop their teaching styles by imitating and adopting the approaches used successfully by other teachers. However, problems arose when the teachers they observed used gendered approaches that could not be imitated successfully. Male student teachers who were unable to adapt and become like the English teachers they had observed were accused of being arrogant. Unable to put the advice they received into use, they were mistakenly seen as rejecting it. Indeed, such perceptions of male student teachers as arrogant first emerged in the very earliest interview sessions:

> 'I was told off for being too cocky' (Martin, Interview 1).

When in university-based sessions, the male students had noted and remarked upon the ways in which men and women students had organised their paperwork differently. According to the men, the female students used various files and diaries, whereas the men

functioned on separate pieces of paper but still presented assessed work appropriately. However, such meticulousness did not apply to lesson plans until they were submitted in portfolios for assessment. Chris and Jonathan explained this paradox when they confessed that although their professional presentation was exemplary they were actually privately untidy, but they wanted to be seen as 'organised' and 'good students'. This desire to be seen as 'a good boy' was often part of over-compensation (Sargent, 2001), given that 'Women have the perception that men are disorganised' (Chris, Interview 3) and 'I don't want them to say something bad' (Jonathan, Interview 3). Jonathan and Chris wanted to be perceived as organised in order to reduce the pressure on them from mentors.

Several of the male student teachers admitted cutting corners with the lesson planning required. Conflict arose as female mentors cited a lack of paperwork to illustrate concerns about the male student teachers' poor performance. A number of the female mentors thought themselves highly organised and insisted that the male student teachers follow their example, as Steve explained when reflecting on his mentor who was 'scary' and 'so driven':

> 'I learnt with her that I had to be absolutely organised, one hundred per cent. She said in the first couple of weeks – I'd thought I'd been OK – but she said, 'You need to organise yourself more in terms of preparation and so I have done that' (Steve, Interview 3).

The male students' organisational skills developed during the year as they learned which paperwork was public and which private. A regular issue, for example, was the extent to which the male students' planning was covert and not shared with mentors. The men's

teaching files were organised and up-to-date when presented to visiting tutors. The men did not voluntarily show their planning to teachers in school, for fear of being reprimanded for it being wrong. However, this resulted in mentors treating the student teachers like pupils who leave homework at home, although in all instances when challenged by mentors, the men produced planning instantly, as explained by Chris and John:

> 'There were a few times when my mentor has asked me for some planning, expecting I won't have it and I have' (Chris, Interview 3).
>
> 'And I could just sort of see that expectation of, 'Oh, he is not going to have them. And as I was producing them, sort of: 'Oh, right, OK" (John, Interview 3).

4.9 Adapting and adopting: the development of teacher identity

The final theoretical construct presented in this chapter relates to 'adapting and adopting'. It comprises two themes relating to the projection of English teacher identity that emerge from the data: first, 'role of humour', which examines the men's experience in relation to the use of humour in class, which is often associated with a male teaching style. The second theme is 'English is gay', which presents the men's reflections upon their experience of English being equated with imputed homosexuality in the eyes of the pupils whom they teach.

The participants described having seen male teachers using humour as an exemplification of the learning environment that they wanted to achieve in the classroom. The effectiveness of male teachers utilising humour in order to establish and reinforce authority and to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere was noted by Chris during classroom observation in the

early weeks of professional placement one. In a lower set Year 9 class he had been asked to sit with a group of pupils whom the English teacher had referred to as 'head cases' (Chris, Interview 2). However, he had found himself joining in with the pupils' humour, allowing their joking to subside before bringing the pupils back to their work. Ben too reported having observed a male teacher using exchanges that were characterised by 'a real sense of humour and familiarity, but keeping a clear focus on the task at hand and his expectations of his pupils' (Ben, Interview 1). Such an approach illustrates the way in which a teacher can tolerate and allow classroom humour, in the confidence that it will ebb away and be followed by an amenable mood. Chris (Interview 2) referred to the character of Mr. Farthing, the English teacher in Barry Hines' novel 'A Kestrel for a Knave', in order to represent the type of classroom relationship he was seeking:

> '"Perhaps Anderson can tell us something about himself that is interesting. A really interesting fact."
>
> 'There was a massive "Wooo!" from the rest of the class. Mr Farthing grinned and rode it; then raised his hands to control it.
>
> '"Quietly now. Quietly."
>
> 'The class quietened, still grinning' (Hines, 1968).

