NCCA
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
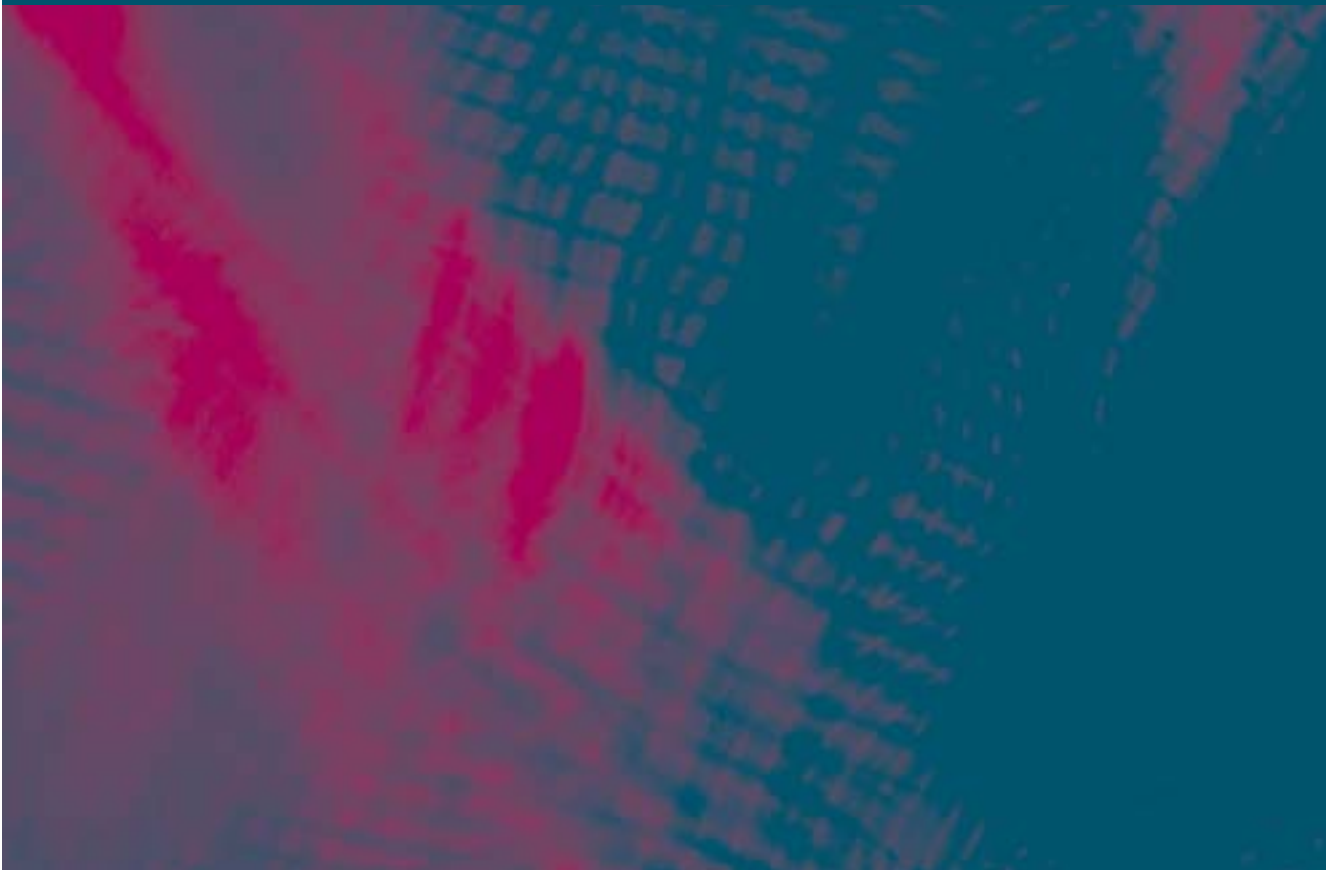An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta

Gender politics and *Exploring Masculinities* in Irish Education

Teachers, materials and the media

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C H A P T E R 1

Introduction

Introduction

1.1 WHY THIS REVIEW?

In October 2000, the Minister for Education and Science, Dr Michael Woods, announced in Dáil Éireann (Dáil Debates 14.10.2000) that he had asked the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to undertake a review of *Exploring Masculinities* (**EM**). **EM** is one of a number of optional Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) modules that may be offered to boys in single-sex schools during the Transition Year or senior cycle of post-primary schooling.

The Education Act 1998 provides that the NCCA will carry out, from time to time, curriculum reviews on behalf of the Minister. The impetus for the review arose from a number of parliamentary questions that had been tabled in Dáil Éireann during ministerial question time, as well as from media attention about selected aspects of **EM**, mainly in the print media, since September 2000.

The terms of reference for the NCCA review were broad, and included research on materials, teachers, parents, schools, principals, etc. In July 2001, the NCCA accepted two tenders for sections of the review; one from Professor Máirtín Mac an Ghaill, Department of Education, University of Newcastle; and one from Dr Paul F Conway and Dr Joan Hanafin, Education Department, University College, Cork.★

★   All three authors contributed equally to this report.

These tenders proposed to do the following:

- To carry out research on aspects of EM in the international context.

- To undertake a content analysis of the public debate on the *Exploring Masculinities* programme, providing a narrative summary of the public context.

- To carry out a study of teachers' and principals' views of implementing the *Exploring Masculinities* programme within the context of the public debate.

Following discussion between the researchers and the NCCA, it was agreed that the researchers would collaborate to provide one report. This report supports the following elements of the NCCA review: an international comparative analysis of **EM** materials, and a study of teachers' views of implementing **EM** within the context of the public debate. It is important to note at the outset that our section of the review did not encompass a focus on parents or students. We had available to us, however, the published Executive Summary of the Limerick Evaluation (Gleeson, 1999), and the unpublished Limerick Evaluation (Gleeson, Conboy, and Walsh, 1999) with case studies of schools' and students' experiences of **EM**. Together with the written submissions, and meetings with interested individuals and organisations at the consultative forums hosted by the executive of the NCCA, the Limerick Evaluation provided us with valuable contextual insights into **EM**.

The primary focus in our report, however, is the international comparative contexts and teachers' reports of **EM** within the context of the media attention to **EM**. We first provide a brief chronology of **EM**'s development since 1995.

Chronology

EM was developed between 1995 and 1997 by the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI). The **EM** Writing Group consisted of a senior psychologist from the DES as project director, Ms. Maureen Bohan, a project coordinator, Mr. Peadar King, and seven experienced second-level teachers from seven different single-sex boys' schools. This Writing Group developed and piloted materials over a two-year period (Phase I, 1995-1997). Twenty additional schools, mainly diocesan seminaries and Christian Brothers' and Patrician Brothers' secondary schools, were enlisted for further development work on **EM** during 1998-1999 (Phase II). The Limerick Evaluation was undertaken during this phase. This 183-page evaluation presented a comprehensive and very positive picture of **EM**, and many of our findings have already been the subject of discussion in the unpublished Limerick Evaluation.

EM was launched in September 2000 and introduced as part of an in-service day for transition year coordinators (Phase 3). In October 2000, the Minister of Education and Science announced that a review of **EM** would be undertaken by the NCCA (Phase 4).

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Two principles guided us in carrying out and writing up our research. First, we have used a wide variety of data sources and methods in order to provide systematic and evidence-based substantiation for our conclusions and recommendations (Lincoln and Guba, 1994). Second, we have located **EM** within its various contexts, thus providing perspective on the various issues around **EM** that have arisen at the classroom, school, community, and public levels.

The two main questions that guided the study on teachers and the public context were: 'What was the shape and temporal trajectory of the public debate?' and 'What are teachers' views of implementing the *Exploring Masculinities* programme within the context of the public debate?' A content analysis was undertaken to provide a narrative summary of the public debate. This was used in the context of interviews with teachers and principals. Written and oral data were collected through a census survey of boys' single-sex schools, interviews with key informants, face-to-face and telephone interviews with teachers and principals, and focus group research with teachers of **EM** in boys' single-sex schools. Subsequently, the data were transcribed, entered into a qualitative data computer software programme, and analysed using an interpretive methodology.

The following themes were addressed in the analysis: teachers' experiences of **EM**; most salient themes in the public debate; temporal map of the public debate and the implementation of the programme; teachers' views of the public debate, and the effects, if any, of the debate on past and future programme implementation; other constraints and affordances on implementation; and emergent themes.

This report is structured as follows. The remainder of this introductory chapter describes the research methodologies employed and the various contexts for **EM**. Chapter 2 is concerned with **EM** materials and with the current status of **EM** in schools. Chapter 3 provides a narrative summary of the public discourse; describes its shape and temporal trajectory; identifies issues arising in the public context; and situates **EM** within an international comparative context. Chapter 4 provides a summary of teachers' classroom

practices in the context of the school and community. The main issues arising from our research, conclusions, and recommendations are provided in the final chapter. A number of appendices are also included.

A diverse set of methods was employed in producing this report, encompassing reviews of literature, documentary analysis, narrative summary, international comparative analysis, surveys, and individual and group interviews. These various methods are detailed where the findings are presented.

In addition, the written and oral submissions to the NCCA consultative forums provided a contextual source of data. In March 2001, the NCCA invited written submissions from interested parties to be submitted directly to the NCCA by the end of June 2001 (see Appendix 1 for list of submissions). All submissions were posted on the NCCA website. Consultative forums were held on October 18th and 19th at the offices of the NCCA in Dublin, and on November 8th 2001 in Limerick, to allow for elaboration and clarification of the written submissions. We were invited by the NCCA to attend these consultative forums and we did so. The written submissions and oral hearings provided clarification and elaboration of selected elements of **EM** that were of concern to interested parties and relevant to aspects of our brief and, thus, were helpful in providing the fullest possible context for our research report.

1.3 CONTEXTS FOR *EXPLORING MASCULINITIES*

It is necessary to locate **EM** within a variety of nested and interwoven policy, legislative, curricular, school, and adolescence contexts in order to understand its rationale and the response to the

programme. A brief overview of some of these contexts is presented here.

Boys' schooling in Ireland

Co-educational schooling has expanded significantly in Western Europe since the late 1950s, and in Ireland since the 1970s, but by comparison with other countries, the Irish education system continues to be characterised by a strong emphasis on single-sex provision (Hannan et al., 1996, p. 2). According to the latest figures available from the Statistical Report (1999-2000) of the Department of Education and Science, of a total of 752 post-primary schools, 16% (n=120) are all-boys' schools. There are 353,860 students enrolled at second level. Most boys are in mixed-sex schools. Of the 170,311 boys in post-primary schools, 33% of boys (n=56,632) are in all-boys' schools and about two-thirds (n=113,679) are in mixed-sex schools. Girls are more likely than boys to be in single-sex schools: forty-four percent of girls (n=81,525) are in single-sex schools and 56% (n=102,024) in mixed schools (Department of Education and Science, 2002).

Table 1.1 Sex of students in mixed and single-sex schools (1999-2000)

Sex of students in mixed and single-sex schools	%	Number of students
Boys in single-sex schools	16%	56,632
Girls in single-sex schools	23%	81,525
Boys in mixed-sex schools	32%	113,679
Girls in mixed-sex schools	29%	102,024
Total	**100%**	**353,860**

Findings from international studies on boys are considered in detail in Chapter 3, and we outline here some findings from Irish studies that have informed the policy context. Many empirical research studies over the last twenty years have attended to the experiences of female and male students in single-sex and co-educational settings, and have generated research findings that have informed policy and practice (Hannan, et al., 1983; Hannan and Boyle, 1987; Hannan and Shortall, 1991; Hanafin and Ní Chárthaigh, 1993; Hannan, et al., 1994; Smyth, 1998; Lynch and Lodge 1999a, 2002). As **EM** is intended for boys in single-sex schools, we highlight here some research findings about boys in single-sex schools.

Research on patterns of curricular provision and subject take-up indicate that boys in single-sex schools are offered a narrower range of subjects than is the case in girls' or mixed-sex schools. Specifically, boys are much less likely than girls to be offered subjects such as music and home economics, and much less likely than girls, or than boys in mixed-sex schools, to be offered social, personal, and health education programmes (Hannan, et al., 1983; Lynch, 1989; Hannan, et al., 1994; Smyth,1998). Concern about the 'narrow instrumental orientation' of boys' schooling was expressed as early as 1983 with the publication of the influential Schooling and Sex Roles: Sex Differences in Subject Provision and Student Choice in Irish Post-Primary Schools. Many research findings also suggest positive educational outcomes for boys in mixed-sex schools, particularly in terms of self-concept and stress levels (Hannan et al., 1994).

The hidden curriculum of schooling differs for boys and girls in mixed and single-sex schools (Lynch, 1989). Salient research findings over the last 20 years from studies on the social climate of schools, and students' attitudes, suggest that boys in single-sex schools

- pay little attention to issues of gender equality and hold more gender-stereotyped views than students in other school types (Hannan, et al., 1983; Lynch and Lodge, 1999a)

- express higher levels of prejudice towards Travellers and gay males (Lynch and Lodge, 2002, personal communication, Appendix 2)

- equate superior masculinity with various forms of physical prowess, sport, and strength; report a strong peer code about height, body size, and sporting prowess; with boys who were small for their age, of thin build, or overweight being negatively sanctioned by their peers through jokes, teasing and bullying (Lynch and Lodge, 1999a).

Rationales for the introduction of programmes such as **EM** then may be seen in the light of these research findings. At least two guiding rationales were presented for the development and introduction of **EM**: first, the absence of opportunities for boys in single-sex schools to reflect on issues of gender; and second, the relatively low provision of SPHE in boys' schools. **EM** was seen to meet both of these needs.