Laughing with the pupils was seen by the men as an indicator both of their enjoying the teaching and of feeling comfortable in the classroom. When used to effect, the use of classroom humour can serve to reinforce the male teacher persona, but it can also act as a way of asserting masculinity and sexuality with male pupils:

'... humour can be an unofficial resource through which boys learn about the culture of manhood and test out these values among one another. Thus we argue that humour is a technique that can be seen to produce differential positions of domination and subordination within the peer group' (Nayak and Kehily, 2001: 110).

The use of classroom humour can serve as an outward manifestation of the pupils' awareness and acceptance of a teacher's gender and authority. In such a way, it can be used to establish and reinforce the warmth of the relationship but also to define the distance between teacher and pupils by emphasising the teacher-pupil hegemony. Steve (Interview 2) suggested that, from his experience and observations, the adoption of a more light-hearted and humorous approach was quite common amongst male teachers:

'I think that, in general, more male teachers use humour in their lessons than female teachers' (Steve, Interview 2).

However, not everything in teachers' use of humour with pupils was benign; at times, some of the participants did experience their use of humour backfiring, with the result that this actually threatened their understanding of how to be a teacher. One such instance, exemplifying the potential danger in using humour was the way in which Chris was clearly shocked when pupils perceived him as 'cocky' because his humour was too sarcastic. When this was pointed out to him by his mentor and he came to an understanding that, beneath the seemingly innocuous banter, his pupils were more sensitive he made an effort to change:

> '[I changed] from being someone who is light-hearted and always looking to crack a joke to being ultra-professional, much more distant and official, which I haven't particularly enjoyed. I have struggled with that side of things' (Chris, Interview 3).

Chris' struggle to acquire a more professional demeanour involved adapting his natural sense of humour; the resulting perceived lack of humour was, in his view, an indicator of failure. The importance of a careful use of classroom humour is considered by Nayak and Kehily (2001)

> 'Our research indicates that it is important for teachers to develop an understanding of the powerful role that humour and sexuality play in how boys learn to fashion and negotiate their masculinities within the informal peer group situation in school' (p. 120).

The realisation that gender played a significant role in their teaching life resulted in the men having a dialogue with their masculinity and at times with their sexuality. They themselves had previously been successful at English at school where, in some cases, they were in the more masculinised context of a single-sex school (Jonathan, John) and later at university, where they had studied English in a predominantly female context. Indeed, the nine men had enjoyed the privileges of being heterosexual men in a predominantly female subject area, which included being perceived as caring and sensitive men:

> 'I am quite proud of the fact that I'm seen by women as a "new man" and that I've got a sensitive side, reading literature' (Jonathan, Interview 1).

Thus, all the participants were intent upon presenting the subject of English as a worthwhile masculine academic pursuit. In part, this was a defensive act designed to protect their own heterosexual credentials, but it was undertaken principally in order to present the boys with alternative versions of masculinity.

Keith spoke about his growing awareness of the gender politics governing the different perceptions and expectations that pupils have of teachers, particularly the way that male teachers are treated or perceived differently on the basis of their gender. He raised questions about embodied masculinities and about male teachers 'doing women's work', which can also result in questions about their status and legitimacy as men:

> 'I think that often there's a stereotype of male teachers being gay in primary school or things like that. I don't know how these things are actually going to manifest themselves to me, but I certainly think it's quite a different thing to be a male teacher than a female teacher' (Keith, Interview 3).

Here, he seems to be suggesting that there may well be parallels between the sort of homophobia and stereotyping that male primary teachers are forced to confront and those that he will have to confront as a male English teacher. Such an overlap between the subject of English and homosexuality (Ellis, 2000: 212) is present in the data of this study, with a clear linkage between the 'accusations' and the subject of English where they take place. The data reveal that 'surveillance' does indeed occur in English lessons, with the issue of the participants being 'accused' of being gay by pupils soon emerging: the male student teachers finding themselves deflecting pupils' assumptions and defending their love of literature:

'Just because we like poetry doesn't mean we're gay' (Ian, Interview 2).

Their sexuality under question, being publicly accused of being gay was a new and difficult experience for the men, which forced them into repositioning and redefining their masculinity both privately and publicly. The participants all faced some kind of comment or question about their sexuality, with pupils often voicing an assumption that a homosexual teacher was teaching them English, simply because they were operating in a predominantly female world that had taken away their assumed heterosexuality. For some of the men (John, Ian, Jonathan, Peter) the experience of bearing the brunt of insults with regard to their sexuality and the subject of English was something that they themselves had previously encountered as pupils whilst at school. However, in the years since then, they had tended to forget the vehemence or conviction of such comments. The men saw themselves as important role models with a major part to play in recontextualising the subject of English for their male pupils. The English classroom was felt by the male student teachers to be a place where teenage sexualities were often explored through humour based on homophobia. Martino suggests that male teachers are monitored for signs or indicators of being gay:

> '... what is highlighted here is how pupils police male teachers through heterosexist and homophobic practices of surveillance' (Martino, 2001: 86).