Gender policy context

Policy on gender and schooling has been informed by research findings (Hannan, et al, 1983; Lynch, 1989; Hannan, et al, 1994). For example, in their national study of co-education, Hannan, Smyth et al. (1996, pp. 205-6) recommended that:

> government policy should be more proactive in encouraging gender equity within schools, not only in relation to subject performance and take-up, but also in relation to the social

development of students. Schools, both co-educational and single-sex, should develop their own policies to promote gender equity; a broad view of gender equity should be adopted with policies applying not only to girls in single-sex schools and co-educational schools, but also to boys in single-sex schools.

Gender education background in the 1980s and 1990s

During the eighties and nineties the DES developed over a dozen gender projects for both primary and post-primary schools. At second level, the emphasis in these projects was on addressing sex-stereotyping, and the main target audience was girls. These DES interventions formed part of a wide-scale initiative by the DES, teacher education departments, and teacher unions to provide equal opportunities for girls (Hanafin, 1998). The EC-funded TENET project typifies this multi-pronged approach to addressing gender issues in education. However, a criticism of these efforts was that they were exclusively focused on girls at second level. In this context, the Limerick Evaluation notes (Ch. 5, p. 40) that the **EM** project director explained that the 'genesis of the **EM** programme could be traced back to FUTURES, a programme which was developed during the late eighties to challenge sex-stereotyping in relation to career choice'. The FUTURES programme was intended for girls in both single-sex and co-education settings.

Questions were raised both at that time, and subsequently, as to why gender issues were not being addressed in boys' single-sex schools. Within this context, the Department of Education (DES) and the ASTI organised a series of workshops for teachers in boys' schools in 1993/94, however, these had to be opened up to teachers from other

schools due to lack of interest from boys' schools. Thus, in 1994, Minister for Education, Niamh Breathnach, according to the **EM** project director, decided that a gender project be developed for single-sex boys schools by the gender equality unit in DES. Development work on this project was undertaken between 1995 and 1997 involving a group of seven teachers (henceforth referred to as 'the writing group'), led initially by the project director and later by a project coordinator hired on a contract basis by the DES, specifically to work on this gender intervention project for boys' schools. At this point, the project was referred to as the gender project for boys' schools.

The rationale proposed by the Department of Education and Science as the immediate context for Exploring Masculinities was the absence of a gender equality programme in boys' schools. Since the mid-1980s, gender equality projects had been developed for use in single-sex girls' schools (e.g. Futures, TENET) and in mixed-sex schools (e.g. Balance: Who cares?). As such, it was seen that girls in single-sex schools and boys and girls in co-educational schools had opportunities to reflect on issues of gender equality, whereas boys in single-sex schools did not. The need for a programme for boys also grew out of the perception that boys' single-sex schools were not meeting the broader social and personal developmental needs of adolescent boys. Indeed, Lynch and Lodge reported that, although teaching staff in some boys' schools were 'proactively involved in counteracting the hegemony of the "masculinity = strength" peer code, through educational and personal programmes,' these programmes 'did not appear to have altered the dominant peer group code to any significant degree' (1999a, p. 239). No data are available on the current provision of these programmes in girls' or in mixed-sex schools, nor about their effectiveness.

The gender policy context includes the Operational Programme for Human Resources, the Joint Oireachtas Committee Report on Women's Rights, the First and Second Commissions on the Status of Women, and the White Paper on Education Charting our Education Future. An analysis of these is available in O'Sullivan's (1999) article 'Gender equity as policy paradigm'. A measure to develop a gender equity curriculum intervention for boys in single-sex schools, approved by Ireland and the European Commission under the Council Regulations for the Structural funds, is described in the Operational Programme 1994–1999 for Human Resources Development, Ireland as follows:

> Development of a gender equity module within the transition year. A special focus of this action will be to create awareness of gender issues in single-sex boys' schools… The stages of development will include the preparation of classroom materials, piloting of the module, evaluation and revision of materials, printing and national dissemination of the module (Ireland, 1995, p.117).

Legislative context

The legislative context includes the Equal Status Act 2000, Employment Equality Act 1998, Education Act 1998, and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The Equal Status Act 2000 is an act to promote equality and to prohibit types of discrimination, harassment, and related behaviour in connection with the provision of services, property, and other opportunities to which the public has access. Nine grounds are covered by the equality legislation: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and Traveller community.

The Equality Authority, whose remit includes the promotion and defense of rights established under the Employment Equality Act 1998 and Equal Status Act 2000, is of the view that **EM** seeks to influence areas which are of concern to the Equality Authority, and 'are happy to note that the Programme addresses issues impacting on the various grounds currently covered by the equality legislation' (Equality Authority, 2001). The Equality Authority has indicated support for **EM** in pursuit of their objectives of 'realising equality outcomes in the workplace and in education and focusing on equality considerations across society.'

The recent equality legislation has considerable implications for schools and schooling, not least in terms of the historic focus on gender inequality rather than on other inequalities. Commentators, both supportive and critical of the programme, have noted and addressed different features of the programme. This may account, at least in part, for the confusion around what kind of programme it is. **EM** is assumed variously to be: a gender equality programme; a health education programme; a personal development programme; and it has also a broader equality focus, dealing as it does with issues of race, disability, sexual orientation, family, and so forth.

Curriculum Context

The curriculum context for **EM** includes the Transition Year, Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), and the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programmes. **EM** was developed for use in Transition Year and in the senior cycle of boys' single-sex schools, and we know from our survey data that it is mainly in use in Transition Year. The mission of the Transition Year programme is 'to promote the personal, social, educational, and vocational

development of the students, and to prepare them for their role as autonomous, participative, and responsible members of society' (Transition Year CSS brochure). Its curriculum is developed at school level in accordance with guidelines issued by the Department of Education and Science. The transition year programme aims to offer students a broad and balanced curriculum consisting of four 'layers':

- core subjects (Irish, English, mathematics)

- subject sampling (e.g. physics, drama, environmental studies, ICT, economics, Spanish)

- modules designed specifically for transition year (e.g. Family Awareness, Tourism Awareness, Mental Health Matters). It is within this modular layer that EM is located. And,

- calendar events (including work experience, community care, social outreach, visiting speakers, and field trips).

A list of modular programmes commonly found in transition year is available in Appendix 3. In addition to these modules, many resource materials are available and private companies or individuals may approach schools with a short programme. Such modules include: public access to law, 'Armed Eye' (a film production course), judo, first aid, dance/drama, personal grooming, and study techniques.

Some critics of **EM** have expressed reservations about the teaching and learning methodologies used in **EM**. These methodologies are not specific to **EM** but more widely used in transition year and in SPHE, as well as in other curricular areas such as: Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), English, Irish, and religious education. A key feature of the transition year programme is, 'the use of a wide

range of teaching and learning methodologies and situations...
Activities such as project work and group work enable students to
have a valid and worthwhile learning experience with emphasis on
developing study skills and self-directed learning.' Other transition
year approaches include: promoting intrinsic motivation, learning
how to relate well to other people, education for maturity, teamwork
skills, increased motivation, and independent learners. These lead to:
more informed choices, personal development, enhancing self-
esteem, activity-based learning, learning from experience, extending
learning beyond the classroom, and interdisciplinary learning.

Professional development for EM/transition year programme

A four-phase plan was developed for the dissemination of **EM**
materials, for initial and continuing professional development for
transition year coordinators, and for teachers of **EM** for the 2000-
2001 school year. The structure of the four-phase professional
development programme was to be as follows: one full-day of in-
service training in 10-12 venues for teachers of senior-cycle pupils
who wished to implement either **EM** or Balance: Who Cares? (a
gender equality programme for single-sex girls' and mixed-sex
schools) in their schools; ongoing support by the Transition Year
Curriculum Support Service (TYCSS) or by the **EM** programme
coordinator; and the development of a network of locally based
clusters of teachers of the **EM** programme supported by teachers
involved in the development of the programme. The first of the four
phases was intended to introduce either programme to all transition
year school coordinators as part of the annual school coordinators'
in-service training programme. Only a small proportion of the
planned dissemination and professional development programme

took place, as a result of a combination of industrial action by members of the ASTI, and the foot and mouth disease. Schools in the Mid-West, Midlands, North-West and Dublin participated in Phase I, while schools in the South and South-East had no introduction to the programme at all. None of the other planned professional development phases took place. All professional development programmes funded by the Department of Education and Science are evaluated by participants. Evaluations of this day's in-service suggest that participating transition year coordinators (all teachers) welcomed the programme, reporting that

- it is the 'school's task' to deal with these issues

- most of the issues in EM were already being dealt with on the transition year programme, and

- the transition year programme is an appropriate location for such a programme.

A report on Phase I of the in-service (King and Simmie, May 2001) suggests that participating transition year coordinators were generally unaware of media comments about **EM**, being 'either unaware or unimpressed by the objections raised about the Exploring Masculinities programme'.

Another context for **EM** was the identification, in the 1980s and early 1990s, of the need for increased provision of social and personal education in boys' schools in particular. Much of the **EM** resource pack may be thought of as an SPHE programme and that provides another context. SPHE is seen to provide students with: a 'unique opportunity to develop the skills and competencies to learn about themselves; to care for themselves and others; and to make informed

decisions about their health, personal lives, and social development. In this way students are enabled to participate as active and responsible adults in the personal and social dimensions of society, and to make responsible decisions which respect their dignity and that of others' (NCCA, 1996, p. 7).

Boys' academic achievement

The academic achievement of boys has been a focus of Irish and international research literatures and has also attracted considerable media and public interest. Two key questions need to be first asked in understanding boys' academic achievement: which boys? and, at what stages? The question 'which boys?' draws our attention to the fact that some boys have very high attainment levels, while the question 'at what stage?' draws attention to the changing patterns of boys' achievement relative to girls at different stages in the education system.

The phenomenon of "panic about boys' 'underachievement'" is one which transcends national boundaries' (Epstein et al., 1998a, p. 6), with debates about boys' underachievement taking place in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark, Germany, and Japan (Epstein et al., 1998a, Head 1999, Jackson 1998, Lingard and Douglas 1999, Mahony 1998), as well as in Ireland (Hannan, et al., 1994).

In Ireland, boys' average academic attainment is lower than that of girls at junior and leaving certificate levels (Hannan, et al., 1994). The response in Ireland to (some) boys' underachievement relative to that of (some) girls has been more muted than elsewhere, leading O'Connor (1998, pp. 166-167) to remark that, in 'stark contrast to attempts to explain class differences in attainment', there has been a

failure to identify male underachievement as a problem requiring explanation. Unlike the UK, male underachievement in Irish schools is 'beginning to be conceptualised as social and skill deficit, thematised as unemployability, and textualised in terms of the human capital needs of a growing, high-tech economy (O'Sullivan, 1999, p. 326).

Many of the conditions that lead to a child being identified as having special educational needs are much more common among boys than girls, with boys making up as much as 80 percent of a particular population (Head, 1999). Boys are more likely than girls to present with behavioural problems, and studies of classroom interaction suggest that it is boys, rather than girls, who are the main focus of negative and managerial attention in classrooms (Drudy and Uí Chatháin, 1999).

1.4 NCCA REVIEW CONTEXT

The remit from the Department of Education and Science to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment presented two main components for the review:

- To evaluate the response to use and outcomes of the programme in schools, including, especially, the views of teachers, parents, and young persons participating in the programme.

- To evaluate the content and process of the programme, having regard to best practice in this and other countries, the implications of current relevant policy and legislation in this area, and the issues raised in the current public debate on the programme.

Four contexts were identified for review activity: one, the schools which implemented the programme, two, the teaching and learning materials that constitute the programme, three, the public and policy context within which the programme was implemented, and four, national and international comparative initiatives. We have identified above the parts of the review which our research report addresses.

C H A P T E R **2**

Exploring Masculinities: development, current status and materials

Exploring Masculinities: development, current status and materials

2.1 DEVELOPMENT OF EXPLORING MASCULINITIES

What is it?

EM is one of a number of optional Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) modules that may be offered to boys in single-sex schools during the transition year or senior cycle of post-primary schooling. It consists of a 420 page resource pack with teacher guidelines and student resource materials, and a forty minute videotape. The resource pack provides material on seven broad themes organised in units around key questions. Typically, the units – on communication skills, work, power, violence, sport, health, relationships, and sexuality, wrapping up, and role models – contain extracts from a wide range of sources in the public domain, including literary texts, newspaper articles, textbooks, current affairs commentaries, policy documents, and existing development education materials. The units may be undertaken in any order. The introductory unit, however, is meant to form a foundation for all or any of the other materials used. The introductory unit focuses on classroom communication skills and emphasises the development of a code of good practice (pp. 3-6) that will support the subsequent exploration of themes in the resource pack. This charter for learning, set within Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Young Person, encourages fairness, confidentiality, listening, honesty, and respect for human dignity.

Aims

The aims of **EM** are to

- explore different perceptions and experiences of masculinity

- promote understanding and respect for diversity

- promote equality among and between the sexes

- provide opportunities for males to develop enhanced interpersonal and social skills

- promote healthy lifestyles

- raise awareness of life choices, changing roles in society, work (paid and non-paid), relationships, health and sexuality, violence against women, men and children, and sport.

Rationale

The stated rationale (pp. vi–viii) for **EM** draws upon societal changes, legislative and policy developments, and empirical studies of the school experiences of Irish adolescent boys. It identifies significant societal and cultural change in Ireland, and socio-political changes in the context of the European Union, as necessitating opportunities for adolescents to cope with these changes in general and, more specifically, to cope with the impact of these changes on the roles of men and women in society. Allied to these overarching observations, several major empirical research studies, undertaken in Ireland since the early 1980s, identified particular social, personal, and health education needs for boys in single-sex schools. Finally, the rationale identifies key European and Irish legislation that provides a framework for the equality and anti-discrimination focus underpinning **EM**.

Project development

The materials were compiled and written by a writing group of seven practising teachers, with a coordinator and a project director. For the most part, the resource material is drawn from widely available curriculum resource material developed by organisations such as Amnesty International and Trócaire. A very high proportion of these are secondar-level resource materials, many of which are already in use in cognate areas such as RE and CSPE. Further, similar materials are widely used in other syllabuses, such as English. As such, the resource pack is consistent with many other curriculum materials currently available to second-level teachers, and reflects a contiguity with prior curriculum materials. In compiling the resource materials, the writing team drew upon an extensive range of reports, statistical data, and commentaries from Irish and international organisations. These include: UN, WHO, Refugee Council of London, European Union, GAA, Combat Poverty Agency, numerous government departments in Ireland, Cork Social and Health Education Project, Rape Crisis Centre, Employment Equality Agency, Health Research Board, Canteen Ireland, An Garda Síochána, Women's Aid, National Youth Council of Ireland, Focus Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute of Ireland, Pavee Point, the Irish Rugby Football Union, Physical Education Association of Ireland, and Radio Teilifís Éireann.

Pilot period

The first, or development phase, of **EM** took place between 1995 and 1997, and involved seven schools. In the second, or pilot, phase from 1997 to 1999, a further twenty-one schools were recruited, giving a total of twenty-eight voluntary secondary schools, of which eight were Christian Brothers' schools and eight were diocesan schools. A total of five years was spent developing and piloting **EM** before its launch in September 2000.

2.2 THE LIMERICK EVALUATION

The Limerick Evaluation was undertaken as an implementation study of **EM** in pilot schools. The evaluation team consisted of Dr Jim Gleeson, Patricia Conboy, and Aileen Walsh of the Department of Education and Professional Studies, University of Limerick. Case studies were undertaken from September to December of 1998. The evaluation was undertaken in two phases. The first phase functioned to orient the evaluation team; all schools using **EM** were contacted and general information and initial reactions were gathered. Subsequently, four case study schools were identified and the case studies were undertaken over a two-day visit by one of the team to each case study school. The team also met the writing group, the project director, and the project coordinator. In addition, the media commentary on the project provided a 'useful source of data' (Gleeson, 1999, p. 7). Other fieldwork was undertaken in focus group format with teachers at two meetings held in Lucan and Portlaoise. The case study schools represented distinctive contexts for understanding the implementation of **EM** in second-level schooling in Ireland: School B, a boarding school; School C, a city school; School T, a town school; and School D, a 'different' school. School D merited the pseudonym different as a team of teachers were teaching **EM** in this school, compared with the other three schools in which only one teacher was involved in **EM**. As Gleeson (1999) noted in the published Executive Summary, the full import of the evaluation cannot be appreciated without reading the text of the full report. It is with this caveat in mind that we draw upon the Limerick Evaluation at various points in our report. The findings from the Limerick Evaluation were summarised in the Executive Summary under the following headings: perceptions of the initiative; curriculum; school curricular factors; the pedagogy of the curriculum; school organisational factors; and the future.

The evaluators' findings, in the unpublished Limerick Evaluation, are laid out under a number of distinct headings: (i) reactions and responses to EM under five headings; (ii) main issues on the basis of an analysis of the broad general context under eleven headings; and (iii) overall conclusions under ten headings. Responses and reactions to **EM** are under the following headings in the penultimate chapter:

• Relevance of **EM**

• Materials

• Provision

• Rationale for involvement in **EM**

• Whole school approach.

Main issues arising in the context of the general context of **EM** are listed under the following headings in the penultimate chapter:

• How hospitable is the general context of Irish education for such an initiative?

• Education policy related issues

• Differing perceptions of the meaning and goals of the initiative

• Teacher isolation and the 'solo flight'

• School ethos and culture

• Pedagogical approaches

• Teacher–student relationships

• The limits of teacher competence

• The adoption of a materials-based approach

• The involvement of the community and parents

• The dissemination of the programme.

Overall conclusions are under the following headings in the final chapter of the evaluation report:

• Student empowerment

• **EM** as a developmental intervention in schools

• The development of the programme

• **EM**: Strategy and purpose

• Reaching students

• Pedagogical approaches

• Handling controversial issues

• The importance of the school setting

• Looking to the future

• Conclusion: Broad policy, strategies for future development, and materials.

A multi-level policy context

The Limerick Evaluation was particularly valuable to us in situating our research. First, it provided a broad overview of educational policy context in Ireland with a particular focus on: the dominance of a technical-rationalist approach to curriculum development (Gleeson, 2000, p. 26); the consensualist and essentialist nature of discourse in Irish education (Lynch, 1987); the anti-intellectual bias in Irish culture (Lee, 1989, p. 573); the evolution of equality and gender policy in Irish education; and the purposes, scope, and impact of curriculum changes in Irish second level schools. Second, it situates **EM** within the context of the history of pedagogical practices in Irish post-primary schools, drawing attention to the pervasiveness of transmission-oriented teaching (Callan, 1997; OECD, 1991) and its impact on teachers' and students' view of teaching, learning, and knowledge. Third, it positions **EM** as an Irish, gender-focused curriculum initiative in the context of evolving discourses on gender and masculinities internationally. Fourth, it locates the perceived need for developmental SPHE programmes, like **EM**, within the developmental tasks of adolescence as 'the distinguishing features of this transitional stage of life' (Gleeson, et al., 1999, p. 10). These tasks are identified as: developing a sense of personal identity, adjusting to sexual maturation, achieving independence from family and establishing peer relationships, and deciding on and preparing for work. Fifth, it draws our attention in its very first sentence to the significance of **EM** as 'a serious attempt to address certain fundamental men's issues in the context of Irish post-primary schooling' (Gleeson, et al., 1999, p. 5), and the origins of the focus on men's issues in the feminist movement. In tracing the ideological origins of **EM**, the evaluators note the distinctions between gender and sex, the preference in **EM** for a focus on masculinities plural

rather than masculinity singular, and the power of viewing gender and masculinities as social constructs (Gleeson, et al., 1999, pp. 5-6). Sixth, the evaluators put particular emphasis on the complexity and contingency of gender relations within evolving, but historically embedded, structures and practices encompassing both individuals and institutions, and interactions between them.

In summary, the Limerick Evaluation provides a coherent set of frameworks within which to interpret the context, significance, implementation, and possible future directions of **EM** at the system, school, and classroom levels. Similarly, we situate this review within the frames outlined in the Limerick Evaluation, namely the complexity of gender relations and the plurality of masculinities; the salience of identity in adolescence; the increasing emphasis on gender issues in Irish society, and the challenges young men face; relevant aspects of Irish educational policy; and the more immediate context of second-level schooling in Ireland.

Perhaps the most visible contribution of the Limerick evaluation was the identification of **EM** as a programme based on a fundamental premise that gender and masculinity are social constructs. This became a contentious issue in the media attention to **EM**. Regrettably, students' and teachers' positive opinions about **EM**, their suggestions for changes, and their understanding of the complexities involved in implementing **EM** at school level, received very little attention despite the publication of the executive summary of the evaluation. The publication of the full Limerick Evaluation would have been helpful. Given how comprehensively **EM** was evaluated, its timely publication would have made available a valuable resource to inform the public, school, and policy arenas.

2.3 CURRENT STATUS OF EXPLORING MASCULINITIES: TEACHER BACKGROUND, SCHOOL CONTEXT, AND TEACHERS' VIEWS OF EM

The school context in which **EM** is taught, teachers' impressions of **EM**, and the teaching of **EM** in the classroom, are critical in understanding **EM** in practice. We address the school context, background information on teachers, and their impressions of **EM** drawing primarily on results from our survey of teachers in all boys' single-sex schools, with and without transition year. We address classroom practice issues later in the report (Chapter 4), drawing on data from our teacher survey, telephone and face-to-face interviews with key informants, and interview and focus group research with teachers. Many of the claims we make here reiterate those made in the Limerick Evaluation. To the extent that our findings confirm or extend those in the Limerick Evaluation, we note these as we discuss the results of the teacher survey and focus group research.

Development of the teacher survey

We now turn to the development of the survey we undertook as part of our research. The survey was undertaken between late November 2001 and the end of January 2002, and addressed teachers' classroom practice and understanding of **EM** in the context of the public debate. Two questionnaires were developed: one for teachers in single-sex boys' schools that were teaching **EM** ('Questionnaire A'), and another for teachers and/or principals of schools in which **EM** is not being, or has not been, taught ('Questionnaire B'). Our purpose in creating two questionnaires was to elicit responses from teachers in single-sex boys' schools in which **EM** is or has been taught, and also those in which it has never been taught. We hoped to obtain as broad a spectrum of views as possible

from transition year and senior-cycle teachers in single-sex boys' schools.

Both questionnaires were developed based on our reading of the Limerick Evaluation, evidence from the educational literature on educational research and questionnaire design (Anderson, 1998; Jaeger, 1988; Mertens, 1998), curriculum development and educational change (Fullan, 1991, O'Connell Rust and Freidus, 2001; Sarason, 1993), and initial fieldwork with key personnel involved in the development of **EM**. A writing team member, the project director, project coordinator, some parents from one school using **EM**, and feedback on **EM** through the seventeen written submissions and nine oral submissions made to the NCCA consultative forums, all provided critical contextual knowledge. The seventeen written submissions about **EM** made to the NCCA, submitted by interested parties, were made available on the NCCA website, www.ncca.ie. Draft versions of the questionnaires were shared with a colleague who has extensive experience of social policy, curriculum change, and gender issues in Irish education, and some changes were made to each questionnaire. Both questionnaires contained Likert-scale items and open-ended questions (de Vaus, 1991). Each questionnaire provided space for teachers to elaborate in response to Likert-scale items for the purpose of understanding the teachers' reasoning that underpinned expressed views on **EM**.

Survey A: Questionnaire for teachers in schools in which EM has or is being taught

The seven-page questionnaire for teachers in schools in which **EM** has been, or is being, taught, included 26 questions on the following areas: size, location, and type of school; teaching experience and

qualifications; teachers' perceptions of the need for boys to have opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues in school; the extent and nature of **EM** teaching in school; students to whom **EM** is taught; teachers' impressions of each **EM** unit; the materials, and overall impression of **EM**; teachers' impressions of students' responses to each **EM** unit; the student materials (handouts and video); overall response to **EM**; **EM**-related professional development experiences; perceived need for, and nature of, professional development; mechanisms for parental involvement in the context of **EM**; and impressions of the public debate and its influence on teachers' own views and teaching of **EM**.

Survey B: Questionnaire for teachers in schools in which EM has never been taught

The shorter two-page questionnaire for teachers or principals in schools in which **EM** has never been taught, included 6 questions on the following areas: teachers' perceptions of the need for boys to have opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues in school; knowledge of **EM**; reasons why **EM** has not been taught; and impressions of the public debate on **EM**.

Survey administration

The two surveys were mailed to two groups of single-sex boys' schools: those with a transition year programme, and those with no transition year programme. All mailings were undertaken by the NCCA. Postal addresses for schools in both mailings were provided by the Transition Year Support Service.

Mailing to all single-sex boys' schools with a transition year programme

The final version of the survey was sent to all single-sex boys' schools with a transition year programme at the end of November 2001, with a request that completed surveys be returned to the researchers by December 14th, 2001, in the stamped addressed envelope (see Appendix 4 for copies of letters and questionnaires sent to schools). The initial mailing to schools was addressed to the transition year coordinator and contained Survey A and Survey B. Transition year coordinators were asked to pass on the 'Yes' survey to the teacher of **EM**, or to complete the 'No' survey if **EM** was not being taught. In response to the slow return rate, a reminder letter, addressed to school principals, was sent to the same group of single-sex boys' schools with a transition year programme in early January 2002.

Mailing to all single-sex boys' schools with no transition year programme

The final version of the survey was sent to all single-sex boys' schools with no transition year programme in January 2002 with a request that completed surveys be returned to the researchers by February 8th, 2002, in the stamped addressed envelope (see Appendix 4 for copies of letters and questionnaires sent to schools). The mailing to schools was addressed to school principals and contained Survey A and Survey B. Principals were asked to pass on the 'Yes' survey to the teacher of **EM** or to complete the 'No' survey if **EM** was not being taught.

In order to improve the response rate to the survey from transition year and non-transition year schools, an advertisement was placed in

the February 2002 issue of ASTIR, the monthly newsletter of the ASTI. The numbers of questionnaires returned according to whether schools did or did not teach **EM** is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Response to survey by schools' Transition Year designation

	YES	NO	Totals
Respondents in TY schools	15	10	25
Respondents in non–TY schools	1	8	9
Total	**16**	**18**	**34**

The following sections report the results of the two questionnaires under the following headings: perceptions of the need for boys to have opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues in school; school context; programme content; teachers' impressions of **EM** units and materials; teachers' impressions of students' response to **EM**; professional development; programme rationale; parents; and the public debate.

All 120 boys' single-sex schools were surveyed. Questionnaires were returned from 32 schools, giving a response rate of 27%. This response rate, while low, is consistent with a recent survey of post–primary schools (Sugrue, et al., 2001). The authors of that report speculated that the low response rate at post–primary level, compared with primary level, was due to recent industrial action.

According to our survey data, **EM** is being or has been taught in fourteen schools. The figure of sixteen in the 'Yes' column total reflects the return of three 'Yes' surveys from one school. We report the results of the survey in three parts. First, we summarise all thirty-

four teachers' responses when asked whether there is a need for a programme that gives boys opportunities to talk about a broad range of personal, social, and health issues (Q. 20 on the Yes survey and Q. 3a on the No survey). Second, we summarise the results from the 'Yes' questionnaires and those from the 'No' surveys.