Keith was disturbed to have been insulted by a group of boys who described him as 'obviously gay' (Keith, Interview 2), although he did not feel particularly threatened by this as his heterosexual credentials were already in place; his pupils had previously asked him

questions about his marital status and he had told them he was married with children. Keith believed their interest in his atypical choice of career was based on the predominance of female English teachers:

> 'I did not elaborate any further but they obviously wanted to know what this man is doing teaching English' (Keith, Interview 2).

However, as identified by Miller (1970), for many adolescent boys, homosexuality was concerned with the subject of English rather than about sex. For John, such gendered assumptions about English as both a pedagogical and learning domain forced him to re-examine and reflect upon his own experiences of being a teenage boy studying English at school, highlighting the stigma attached to English because of its perceived focus on expressing emotion and studying poetry. This led him to discuss a particular incident involving a task where pupils had been required to select a poem and read it aloud to the class. Upon finishing his presentation, he remembered that 'a couple of the lads just pissed themselves laughing' (John, Interview 1). The incident is pertinent because it reveals a particular awareness of being placed under the homophobic surveillance of other schoolboys, as a consequence of choosing to engage in what was considered to be a transgression of normative masculinity.

Chris was the first man in the study to raise the issue of how his gender was having an effect on the male pupils in the classes, who had become more involved in speaking and listening work, such as whole class discussion:

'They feel more at ease talking about certain things when it's a man steering the discussion. You can see that' (Chris, Interview 2).

His experienced female mentor had also pointed this out to him. Jonathan believed that many pupils like having a male teacher, 'the lads especially' and 'loved it' when he did something more boy-friendly in English (Jonathan, Interview 3). He gave an example of such 'masculine' teaching in how he reacted to being told that the Year 7 boys were much weaker than the girls:

> 'I deliberately did stuff on fantasy fiction: video games; sci-fi; Dungeons and Dragons and all that. I am not saying the girls don't like it but it's definitely more of a boy thing.'
>
> (Jonathan, Interview 2)

However, not all of their interactions with boys were successful: Steve noticed that he had more 'cross words' with boys than with girls because he dealt with them differently, as he admitted, 'I don't always get it right' (Steve, Interview 3).

Chapter 5: Reflections

In this chapter, I present a summary of my study's contribution to new knowledge in relation to three areas, each separate and self-contained but at the same time interlinked: men and education, English within the secondary curriculum, and initial teacher education. To conclude, the implications of the study's findings and conclusions are outlined and presented as a series of recommendations, suggesting possible changes to current practice and potential areas of further research.

5.1 Becoming a secondary English teacher

A study of a small group of men training to become secondary English teachers has been important because its findings make contribute to new knowledge about the adaptations involved in becoming a teacher of English. From their own words I have uncovered ways of 'being' an English teacher adopted by male student teachers, which is found in their understandings of the interrelationship between being a man, the subject of English and becoming a teacher.

The study was designed to provide a discursive space within which a small group of men learning to become secondary English teachers might articulate the processes of socialisation, negotiation and adaptation involved in undertaking an initial teacher education programme. Analysis of the resulting interview data and contextual sources of knowledge has revealed a series of insights, located in emerging theoretical constructs and connected adaptations between the three interlinked areas of research interest. The overlap of these

three areas provokes a particular interest, the place at the social and intellectual heart of the study. It is through entering this figurative space that one can gain access to an understanding of the particular processes of adaptation and negotiation undertaken by the participants.

The study's research methodology, a case study using loosely ethnographic research methods, provided an opportunity to explore in depth the male student teachers' perceptions in regard to their experiences. Over time, relationships with the nine participants developed, and became founded on trust together with a shared interest in discovering the social realities involved in being a male English teacher. The study is located within the existing field of research into masculinities, and follows the advice of theorists who counsel against seeing the group 'men' as an essentialised, unified whole. Although this is a case study of one small group of men and, as such, looks for commonalities and areas of shared concern, it must be remembered that it is, at the same time, a study of nine individuals, each of whom has his own particular history, relationship with the subject of English and experience of adaptations and negotiations involved in successfully completing the initial teacher education programme. Consequently, the 'group' in question must not be seen as a single, fixed entity, rather they should be seen as individuals who each share a number of common factors, in terms of background or experience.