Teachers' perceptions of the need for boys to have opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues in school

Responding to the statement 'there is a need for a programme which gives boys opportunities to talk about a range of personal, social, and health issues', thirty-two of the thirty-four teachers (94%) who returned surveys either agreed or strongly agreed that boys need a programme which gives them opportunities to talk about a range of personal, social and health issues. Thus, we can say that teachers overwhelmingly agreed that there is a need for a programme that gives boys opportunities to talk about a range of personal, social, and health issues. We also note that whereas fifteen of sixteen teachers of **EM** strongly agreed (the other teacher 'agreed'), in schools that had not taught, or were not teaching **EM**, seven strongly agreed and nine agreed (Table 2.2). Thus, teachers in schools teaching **EM** appear more likely to strongly endorse the need for a programme to give boys opportunities to talk about personal, social, and health issues.

Table 2.2 Teachers' views of need for programme to give boys an opportunity to talk about personal, social, and health issues

	Strongly agree	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Totals
Teaching **EM**	15	1	0	0	16
Not teaching **EM**	7	9	1	1	18
Total	**22**	**10**	**1**	**1**	**34**

Comments made by teachers using EM

*Unfortunately, no we do not offer **EM**. We are acutely aware of the need for something for boys. We are delighted that **EM** was developed and being done. It has not been introduced in the school because we introduced LCA and a new RE programme and felt that was enough to be adding on.*

(School principal, phone interview, February 2002.)

Most of the teachers made comments in response to this item. Almost all of the comments relate to teachers' views about the need for boys to have such programmes, and the constraints on, or critical supports in, developing programmes in schools.

Boys, like everyone else, need to develop skills to deal with and express emotions.

What prompted me to get involved was a suicide in the school and the absolute conviction that boys are not equipped to deal with their own emotions/fears/uncertainties etc. (Please forgive the teacher's voice!).

Programmes like this are highly desirable. It might be even more

valuable for a co-ed environment as many of the topics explore gender matter. The whole area of health in secondary schools is very fragmented. We dropped our RSE programmes (It was part of Social Studies in Final Year) to make way for CSPE.

I work closely with the local psychiatric services… The local hospital admits an average of 6 suicide attempts each weekend and this is in a small county hospital. These admissions are life-style driven, sexual identity being a common factor.

A much needed programme but classes should be small, and should not be stand alone, but be incorporated within the SPHE programme, seen as an extension of it at the senior level.

Some teachers noted the constraints on implementing such programmes and speculated about their limited impact in general.

There is a need for this but boys don't talk that much in groups and all of my groups would not be less than twenty-five. We are only scratching the surface in school as really what influences young people is what happens outside school at home and in society in general.

At the beginning of each module, some boys will inevitably refuse to give an opinion or admit 'I'm no good at this sort of thing'. I have found it gratifying that many of those with the above opinion at the beginning of the module, become fluent and contribute regularly to discussions.

I strongly agree. This is a suitable programme for the above agenda but some modification is required.

In summary, while teachers who are, or were, teaching **EM** strongly endorsed the need for programmes that give boys opportunities to talk about personal, social, and health matters, they also raised questions about issues of boy-related school and classroom culture, and curriculum content implementation.

Teachers who were using, or had in the past, used **EM** were also asked to comment on the nature of content they might include in an SPHE programme for boys (Table 2.3). There is a degree of consensus among **EM** teachers about the nature of content in an SPHE programme for boys. Nevertheless, two teachers did not think they would include a unit on 'Men and power' and one teacher, in each instance, did not think they would include units on 'Violence' and 'Men and sport' respectively.

In conclusion, teachers, whether they had or had not taught **EM**, were in favour of programmes that give boys opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues. Summarising the teachers' responses, it appears that there is strong consensus regarding not only the need for, but also the nature of the content, in an SPHE programme for boys in Transition Year or senior cycle.

Table 2.3 Teachers' opinions as to whether they would include selected units if they were designing a programme for boys in the senior cycle of single-sex post-primary schools (n=16)

I would include	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
Communication skills	–	–	7	9	–
Men & working	–	–	8	8	–
Men & power	–	2	5	7	2
Relationships	–	–	4	11	1
Health	–	–	6	10	–
Sexuality	–	–	6	9	1
Violence	–	1	5	8	2
Men and sport	–	1	6	4	5
Role models	–	–	5	4	7

Comments made by teachers who had not used EM

In elaborating on their responses regarding the general need for programmes to provide opportunities for boys to discuss personal, social, and health issues, the majority of teachers who had not taught **EM** referred directly to it in their comments. Their comments shed some light on predominantly organisational, rather than ideological, factors. Among the issues they drew attention to were: the proliferation of transition year modules, the lack of time because of a crowded curriculum, and lack of knowledge about **EM**. Some specific comments included:

> *As stated above – newly appointed principal – and only introducing SPHE at first-year level next year.*

> *A wide range of programmes in circulation and not always possible to give each the time it deserves.*

> *I am familiar with the programme. At present I am involved in other areas of school life, so no time for this programme.*

> *Don't know anything about this programme.*

Two teachers commented on how they thought the programme might not be suitable for their school. One of the teachers who agreed that there was a need for a programme commented as follows:

> *Not familiar with the programme – would have serious concerns re. it versus our ethos.*

The one teacher who strongly disagreed with the need for personal, social, and health programmes for boys commented as follows:

> *With all the controversy surrounding it I don't see why we'd draw that upon ourselves.*

In summary, a diverse range of reasons was offered by a small group of teachers in terms of why **EM** had not been offered to date in their schools. The reasons for not adopting the programme to date revolve primarily around school organisational constraints, and lack of familiarity with **EM**, rather than ideological concerns.

School context

The majority of schools that responded to our survey were in either urban or town settings with only one of fourteen from a rural area (Table 2.4). There was one non-response to this question. The

majority of schools responding to our survey cater for between 250 and 500 students (Table 2.5). However, a small number of larger schools also responded. Our survey indicates that **EM** is being taught by both male and female teachers in almost equal numbers (Table 2.6). This finding is not what we expected, based on the Limerick Evaluation, which indicated that more female than male teachers were teaching **EM**.

Changes in the number of schools teaching EM

Based on our survey it appears that 2000/01 was the high watermark year for teaching **EM**. However, we note that at least fifteen schools were teaching **EM** during 1998/99 according to the Limerick Evaluation. Thus, our survey may not be picking up the full complement of schools that have taught **EM** over the last six years. Yet, while the figures for the number of schools teaching **EM** during the years 1996 to 2000 indicate a slow increase, we note the drop off from eleven in 2000/01 to seven during 2001/02. A small number of teachers commented that the adverse publicity directed toward **EM**, primarily in the newspapers, made themselves, some of their teaching colleagues, and some principals wary of continuing with the **EM** programme. Other factors, however, were also implicated in the drop off in teaching **EM** including: changes in the teaching responsibilities of teachers involved; and some of the content of **EM**, or similar content being addressed in other aspects of SPHE programmes in schools. Seven of the sixteen teachers gave no response to this question since they had not stopped teaching **EM** (Table 2.7).

Table 2.4 Type of school responding to teacher survey (n=14)
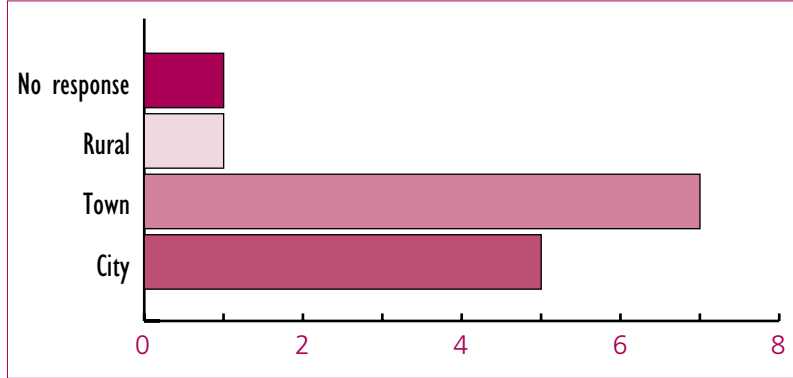
Table 2.5 Size of schools responding to survey (n=14)
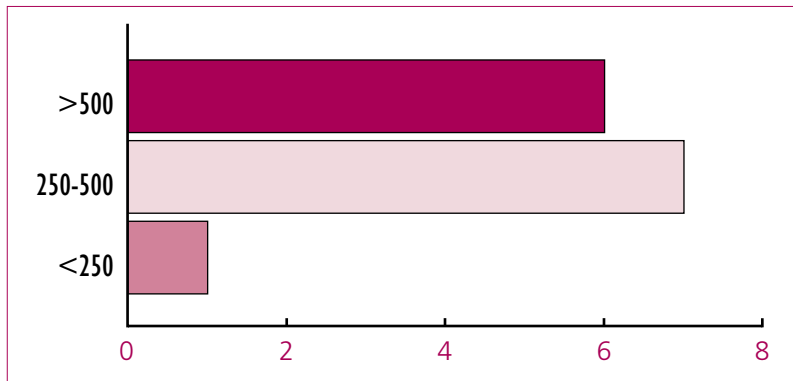
Table 2.6 Number of male and female teachers teaching EM (n=16)
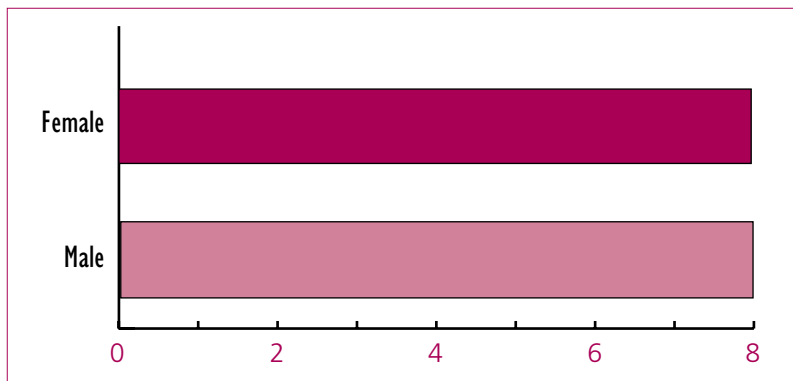
Table 2.7 Number of schools teaching EM each school year 1996-02 (n=14)
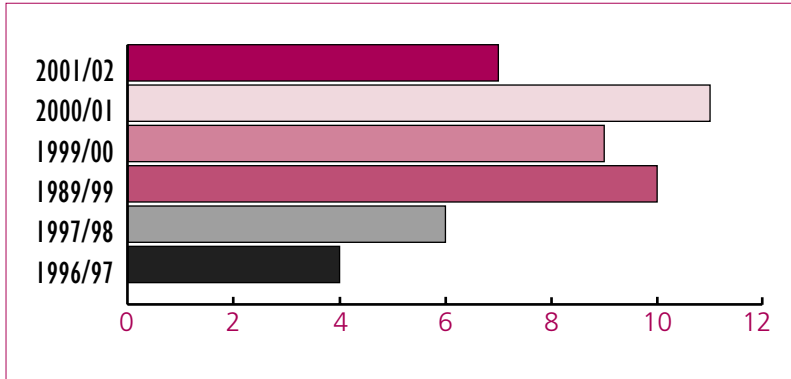
Table 2.8 Why schools stopped teaching Exploring Masculinities (n=16)
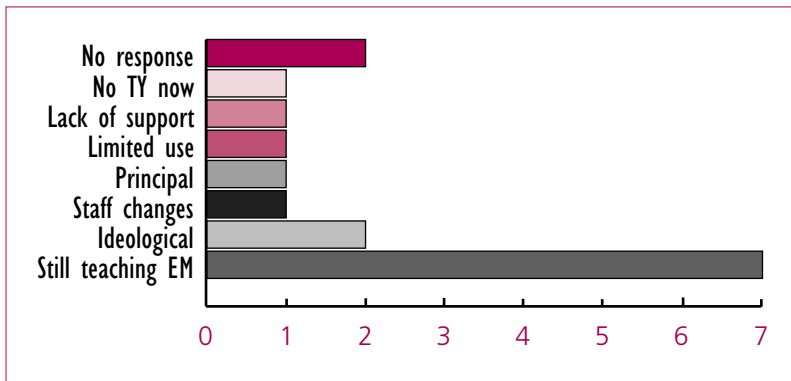
Table 2.9 To what group(s) of students is EM taught? (n=14)
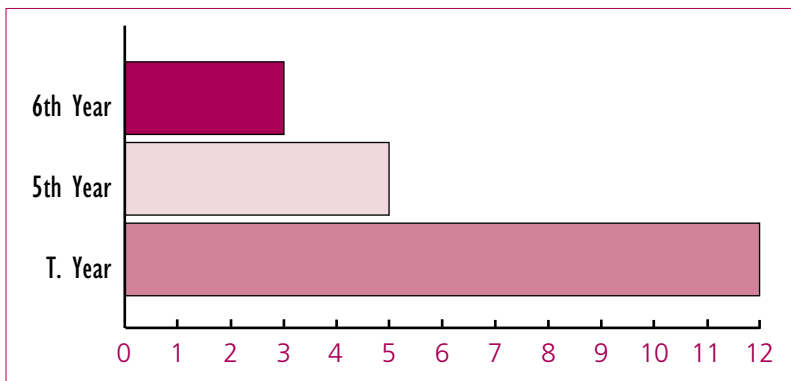
To what group(s) of students is *Exploring Masculinities* taught?