An aspect of the new knowledge that emerges from an analysis of the data relates to these hitherto successful students of English being perceived as 'problems' by mentors, who are

particularly critical of their planning and classroom management, judging them to be lazy and overly relaxed in their relationships with pupils. This is new knowledge, as it relates to a group of men who have been adjudged to be 'good at English', who have often never previously experienced difficulties in the subject and yet are suddenly considered 'problem cases' as they enter the secondary classroom. Having embarked upon a journey of teacher education, the study reveals that these male student teachers of English report experiencing difficulties in adapting to their new surroundings. The men are used to working in the feminised surroundings of the subject of English, as a member of a minority group involved in negotiating the challenges of a subject perceived as feminine. However, it seems to be that, although the negotiation of this gendered space can be successfully achieved by these men, it is when one adds a second gendered construct, in the form of teaching as a career that the men start to report experiencing difficulties.

For the men, a series of personal and professional challenges emerged in relation to their performance of particular roles: being a man, being part of the subject of English and being a teacher. However, reflecting the initial research shape of the study, the challenges also arose in combinations, as the three individual areas connected, overlapped and influenced each other. For instance, one area of overlap was in regard to the male English student teachers' adaptations that occurred upon entering the predominantly female profession of English teaching. A second interlinked area was the student teachers' negotiation and repositioning within the subject of English. A third area of change was the men's awareness of being a man when working with young people in an English classroom. Each of these

aspects involved the male English student teachers' identity and gender in relation to being a male teacher in a feminised profession (Miller, 1992, 1996) and within the predominantly female subject of English (Thomas, 1990, 1991).

The men's teacher socialisation process involved a number of further adaptations or negotiations in their masculinities, as well as in their personal and professional identities: changes in regard to relating to colleagues in a predominantly female profession; changes in regard to relating to the subject of English, and changes in regard to relating to pupils in the classroom. As such, this is a development of theories of constructed masculinities among men in predominantly female occupations (Bradley, 1993; Williams, 1993, 1995), particularly in teaching (Sargent, 2000).

5.2 Doing things differently: suggestions for further research

This small-scale case study has added areas of new knowledge to research into men in secondary English teaching. Based on the findings of my study, which was based in my own university education department, further research would be worthwhile in the form of a larger sample over several institutions, to see whether the findings are replicated. Such an expanded study could either take the form of one large sample investigating the social reality across several institutions, or alternatively a network of smaller scale studies each contributing to a growing body of research into men training to become secondary English teachers.

My study was particularly designed to capture the experiences of a small group of male student teachers during their PGCE programme. However, although this has been achieved, the study did not then follow the male student teachers beyond the end of the training programme and into their first teaching posts. Although I have maintained an informal contact with six of the nine men, which has been most valuable in ensuring that the men recognised the views presented as a valid representation of their experiences, this was not part of the formal research design. Such continued contact would have provided further small-scale longitudinal data, which would have yielded an additional dimension.

My study has been based on the perceptions of a small number of male student teachers and has deliberately captured only one set of voices. It did not seek to hear the voices of the female mentors in the placement schools; nor did it seek to understand why the minority male English teachers, especially the heads of department, seemed to absent themselves from training or mentoring responsibilities. A series of in-depth interviews with female mentors and male English teachers could be an area worthy of further investigation to provide a more rounded picture of the male student teachers' experience. Similarly, the voices of female student teachers of English have not been sought in this study. They would have much to offer, and their story is worthy of investigation in itself.

Research to capture the voices of pupils in secondary schools about their experience of being taught by male and female teachers in various subject areas would also be valuable. The role played by teachers' gender in pupils' attitudes to subject disciplines would develop the work

of Thomas (1990, 1991) and Miller (1992, 1996). This would also begin to have a direct impact upon the field of initial teacher education, as a number of programmes have now introduced pupil panels, contributing to the selection and recruitment of applicants to initial teacher education programmes. Indeed, the gender implications for training revealed by my study suggest that those involved in the application process should pay attention to gender issues. Decisions regarding application and selection need to acknowledge that male and female student teachers' experience will be different and gendered.

5.3 Doing different things: implications for changes to current practice

The themes and constructs emerging from my research have influenced the shape of professional relationships, both with student teachers and with school-based mentors. From the interviews, I was able to gain a perspective about the men's perceptions of their training needs in relation to the journey of becoming a male secondary English teacher and, more particularly, the processes of adaptation and negotiation involved in establishing and maintaining effective relationships with teachers and pupils. The study's findings and conclusions suggest that, in the training of English student teachers, closer attention must be paid to the gender both of the students and of their trainers.