EM is taught mainly to transition year students (Table 2.9). However, a small number of schools include some of **EM** as part of the senior-cycle curriculum in either Religious Education or SPHE classes. Although we did not ask how many students had participated in **EM**, we can estimate that given the number of schools and classes in which EM has been used between 1996 and 2002, hundreds of students at least have participated in the programme.

Profile of EM teachers

The 16 **EM** teachers had a total of 295 years teaching experience in total, with an average of 18.5 years. The range of years teaching was from 3.5 to 30 years. The number of years teaching for sixteen teachers respectively were: 3.5, 4, 5, 8, 15, 15, 15, 15, 16, 20, 22, 27, 28, 30, 30, and 30 years. Thus, the typical **EM** teacher is very experienced, with twelve of the sixteen having fifteen or more years of classroom experience. All of the 16 respondents were either guidance and counselling teachers, or their teaching subjects were religion and/or humanities combinations. Many teachers had qualifications that they saw as supporting their work on **EM** (Table 2.10).

What experience, if any, do you have that helps you in teaching Exploring Masculinities? In response to this question, most of the teachers noted that they had a variety of relevant experience including: the teaching of religion, training in counselling and group facilitation, and work in providing relevant professional development for other teachers.

Over half of the teachers had been teaching **EM** for three or more

years (Table 2.11). One of the teachers indicated that his teaching experience amounted to ten years since he had been teaching his 'own version' of **EM** in the context of SPHE over that period.

In summary, what can we say about the profile of the typical **EM** teacher? Typically, this teacher has over fifteen years experience; is primarily an arts/humanities and/or religious education teacher; has undertaken, at his or her own initiative, additional qualifications in areas related to SPHE; and teaches **EM** as a small part of his/her overall teaching responsibility. A number of points are worthy of attention in relation to the profile of teachers teaching **EM**:

- Teacher competence

- Availability of SPHE in-service

- Diversity of teaching skills

- Relevance of skills and knowledge learned in other domains.

We address these later in the report.

Table 2.10 Responses to question: What qualifications, if any, do you hold that help you in teaching Exploring Masculinities? (n=16)
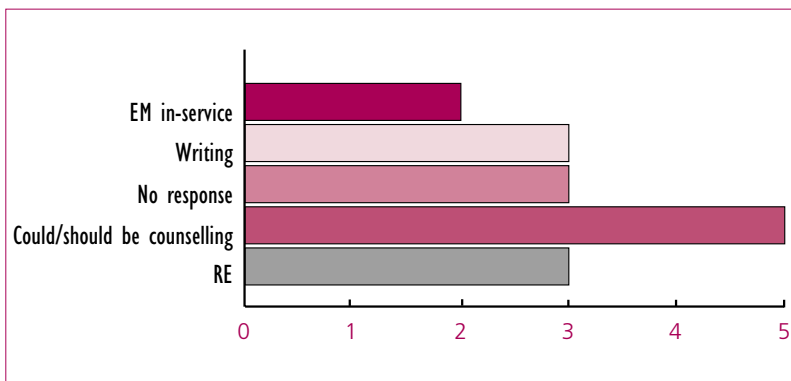
Table 2.11 Response to question: For how many years have you been teaching Exploring Masculinities? (n=16)
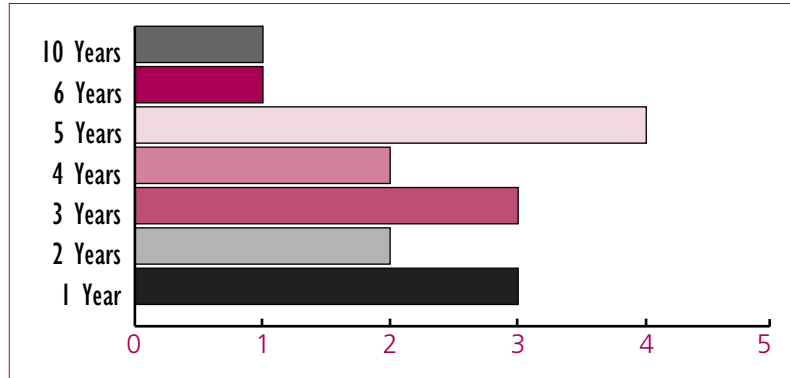
Table 2.12 Response to question: Approximately how many hours do students spend on the Exploring Masculinities programme over the course of one school year? (n=16)
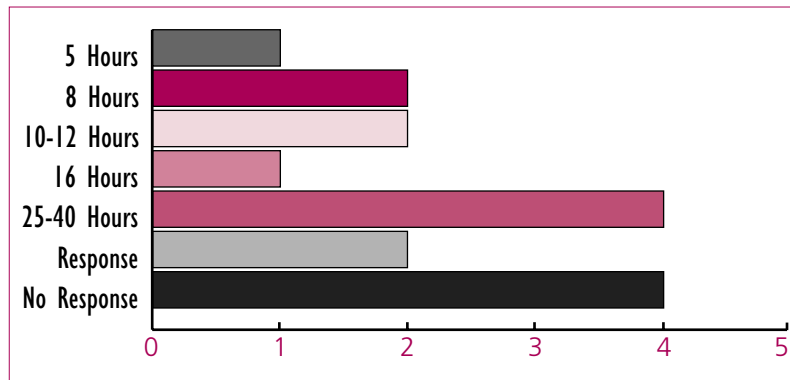
Teaching of EM in schools: timetabling, colleagues, and content focus

For how many lessons each week is Exploring Masculinities taught? The modal lesson block for **EM** is two lessons per week. Two teachers said that it is taught once per week and another said three times per week. In addition to indicating specific time allotment for **EM**, five teachers said that **EM** was used flexibly: one said they fitted it in when it suits; one taught it a bit but it was not timetabled; one said that it depends; and finally two said that they only used it as a resource in religious education or guidance and counseling.

How many hours do students spend on the Exploring Masculinities programme over the course of one school year? The time spent on **EM** varies considerably from five hours (one teacher) to eight hours (one hour per week over two months) to twenty-five hours, that is, one hour plus, each week of the school year (Table 2.12). **EM** represents only a small fraction of the transition year timetable. There appear to be two modal arrangements for the teaching of **EM**: 8-12 hours over a term or portion of a term (4 teachers), or a more prolonged **EM** experience over the entire school year, that is, 25-40 hours (4 teachers).

In nine of fourteen schools, the responding teacher was the only person who had taught or is teaching **EM** in that school. However, it also worth noting that there were two teachers in two schools who were teaching **EM**, and three in two others who had taught it, though the programme had been discontinued in one of these schools. A number of issues arise in relation to school organisational factors:

- 'Solo flight' as the dominant approach to **EM**.

- A network of teachers in a school teaching **EM** is the exception rather than the rule.

- Difficulty of integrating **EM** (and other SPHE programmes) into the school culture if only one teacher is involved.

EM content focus: what is taught?

All of the teachers using **EM** told us that they used it as a resource pack rather than a step-by-step syllabus or programme. The 'resource pack' role of **EM** is evident in Table 2.13, which illustrates how teachers, typically, use some, rather than all or none of the units.

Two-thirds of the respondents teach, or have taught, all or some of units one to five, but units six and seven have rarely been taught at all. A small minority of teachers has taught all of a small number of individual **EM** units.

Teachers' impressions of the units

Teachers were overwhelmingly 'positive' or 'very positive' about the units in **EM** (Table 2.14). Of the possible one hundred and twelve responses to the seven units by sixteen teachers, the following pattern emerges: seventy were either 'very positive' (23) or 'positive' (47), six were 'negative', one was 'very negative', and two wrote 'no opinion'. There were thirty-three non-responses, a factor that can be explained by non-use of some of the units by a number of teachers. Overall, of the responses, eighty-nine per cent were 'positive' or 'very positive', nine per cent were 'negative' or 'very negative', and two per cent expressed 'no opinion'.

In terms of specific units, approximately two-thirds of the teachers were either 'very positive' or 'positive' about units one to five. Units five and six were taught by a smaller number of teachers. Thus, overall, fewer teachers were positive about these units. However, these teachers did not have a negative impression of the units. Twelve did not respond to unit seven (Wrapping it up) and six did not respond to unit six (Men and sport). Some teachers had negative impressions of three units: Men and power – three teachers; Violence against women, men, and children – two teachers; and Men and sport – two teachers. Only one teacher had a 'very negative' impression of any unit: Men and Sport.

Table 2.13 Units of EM taught now or in the past (n=16)

| | *I teach/have taught* | | | |
	all	some	none	no response
Starting out Communication skills: (Unit 1)	4	7	–	5
Men working (Unit 2)	2	9	2	3
Men & power (Unit 3)	2	12	–	2
Relationships, health, and sexuality (Unit 4)	2	11	1	2
Violence against women, men and children (Unit 5)	2	11	1	2
Men and sport (Unit 6)	1	5	4	6
Wrapping it up: Role models (Unit 7)	0	1	5	10
Men working (Unit 2)	2	9	2	3
Men working (Unit 2)	2	9	2	3
Total	13	56	13	30

Table 2.14 Teachers' overall impression of units in the EM manual (n=16)

My overall impression of each of the following units is:						
	very positive	positive	negative	very negative	no opinion	no response
Starting out: Communication skills (Unit 1)	3	9	–	–	–	4
Men working (Unit 2)	4	7	–	–	1	4
Men & power (Unit 3)	4	7	3	–	–	2
Relationships, health, and sexuality (Unit 4)	5	8	–	–	–	3
Violence against women, men and children (Unit 5)	4	7	2	–	1	2
Men and sport (Unit 6)	2	6	1	1	–	6
Wrapping it up: role models (Unit 7)	1	3	–	–	–	12
Total	23	47	6	1	2	33

Table 2.15 Teachers' overall impression of EM (n=16)

	very positive	positive	negative	very negative	no opinion
My overall impression of Exploring Masculinities is	5	11	–	–	–

Table 2.16 Teachers' impressions of the materials (n=16)

My impression of the:	very positive	positive	negative	very negative	no opinion
MEM teachers' manual?	6	8	–	–	2
EM video?	3	8	–	–	4 + 1 'mixed'
Teaching methodologies suggested in EM	4	8	–	–	4
TOTALS	**13**	**24**	**–**	**–**	**10 + 1 'mixed'**

What did teachers say about these units? Seven of the teachers made comments about unit content. These comments, as might be expected from the results in the above table, were overwhelmingly positive, but nevertheless pointed to the need for modification and improvement of unit content. In addition, the comments below highlight again how **EM** is used as a resource pack, rather than a systematic programme of study followed by all teachers.

Dip in as resource pack…Units 3 and 5 too stereotypical. Teacher can dilute that in class discussions.

To tell you the truth I do not use the manual that much, as over the years going back to the early 1990s, I had gathered my own material and method. I've updated it as I go along with new examples, figures…etc.

With limited time, with two groups, of 16 weeks duration, I have to barely touch on some topics. At this stage, I think I have a balanced programme to teach.

I feel the programme is a resource not a test bank and it was never intended as such. It is extremely useful resource material for Transition Year, LCA classes. It's a 'dipping in' book and the wide range of back-up material is excellent and suitable for all levels.

Excellent collection of materials. I have used material from the above units (1-5) in senior-cycle Religious Education and Transition Year personal development. I find it is useful as a resource.

Teachers' overall impression of EM

While holding reservations about particular units or facets of the **EM**, all of the teachers were either 'positive' or 'very positive' in terms of their 'overall impression' of **EM**. This is an important finding, given some criticisms, and suggested modifications of specific aspects of **EM**'s content by the teachers, in that it draws attention to teachers' careful evaluation of **EM** and the considered use of curriculum materials informing their classroom practice. A number of issues arise out of teachers' impressions of individual units, their overall impression of **EM**, and their use of the materials:

- Mediation of **EM** at many levels: school, teacher, and student.

- **EM** as a programme or resource pack and attendant implications for thematic coherence around masculinities.

- Role of teacher's professional judgment.

Teachers' impressions of the EM materials

In terms of their overall impression of the materials, all teachers were positive about the resource pack, the video, and the teaching methodologies in **EM**. None of the teachers expressed overall negative impressions of the materials.

Their comments note that the materials were appropriate for students, however, they also indicated that there was room for modification, and also noted again how they supplement **EM** with other material (e.g. one teacher used video material other than what was provided with **EM**). One teacher noted that the 'methodologies were suspect in parts of the programme'. It is not clear why this teacher viewed the materials as suspect as nothing else was written on the questionnaire in this regard. This teacher had a positive impression of the materials overall.

Teacher Response: Very positive to all three items about materials.
Comment: I found that for an all-boys' school the approach was most effective. It struck the right note.

Teacher Response: Very positive; positive; and positive to the three itemise about materials.
Comment: Methodologies suspect in parts of programme.

Teacher Response: Very positive; positive; and positive to the three items about materials.
Comment: Very useful.

Teacher Response: Very positive; positive; and positive to the three items about materials
Comment: Vox pop videos date very quickly and we may need to produce a newer version in the future.

Teacher Response: Positive; positive; and positive to the three items about materials.
Comment: Some of the games/group work could be chaotic. I prefer to have my group sitting around tables and discussing issues with them. Also using other video material other than the EM.

Teacher Response: No response to Likert–scale items.

Comment: Excellent resource materials…well organised with good instructions…etc.

Even though only two teachers commented explicitly on the **EM** video, their comments both draw attention to how it might be supplemented and/or updated.

Summary

What have we learned about **EM** in terms of school context, teacher background, and teachers' evaluation of the units and the materials, and their overall impression of **EM**?

- Teachers, regardless of whether they teach **EM** or not, are overwhelmingly supportive of a programme that gives boys opportunities to talk about social, personal, and health issues.

- **EM** is mainly taught in schools with 250 students or more, and in urban and town schools rather than rural schools.

- **EM** is currently being taught in seven schools and has been taught in fourteen schools to date. However, this may not reflect the full complement of schools that are teaching or have taught **EM**.

- Typically, **EM** teachers have fifteen or more years experience and have additional qualifications relevant to teaching **EM**.

- **EM** is primarily taught in transition year as a stand–alone module, although a handful of schools also use the materials in 5th and/or 6th year in the context of religious education, SPHE, or guidance and counselling. In each instance, teachers use the **EM** manual

and video as resources, a 'dipping-in pack', rather than as a systematic course of study. Two lessons per week is the modal lesson arrangement for **EM**.

- Factors related to school organisation and availability of resources have resulted in a 'solo flight' modus operandi, with typically one teacher per school involved in **EM**.

- In schools where **EM** has been discontinued, the explanations offered by teachers suggest that school organisational constraints, rather than ideological concerns about **EM**, were central to it no longer being offered.

- Teachers report that student responses to **EM** are primarily positive, with some mixed responses and a small number of negative responses.

- Teachers view the units, the materials, and the overall **EM** programme in a positive light. Some teachers expressed negative views about specific aspects of some units. While there was an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the programme by teachers, a considerable number also recommended some specific modifications to the programme (e.g. update video, provide updated statistical data, more up-to-date role models, update cartoons, make material available on CD-ROM, provide website to support programme).

- Teachers' comments suggest that a range of classroom cultural factors is important in understanding the mediation of **EM** in practice.

In conclusion, many of the findings here reiterate those of the Limerick Evaluation. In particular, the following findings, which

concur with ours, were prominent in both the unpublished evaluation and the published Executive Summary:

- Teachers supported the **EM** initiative.

- Teachers suggested some modifications.

- School organisational and school cultural factors played an important role in the implementation of **EM**. We note in this regard the predominance of 'solo flights' by teachers.

2.4 *EXPLORING MASCULINITIES* MATERIALS

Introduction: evaluation design and methods

This section of the report focuses upon a close examination of the **EM** materials. We use two criteria: generic education criteria in the areas of social, personal, and health education (SPHE), and gender education criteria, as strategic evaluative devices (McKernan, 1991; Patton, 1997). The main purpose of this evaluation is to consider the compatibility between the teaching and learning materials and the programme aims and objectives. This compatibility is guided by issues of relevancy, coherency, and practical application.

We also believe that the evaluation of the programme has to acknowledge the wider cultural, curricular, and research contexts. The four salient aspects of the cultural context are as follows. First, there is a recognition of similar initiatives that have recently taken place in Canada, Norway, Australia, England, and the USA (Lesko, 2000; NSW Board of Studies, 1996; Gender Equity Taskforce, 1997; Frank and Davidson, 2002). Interviews with these international programme directors as well as a critical analysis of the programmes, enable the evaluation to draw upon international themes and practices. Second, the **EM** programme is linked to research literature on gender and on personal, social, and health education. This includes previous and existing personal and social education and gender initiatives that have been implemented in Ireland (for example, FUTURES, Department of Education, 1992; Balance: Who Cares?, Department of Education, 1997). Third, this evaluation is informed by our analysis of survey and interview data and the public debate. Finally, reference is made to the Limerick Evaluation.

Content analysis

Exploring Masculinities consists of 76 lessons that are divided into seven themes. They are:

- Starting out;

- Men working;

- Men and power;

- Relationships, health, and sexuality;

- Violence against women,

- Men and children;

- Sport, and wrapping it up.

A main aim of the report is to consider the extent to which the teaching and learning materials are relevant, coherent, practical, and consonant with the programme aims. As indicated above, significant emphasis is placed on evaluation criteria of the generic educative dimensions of the teaching and learning materials, alongside the criteria of gender and education. The programme's aims are:

- to explore different perceptions and experiences of masculinity

- to promote understanding and respect for diversity

- to promote equality among and between the sexes

- to provide opportunities for males to develop enhanced interpersonal and social skills

- to promote healthy lifestyles

- to raise awareness of: life choices; changing roles in society; work (paid and non-paid); relationships; health and sexuality; violence against women, men, and children; and sport.

We begin with a discussion about generic education criteria in the areas of SPHE and gender education before examining each theme in detail. This is a curriculum area that has tended to be marginalised in Irish schools, with its strong emphasis on mainstream academic subjects (Gleeson et al., 1999), particularly in boys' single-sex schools. Interviews with participating teachers, and evidence from the Limerick Evaluation, make clear that the accompanying under-development of SPHE materials for senior-cycle male students has ensured that **EM** is most welcomed by teachers. As we examined the materials over time, it became clear that the writing team had worked very hard and spent considerable time drawing together materials from diverse sources to form a rich, flexible, and practical set of resources. The exceptionally high quality of the materials is due to a number of factors. The teacher guidelines and student materials are very well designed and professionally produced. Particularly welcome is the very well-ordered style of the materials with headings and numbering system, making them easily negotiable for teachers and students. The teacher guidelines include: objectives of the lessons, suggested teaching methodologies, notes relating to the specific lessons, film and literature references, and information on how to use the material.

Rather than 're-inventing the wheel' – a common fault in curriculum development – the designers draw upon a wide range of existing materials. The student materials make extensive use of primary sources, which are usefully listed. There is a good balance between the use of international and national sources. The team of

writers, rightly, give preference to Irish resources to add to the pedagogical appeal and relevance of the subject matter to adolescent boys. The materials are also very well grounded in recent social, economic, and legislative changes in Ireland and Europe. In developing the programme, the designers have operated with a principle of diversity, ensuring broad representation of people and places. The suggested methodologies for the individual themes are generally very well thought out, although our research with teachers suggests that not all methodologies work equally well with all class groups. Methodologies are both pedagogically sophisticated and realistic for work in this area of the curriculum. For example, each session has exploratory questions that can be completed either as group discussions, small group exercises, or as written work. This provides a contemporary feel to the materials that has important pedagogical implications for students brought up on a high-tech culture, with its emphasis on 'the new'. Teachers are aware that, outside of the family, adolescent students' main alternative source of knowledge about moral issues is through access to high-tech media, which is powerfully disseminated through peer groups. Hence, curricular material must be seen by students to be relevant to their day-to day-lives. The Limerick Evaluation (Gleeson et al., 1999, p. 134) reported that the 'reactions of participating students were varied in that some expressed a preference for the more didactic style while others sought discussion around the various topics.' On balance, the **EM** programme very successfully combines student interests with a strong value-base, that sees social relationships, marked by understanding, fairness, and respect, as central to the meaning of life.

The **EM** programme makes use of a multimedia approach. Most significantly, a video that follows the themes as set out in the materials, has been specifically made for this project. It is intended

that the video be integrated into the class sessions, and guidelines are included in the teachers' notes on how the relevant sections may be used in conjunction with the student material. There is also additional material, consisting, for example, of an extensive list of references and an audiotape of poetry and literary extracts. **EM** makes some references to websites but this is an area that could be developed. Perhaps a main limitation of curriculum resources is an inevitable obsolescence and this is particularly true of the **EM** video, as indicated by our research with teachers. Our narrative of the public debate suggests that images from the video were highly influential in informing critical positions about **EM**.

Examining the themes

Theme one: starting out

This introductory theme consists of eight lessons. They are: learning in a safe environment; our code for learning; listen up; another fine mess you have got me into; being assertive is not being aggressive; the murder hunt; the freedom to be, and starting out. The lessons are designed to facilitate the building of trust and respect among the students taking part in the **EM** programme. The first task for the students is to establish a code of good practice for the whole class to explore masculinity. The participants are encouraged to make explicit their commitment to the programme in terms of expected behaviour towards their classmates and teacher. It is intended that the code will facilitate open discussion, establish the right to be heard, and allow reflection on their development as people. The professional experience of the writing team is evident in their acknowledgement that the challenge of any code is not so much to draw it up but to implement it. This will require teachers assessing the effectiveness of the code in the context of the programme's

different themes, and making any necessary adjustments. All the themes are located within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Young Person. For example, lesson one, begins with Article 12: 'As a child/young person, you have the right to have others listen to your opinion.' The themes are based upon a key pedagogical principle of the affective curriculum; that a balance and integration between thinking and feeling is important.

The following lessons explore a number of inter-related topics: how male students can be assertive without being aggressive; the advantages of group work; examining personal freedoms; and barriers to boys achieving their full potential. The lessons, which exhibit relevancy, coherency, and practical application, serve to address a key aim of **EM**, to provide opportunities for males to develop enhanced interpersonal and social skills.

There are a number of strengths in this introductory theme. The teacher guidelines and student materials are very thoroughly designed to meet the users' needs. There is a wide range of acknowledgements, indicating the broad range of existing sources on which the theme is developed. The introductory and concluding lessons provide internal coherency to the theme. Overall, the suggested methodology includes: teacher exposition; questioning; group discussion; one to one interaction; role play; video; group work; and observing class interaction. Generally, they are appropriate to achieving the objectives of the lessons. However, specific methods, such as role play and group observation (The Murder Game), may prove difficult for some students, depending upon a school's pedagogical culture. Teachers' classroom practice is addressed in Chapter 4. There is a wide use of media sources, including video and film, which will appeal to students.

A potential weakness of the introductory theme is the lack of clarity as to the intended curriculum status of the **EM** programme as a whole. At one level, it is not clear whether the materials constitute a general SPHE programme or a programme specifically designed to meet boys' current personal and social needs. Theme One follows a general curriculum approach to establishing an SPHE programme. It is student-centred and promotes active learning that provides a space for students to engage with a range of issues with moral implications, while at the same time developing their social and communication skills. The general 'SPHE feel' is reinforced by the fact that four out of the eight lessons in this section are adopted from, or influenced by, material from the Cork-based Social and Health Education Programme for senior-cycle students (Dorr and Lynch, 1990). At another level, it is not clear whether the materials constitute a syllabus or a loose collection of resources that are intended to be used within other curriculum initiatives, such as SPHE or religious education. An important pedagogical and ethical issue emerges here, that if teachers dip into the **EM** programme for individual themes/lessons, their students will not have full access to the introductory theme on establishing good practice. Participating schools need to address how this essential preparation for discussion of sensitive issues among students is provided by other SPHE programmes in their school. At the same time, in the introductory theme, there is little reference to gender, or more specifically, masculinity. This might suggest that **EM** is best characterised as an SPHE programme with a boy-centred approach. Hence, topics such as sport, work, and health can be used as starting points to enable male students to talk about personal and social issues, thus challenging the widely-held conception of their emotional illiteracy. However, a main disadvantage of this generalised SPHE approach is

that it does not make clear at the beginning of the programme, which claims to provide boys with the opportunity to explore different perceptions and experiences of masculinity, how this main area of inquiry is to be addressed. It may be that the title of this curricular initiative, Exploring Masculinities, which has proved rather controversial, distracts from the high-quality SPHE materials provided for boys by the programme.

Theme two: men working

EM sets out to help young males to reflect critically on the various constructions of masculinity, and thus be in a better position to develop their personal identities. This theme focuses upon what traditionally has been seen as a central aspect of masculine identity, that of work. The section consists of eleven lessons. They are: the world of work; driving to work – the golf game with a difference; the equality debate – where are we now?; so what are you going to be when you grow up?; widening the career horizon; my ideal job; work in the home; working in the voluntary sector; school work; me, father?; and drawing it all together. The range of methodologies, which includes teacher questioning, brainstorming, writing tasks, group activities, the Game of Golf, group discussions, completing worksheets, carrying out surveys, and making a collage, are appropriate to achieving the objectives of the lessons. The theme explores work in all its forms: paid, non-paid, voluntary, and non-traditional, and examines how the nature of work has changed between generations. Students are encouraged to explore various social justice issues. For example, the introductory lesson is located within human rights article 23: 'Everyone has a right to work and join a trade union.'

There are a number of strengths in Theme Two. The changing nature of working life is examined within the context of the experiences of diverse social groups, including women, gays/lesbians, disabled people, and Travellers. The teacher guidelines include references to the state-sponsored body, The Equality Authority, and non-governmental support organisations, as background information on how issues of equality have an impact upon these groups, at a time of recent social, economic, and legislative changes in Ireland. In turn, this provides an excellent background to setting up student material on the equality debate now taking place in the wider society. The **EM** materials are well grounded in male students' experiences, demonstrating practical application and relevancy. They capture ethical dilemmas facing young men at the beginning of the twenty-first century, providing a public space for students to reflect on past and future hopes and influences in preparing for adulthood and the world of work. The lessons address the programme's aims of raising awareness of life chances, and providing opportunities for males to develop enhanced interpersonal and social life skills.

The transition from school to work is seen as one of the major transitions in contemporary societies (Willis, 1977; Weis, 1991; Hannan and Ó'Riain, 1993; Hannan and Doyle, 2000). A recent main current in this literature has been the way in which young men are coping with the changing nature of work (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 1997). In this theme there is good use of case studies of men involved in non-traditional occupational roles. For example, we are shown a full-time volunteer in his community, a full-time carer in the home, and a man working as a nurse. This is highly appropriate at a time when there has been a fundamental shift in the economy, with the ascendancy of the service sector. This has specific implications for groups of young men as this sector has traditionally

been associated with female workers. The Golf Game with a Difference provides an imaginative way for senior-cycle students to explore facts and values about work in contemporary society. There is excellent student material on the Equality Debate, with reference to Travellers, gays/lesbians, men and women, and people with disability, which serves to address the programme's aim of promoting understanding and respect for diversity.