My developing awareness of the male student teachers' discursive representations of their experiences informed the discussions that I had with colleagues and mentors at Powick Bridge University. Although the study itself focused on male student teachers of English, the lessons learnt were not relevant only to this small and specialised group. Indeed, in order to

better address the needs of all student teachers on initial teacher education courses within Powick Bridge University, there are a number of specific developments that have already been implemented. It is anticipated that, as a result of these, not only will the quality of the training programme be improved for male student teachers of English; some of the changes will also impact on female English student teachers and some on student teachers in other subjects, whether male or female.

One major development to practice that has already been implemented, given the study's three principal areas of focus: men, English and teaching, has been a move to ensure that gendered relationships between mentors and student teachers are both overt and explicit in English mentor training and development sessions. Although the participants in the study were on a one-year PGCE programme, the revised mentoring sessions are also utilised by the tutors, mentors and students on three-year undergraduate English programme. Furthermore, although not a specific age-phase focus for this study, primary and early years tutors have recognised the applicability of the study's findings to their own work and have adapted the resources and material for use in their own mentoring programmes.

Previously, the university's mentor training and development sessions had not specifically addressed the gender issues arising from initial teacher education programmes: in fact, for mentors and student teachers alike, gender issues were generally limited to issues relating to teaching male and female pupils and issues concerning pupil achievement. Mentor training and development materials have now been adapted to include resources and activities that

discuss and address gender issues. A recent development has been the introduction of online mentor training, allowing all mentors (and students) access to the full range of current mentoring materials. Within this online mentor training, accessed via the partnership website, video recordings of mentor meetings with both male and female student teachers has been set up, together with a commentary, additional annotations and a series of case studies.

Arising from my research, along with a number of university and school-based colleagues, I have been working in general professional studies sessions to provide male student teachers with a range of practical strategies in order to help them avoid becoming stereotyped by mentors and host teachers on school placement. The timing of these sessions has been immediately pre-placement, with a focus upon building effective relationships with colleagues. One particular area of focus has been awareness-raising for the students about to go out on placement around mentors' views in regard to male students' perceived overly relaxed classroom style, together with the need to ensure that an effective masculine way of projecting classroom control is addressed, so as to avoid potential accusations of 'ducking the issue'.

A number of the approaches arise from the data. For instance, both Martin and Peter suggested becoming involved in the life of the school early in the placement, in order to counter particular preconceptions based upon male student teacher stereotypes, especially that of being lazy. Several of the participants (John, Peter, Martin, Ben, Chris) suggested the

possibility of paired placements with another male English student teacher, which would then create opportunities for discussion of observed lessons, joint planning and team teaching. Such a pairing would offer an opportunity to observe another man relating and communicating with teachers and pupils at close quarters. Wherever possible, with schools prepared to take two student teachers in the department at the same time, this suggestion has been implemented, with a degree of success. However, as the majority of English departments will only accept one student teacher at any one time, the wider applicability of such a paired placement strategy does seem limited.

Based on my study's findings I have also discussed with colleagues a number of possible changes to future practice. Mentoring student and newly qualified teachers should not be seen as the sole preserve of female colleagues. Male English student teachers do need to observe a full range of effective teaching and learning styles, including those deployed successfully by other men. They need to see women and men teaching English skilfully. The implication of this is that male English teachers in schools need to take a more active role in the training of English student teachers, in order to support new entrants to the profession, rather than relying principally on female colleagues to carry out the support and guidance work involved in mentoring new teachers.

5.4 Endings

The genesis of this study had initially arisen out of early data emerging in relation to student teacher performance by grouping, which seemed to suggest that gender was the largest

signifier in relation to comparative student teacher attainment. In planning the structure of my thesis presentation, section 1.1 which details the conceptual development of the study was almost entitled 'Genesis'. Had that been the case, then surely this chapter would have been called 'Revelation'. Alas, there is to be no revelation in this chapter and so, instead, section 1.1 is simply entitled 'Beginnings' and this, the final section is called 'Endings'. In a way, though, that is no more satisfactory than the first suggestion, for although this represents the end of my study, the research continues, as does the work of training student teachers of English, both male and female.

The study contributes to research into the fields of men and masculinities, the subject of English and initial teacher education. However, as well as a contribution to these interlinked areas of research, it also stands as a record of the individual negotiations and adaptations that these individuals underwent during their training. The men offered their time, their commitment and their honesty in order to make an authentic representation of how they perceived their training journey. The thesis is now offered, in the hope that it will be seen as a helpful and timely study to these fields.

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