This section illustrates the general point, explored below, about asking the question: which boys are experiencing specific difficulties in which particular contexts? For example, a serious weakness here is that in disconnecting masculinity from other social categories the significance of socio-economic status is underplayed, which international research illustrates remains the defining feature of future work location for male and female students (Weis, 1991). For example, in The Golf Game, there is no reference to the implications of the changing nature of work in relation to global restructuring, de-industrialisation, and the accompanying feminisation of workers, for working-class and unemployed men and women. This is of particular importance as young people from these socio-economic groups continue to experience social exclusion from the expanding economy at home, and to be over-represented in emigrating from Ireland. Agencies working with such young people in England highlight how ill-prepared they are for rapidly changing knowledge-based modern economies, which is often one of the main reasons for their leaving Ireland (Williams and Mac an Ghaill, 1997).

Theme three: men and power

There are sixteen lessons in this section. They are: playing with power; men's power, women's power; the story of power; defining

bullying; reflecting on my own behaviour; effects of bullying; making the school a safer place; I know Tim's number by heart; just a bit of a laugh; it's only words; strategies for coping with bullying; guess who's coming to dinner?; I have a dream; wheel power; no place to go; and listening to women's voices. Thus, the lessons cover bullying, sexual harassment, racism, poverty, and driving (e.g. the statistics for road deaths). A range of methodologies, within a suggested cross-curricular framework, is provided, including: group work, discussions, games and brainstorming, that encourage students to reflect on their own behaviour. Overall, they are appropriate to achieving the objectives of the lessons and supporting unit coherency.

The early lessons explore the nature of power, with a specific focus on the contrasting experiences of men and women holding power. The student material on the story of power is very informative and effective in illustrating how women's experiences have been written out of history. In so doing, it addresses the programme's aim of promoting equality among the sexes.

The next section on bullying, which constitutes the main topic in this theme, provides some of the best material in **EM**. Both the teacher guidelines and student saterials are excellent, very thorough, and methodologically sophisticated. As part of the guidelines for coping with bullying, the student materials include information on the extent of bullying, the description of bullying tactics, and the effects of bullying. There are very useful and creative suggestions about making schools safe places, carrying out a bullying survey, and developing a mentoring system. This section addresses the programme's aim to provide opportunities for males to develop enhanced interpersonal and social skills.

A further major topic in this theme is an examination of black culture and black people's lives. In so doing, it addresses the programme's aim to promote understanding and respect for diversity. However, there is a missed opportunity here to explore different perceptions and experiences of masculinity. Future curricular work might usefully engage with the relationship between white masculinities and diverse representations of black men in Ireland and internationally. This is especially important on two grounds. First, the international literature shows that within Anglo-American societies, black culture is a major resource for some white men in constructing their personal identity. Second, hierarchies of masculinities are racialised. As we begin to address the issue of racialisation in Ireland, one productive area of inquiry may be the interaction between masculinity and recent refugees/asylum seekers, in terms of how social and spatial exclusion are mediated.

A key part of this section in exploring the way in which the words students use reflect their values, focuses upon the power of language and the effects of particular types of negative language. The worksheet, 'It's Only Words', in the student materials, offers the opportunity for students to be introduced to labelling theory and its effects upon social minorities. In providing students with a useful framework to explain different social groups' experiences, this theme facilitates the achievement of a key aim of the programme, that of promoting understanding and respect for diversity.

The need to develop high-quality SPHE and related programmes in Irish single-sex boys' schools has been noted (Hannan et al., 1983, Hannan et al., 1994; Collins and McNiff, 1999; Morgan, 2000). Reading through the **EM** themes makes clear why this is such a difficult task. In this curriculum area we are dealing with highly

sensitive and controversial moral issues, on which there is not a consensus in the wider society (Carrington and Troyna, 1998). The international literature on boys' schooling makes manifest educational, political, and media controversies that have surrounded this issue, particularly in relation to attempts to implement curriculum change. As Connell (1996, p. 206) points out:

> In the United States, a proposal to establish boys-only public schools in Detroit was halted at the last minute in 1991 by legal action that declared them discriminatory. In Australia, after media controversy about boys' academic 'failure' relative to girls, a parliamentary inquiry into boys' education was launched in 1994.

Within an Irish context, the **EM** programme has attracted criticism as part of a broader public debate. At a school level, such controversial issues as domestic violence and sexual orientation, which take place within highly politicised arenas, are difficult for individual teachers on SPHE courses to address. We suggest that one way forward is for curriculum designers, at a conceptual level, to explore such questions by engaging with diverse literatures on masculinities and wider sex/gender relations, enabling both teachers and students in this field of inquiry to develop a critical literacy (Young, 2000).

Theme four: relationships, health, and sexuality

This section has fourteen lessons. They are: sláinte; focusing on mental health; bald head – testicular cancer; building good relationships 1; building good relationships 2; Ma, Da, and Grandpa; talking sex; Frankie and Chris; sexual orientation; understanding gay people; sexual myths; pornography: an industry?; drink that up, it'll

make a man of you: throw it up, feel like a man again; and the ball at our feet. This theme, Relationships, Health, and Sexuality, has been the subject of criticism in the media, particularly in relation to what was seen as an 'over-emphasis' on homosexuality (see Chapter 3, this report). Figure 2.1 shows the variety of topics covered in the unit and their relative emphases in the materials. We note that the single largest section in this theme is 'Ma, Da, and Grandpa'.

Figure 2.1 Theme three: relationships, health, and sexuality: number of pages devoted to individual topics
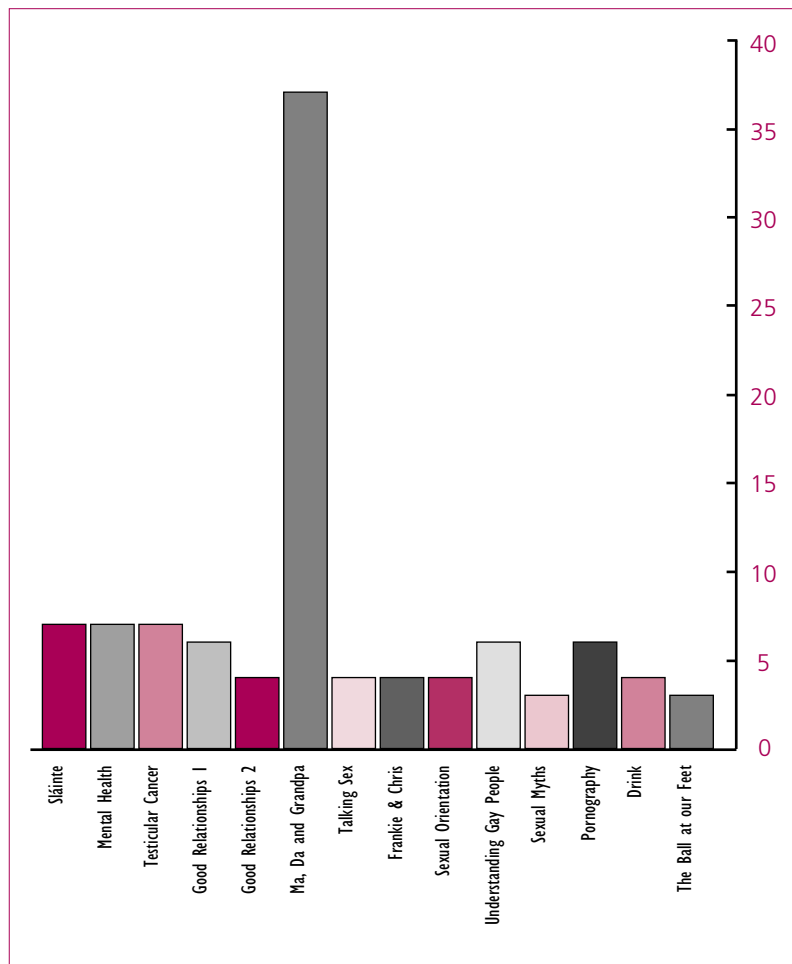
EM is an important initiative in promoting the personal development of boys into adulthood, with a main aim of promoting healthy lifestyles. Theme Four addresses this aim in helping to develop the life and relationship skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world. The lessons cover many elements of health – mental and physical – as well as an exploration of relationships, sexual orientation, pornography, and alcohol abuse. In the teacher guidelines, basic terminology used in the theme is usefully defined; for example, the structural causes of ill health and the concept of social health. A very good range of methodologies is employed, including brainstorming, group discussion, and use of worksheets that are appropriate to achieving the objectives of the lessons. The first lesson is based upon students completing a worksheet, 'For Me, Being Healthy Is…'. This is a highly effective introduction to the area, and is followed by a very sensitive exploration of mental health and a much needed discussion on male cancers. These topics encourage students to reflect on practical aspects of men's health and self-care.

The next lesson covers building good relationships. The specific concern is to enable students to examine how our personal relationships change as we get older. There is a very useful exercise in mapping relationships at the age of seven and comparing them with current adolescent friendships. The early lessons provide a fine foundation for students to explore how they might develop good relationships with their parents/guardians. There are first-class sources, including audio material of extracts from Irish literature about mothers and fathers, and film and video, in which a wide range of fathers is presented. A main purpose of this section is to explore the implications of being a father at a time of rapid social and cultural change, which is having a major disruptive impact on

the notion of traditional parenting (McKeown, et al. 1998; McKeown, 2001). This is particularly welcome at a time when international studies on sex and health education stress the importance of boys' as well as girls' preparation for adulthood to include issues surrounding parenting (Lloyd, 1985; Davidson, 1997). However, the material seems to be a little dated. For example, there is an absence of current popular debates in Ireland, which claim that Family Law discriminates against men as fathers, particularly in relation to fathers' access to their children after separation and divorce (see, for example, Ferguson, 1996; Commission on the Family, 1998; McKeown, et al. 1998; Martin, 2000; Kiely, 2001; McKeown, 2001, 2001a, for discussion of the changing roles of fathers and families, and for societal and legislative contexts). These are central questions for a younger generation, who will inherit the responsibility of resolving such highly contested social issues. From an educational perspective, it is within the context of exploring such unresolved issues, that young people may be provided with the opportunity to develop enhanced interpersonal and social skills.

The next lesson deals with sex and sexuality, including learning about sexuality and sexual reproduction; examining gender and sexual stereotypes and their implications for boys and girls; exploring the meaning of sexual orientation and homophobia; critically engaging with the growth of pornography as an industry; and exploring the effects of drink and advertising on masculine identity. Internationally-based approaches to SPHE have, until recently, often focused upon a rather narrow prescriptive agenda, attempting to change boys' negative sexual behaviour. There is much evidence that these programmes are ineffective (Lingard and Douglas, 1999; Dunphy, 2000). **EM**, informed by a creative pedagogical style, an

appropriate range of methodologies, and an engagement with the complex nature of young male identity formation, is a more effective approach. Internationally, an increasing number of boy-centred curriculum initiatives are also adopting such an approach.

Reviewing the international literature, Morgan (2000) draws attention to five broad conclusions in relation to evaluating the effectiveness of relationships and sexuality education: first, only a small number of rigorously designed evaluations exist; second, there is 'no evidence that these programmes are harmful, that is there is no evidence that sex education leads to earlier or increased sexual activity among those who were exposed to it' (p. 24); third, some programmes are more effective than others; fourth, the informal features of school interaction with peers also play an important part in attitudes to sexuality; and finally, teachers' training and attitudes are important factors in relation to the effectiveness of sexuality education programmes. He summarises the distinguishing characteristics of effective programmes as follows:

(i)   Effective programmes went beyond the cognitive level; they focused on recognising social influences, changing attitudes, and building skills.

(ii) They reinforced values that were consistent with the students' cultural backgrounds.

(iii) The effective programmes included age-appropriate, accurate information.

(iv) The use of active learning methods (as opposed to passive learning of facts) was an important characteristic of effective programmes.

(v) They included activities that addressed the social and media influences on sexual behaviour. (p. 24)

Internationally, the issue of sexuality and schooling has a contested history, with each society displaying its own attempt to come to terms with what is often seen as a controversial issue (Dunphy, 2000; Gammage, 1998). Fahy has written of the Irish context, exploring 'how sexual culture in Ireland has evolved…from a sacralised to a partly secularised cultural environment' (2000, p.54). Critics have noted that in the **EM** materials more is written on the subject of homosexuality than heterosexuality. Such reactions are part of a general United States-led trend in which anti-oppressive curriculum initiatives (for example, around issues of anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, and anti-racism) are accused of discriminating against social majorities, for example, men, heterosexuals, and white people. This is a very interesting recent development in the education of boys. Prior to the implementation of these anti-oppressive initiatives, boys were not thought of as gendered, and similarly heterosexuality and whiteness were taken for granted in social education programmes. Hence, progressive initiatives have created a space in which social majorities are asking: what about us?

The final lesson successfully draws upon topics discussed in Theme four to enable students to answer the question: what choices can I make to ensure I live a healthy life?

Theme five: violence against women, men, and children

There are eleven lessons in this section. They are: feeling safe, feeling fear; building a home; breaking the silence of violence in the home; why doesn't she leave?; the cycle of domestic violence; violence against women – the extent and the reality; violence against parents;

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violence against men; violence against children – sexual abuse; disarming the fist; and a challenge for men (Fig. 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Theme five: violence against women, men and children: % of materials on individual topics
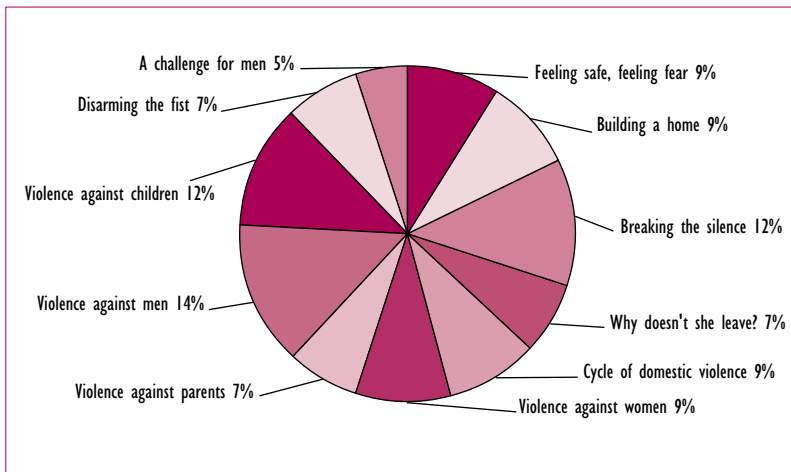
Feminists in the 1970s and 1980s raised questions concerning domestic and sexual violence. However, it is not until relatively recently that schools have addressed what are considered to be highly controversial issues. The international literature makes clear that this is one of the most difficult areas of curriculum interventions in SPHE provision (Carrington and Troyna, 1998; Stradling et al., 1984). A range of methodologies is suggested, including: group work; completing worksheets; brainstorming; reading book extracts; and whole class discussion. Given the sensitive nature of this topic, extra attention needs to be given to the appropriateness of some of these methods depending, for example, on the composition of the class and the school culture.

For example, the introductory lesson explores the question of safety and fear. This enables students to identify a number of inter-related

issues: which groups are at greatest risk?, what places are high risk?, and, at what times are places less safe? Students are asked to complete a worksheet on 'what frightens me,' and to carry out a survey on places where boys and girls feel fear and feel safe. Such exercises require teachers to feel confident in dealing with such emotionally charged material. It is possible that such a discussion may be the first opportunity for a student to discuss highly personal information in a public forum. Similar potential difficulties can be identified in the next lesson on building a home, which includes discussion of establishing a code of good practice for family members. These first two lessons form the context in which domestic violence is discussed.

An aim of **EM** is to promote equality among and between the sexes. The lessons in this theme successfully provide a public space for male students in single-sex schools to discuss various forms of violence against women, men, and children. This is a much needed element of the SPHE curriculum that is frequently not addressed in schools.

Another aim is to explore different perceptions and experiences of masculinity. Theme five is less successful in responding to this aim. It is suggested that most perpetrators of violence are male, giving examples that in the United States 95% of all juvenile murders are committed by boys and, in Britain, a two year old, Jamie Bulger, was killed by two boys less than ten years older than him (teacher materials p. 295). This is important information about understanding the relationship of gender and violence. However, alongside this information, an exploration of masculinity in the context of school, needs to add two important points. First, if one accepts that most violence is committed by men, nevertheless, most men are not involved in violence. Second, that there is literature now available

that contests the figures on which men are exclusively associated with violence, arguing that the violence of women is underplayed. To be fair to the designers of **EM**, the student material: violence against men, does acknowledge that 'a minority of men have been subjected to physical, emotional, and mental abuse by women'. However, it does not develop this discussion. For some educators who have attempted to establish the question of violence against women on the SPHE curriculum, there is a fear that including women's violence results in a notion of gender symmetry. Still, given the current popular debates around this issue, the curriculum seems an appropriate place to practise a critical literacy, enabling an exploration of the complexity involved.

Portrayal of domestic violence in the materials is more complex than suggested in the public debate. The teacher note on page 253 of the materials, presents a banner headline titled REMEMBER!, with a statement about domestic violence:

REMEMBER!

No matter who you are, whether you are male or female, whether you are young or old, if you are subjected to domestic violence, or to violence of any kind, you should contact the Gardaí for immediate help and advice.

Of particular importance here is the stated acknowledgement, in the student material, that men as well as women can be the victims of domestic violence. The teachers' notes (p.269) encouraging teachers 'to get up to date figures on violence against men and women' demonstrate an awareness of the complexity of teaching controversial issues. There is a particularly strong case to be made here for communicative competence in the context of SPHE (Williams, 1996), and for critical literacy, particularly because of contested content in the teaching of controversial issues. As Stradling et al., argue:

> The more contemporary the issue the greater the problems for the teacher, mainly because the outcome may still be very difficult to predict; we do not have the benefit of hindsight regarding the significance of recent events; students are likely to bring with them into the classroom their own interpretations, experiences, judgements and prejudices; the primary sources of evidence are likely to be biased, incomplete and contradictory; and it is even difficult to establish criteria for determining what does and does not constitute valid evidence. (Stradling et al., 1984, p.3)

Teachers' reports of their classroom practice also provide evidence of a more sophisticated presentation of this material than is suggested in the public debate (see Chapter 4).

Theme six: sport

This section consists of eleven lessons. They are: a sporting chance; scoring in sport; my sporting and recreational life; the dressing rooms; child's play; the coach; the winner takes it all; the supporter; the apprentice; the players; and sport and the media. A range of

methodologies is suggested. These include: brainstorming, group work, and reading extracts that are appropriate to achieving the objectives of theme six.

The introductory lesson explores the meaning of sport, examining a wide range of individual and team sports. This is followed by a lesson encouraging students to consider their own involvement in sport and time spent in leisure activities. These early lessons address the aim of promoting healthy lifestyles.

The following lessons adopt a highly critical standpoint in relation to sport. On the positive side, this provides students with several aspects of sport not generally covered by the media, such as the cost of attending football matches abroad, and the effects of rejection on young football apprentices.

The student material includes interviews with prominent sports people. The players provide a rounded picture of sport that is highly informative for students. For example, fifty-five pages are devoted to autobiographical portraits (2-3 pages each) of seventeen Irish male sports players from a range of sports. The seventeen athletes are: John Treacy, Owen Casey, Dougie Hyde, Dixon Rose, Jamesie O'Connor, Sean O'Grady, Conal Kelly, Frank Nugent, Glen Ryan, Tony Ward, Francis Barrett, Ian Wiley, Mark Scanlon, Derek Ryan, Ken Doherty, Michael 'Ducksey' Walsh, and Mark Scannell. These portraits adopt a critical stance toward sport, examining a range of issues relevant in understanding the relationship between sport and society, and the generative role of sport in the lives of the featured players. Among the issues raised in adopting a critical stance toward sport are the following: drugs and sport, winning and losing, racism, life in the dressing room, women in sport, preferential treatment of prominent

sports players, coaching, parents and sport, sport and sectarianism, sport and bullying, media, training, the rewards from sport, image of sport, teamwork, and the overall importance of sport. A notable strength of the headings used in the 'Players' lesson is that they could be used to review the themes addressed in earlier **EM** units (e.g. bullying, drugs, relationships with parents). The issues raised under each of these headings, across the portraits, could provide the basis for fruitful discussion with adolescents about the role of sport in society and its impact on their own ideals, emotions, and actions.

In many of the portraits, a number of headings reappear across the fifty-five pages. These are:

- Starting out: an autobiographical sketch of each sports-player documenting his pathway into sport

- Training: a description of the player's training programme and its impact on his performance and overall influence on social and work life

- Future or final comment: a brief review of highlights in the individual's sporting life and some indications of his dreams and plans.

All seventeen of the portraits include a commentary on the positive and generative role sport has played in the life of the featured sportsman. Among the positive contributions attributed to sport are the following:

- Lessons about life: winning and losing (John Treacy).

- Development of physical skills (Owen Casey).

- Meeting people, making friends, and travel (Dougie Hyde).

- Mentoring and coaching from older players (Dixon Rose).

- Role of sport in family life (Sean O'Grady).

- Team sport and how it contributed to a fulfilled life (Tony Ward).

- Development of self-discipline through sport (Conal Kelly).

- Development of self-reliance through mountaineering and the role of sport in providing intercultural experiences (Frank Nugent).

- The powerful influence of a coach/mentor (Francis Barrett).

Of all the portraits, one of the most positive commentaries is provided by Jamesie O'Connor, All-Ireland hurling winner with Co. Clare in 1995, whose description of the role of hurling in his life captures the role sport sometimes plays in providing a sense of direction, confidence, and belonging:

> *Starting out*
>
> *Being a hurler has made a huge difference in my life. It was an ambition of mine since I was very young to play for St. Flannan's. I attended matches when I was in primary school, and I thought there was nothing like the atmosphere of Harty matches. I still remember the crowds of buses, the singing at the matches, and the general sense of excitement. I remember thinking then I would love to be part of that team at some stage. When I got to St. Flannan's I eventually got on the Harty team. I was made captain in 1990 and that was such a big deal at the time. I felt very honoured. I felt it was great for my self-confidence, no doubt it is for all players. Other students look up to you and sometimes notice that there is a swagger about the Harty boys.*

There is clearly, in our view, a positive tone to this piece, yet it also lends itself to some critical commentary. For example, 'the swagger' might form the basis for a conversation about social rankings in secondary school. Overall, the portraits do not convey a rose-tinted view of the sporting life. Rather, the portraits raise questions, challenge accepted beliefs, and adopt a critical literacy stance toward reading the messages from the culture of sport. The wide range of sports addressed, and the similarity of the headings across portraits, facilitates the comparison of athletes' positions on issues that are likely to be intensely interesting to many, but not all, adolescent boys.

Theme six also raises important questions about excessive competitiveness that will have particular resonance in single-sex boys' schools. Internationally, school sport has provided an important arena for some working-class boys and girls to achieve success, and this merits further elaboration here. Equally important is the critical discussion on the professionalisation and commercialisation of sport. This information addresses the aim of raising awareness about the changing nature of sport in contemporary societies. Positive attributes associated with sport, including pleasure, comradeship, team building, collective support, and a sense of achievement are in evidence in many parts of the theme.

Theme seven: wrapping it up

This is the final section. It has five lessons: Where do we go from here?; Images of man; Boy at the window; We can work it out; and Male models. The theme successfully draws upon some of the major topics raised in earlier themes and invites students to explore what they would like to achieve now and in the future. The range of methodologies, including reading extracts from literature, preparing a

collage, group work, and brainstorming are appropriate to achieving the objectives of Theme seven.

Students are encouraged to identify short and long term goals that they would like to achieve in their lives, and explore how they could be made a reality. This is linked to an exploration of what they think makes an 'ideal man', and is followed by an examination of what we can learn about men's lives from literature. Next, the students are asked to examine the advantages of working collaboratively rather than individually. This approach can be a very effective lesson in developing student reflexivity, enabling students to consider this issue at many levels: home, school, community, national, Europe, and global. The final lessons end on a very positive note in exploring which men have made a major positive contribution to human relations. In so doing, they address a key aim of **EM**: to explore different perceptions of men.

In the next section of this chapter, we address, in greater detail, the nature and potential impact of role models in **EM**. We do so in light of the frequency with which **EM** was criticised for portraying either negative images of boys and men, or for presenting too few positive images of boys and men,

Images and role models of boys in EM and their implications

The issue, of whether **EM** presents both too few positive images and too many negative images, or role models for boys, was a sustained concern in media attention to **EM** (see Chapter 3). In this section, we note that the educational and psychological literature on this topic typically relies on the use of the term 'role models' rather than 'images'. We discuss role models by first describing the ways in

which EM provides, or does not provide, a range of appropriate role models, or what Bruner (1990) has called 'images of self-hood'. We then contextualise **EM**'s use of role models in light of the literature on role model choice, and the potential impact of these choices.

Role models, or images of being a boy or man, are provided explicitly in five sections of **EM** encompassing 117 pages of the 420-page manual. In addition, there are other potential role models for adolescent boys throughout the manual in various chapters. The four sections that draw explicit attention to potential role models do so with somewhat different motives and purposes, depending on the theme in **EM** being addressed. We deliberately use the phrase 'potential role models', as it is known from psychological research on role models that people do not respond in the same way to each potential role model, nor are they likely to view all aspects of each potential role model's life as worthy of emulation (Bandura, 1986; Gash and Conway, 1997; Pintrich and Schunk, 1996; Bucher, 1998; Conway and Hapkiewicz, 2000). The five sections in the **EM** manual are as follows:

1. Who is coming to dinner? Teacher guidelines (p. 134) and student material (pp. 135-150). This section has 32 potential role models (16 pages total).

2. Ma, Da, and Grandpa. Teacher guidelines (pp. 189-90) and student materials (pp. 191-214). This section has at least 26 potential role models in the 26 extracts from stories, prose, and poetry on father/guardian-son relationships (25 pages total).

3. The Players. Teacher guidelines (pp. 323-24) and student materials (pp. 325-384). This section has 17 potential role models (61 pages total).

4. Images of Man. Teacher guidelines (p. 392) and student material
   (p. 393). Many diverse role models or images are possible here, as
   students are asked to choose images from 'newspapers, magazines,
   and pictures' (p. 392) (2 pages total).

5. Male models. Teacher guidelines (p. 399) and student material
   (pp. 400-412). This section has 10 potential role models (13 pages
   total).

There are a number of important points to note here. First, role
models and images of being a man constitute a very significant
portion of the **EM** materials. In this regard, assertions in the media
that **EM** provides too few role models for boys are poorly grounded
in the actual programme material itself. One hundred and seventeen
pages of the four hundred and twenty page manual, can be
interpreted as explicitly providing role models for boys. At least 84
role models are described in these five sections, in some detail, and
students are also invited to add their own. The manner in which
they are presented generally lends itself to the development of
critical literacy around students' choice of role model or image. Thus
the sport players' discussion of their experiences adopts a critical and
reflective stance toward issues that arise in sport, its relationship to
society, and its role in people's lives (e.g. winning and losing, sport
and politics, racism, dressing room culture, family life and sport, and
coaching, among other topics).

Second, there is an impressive range of role models, providing many
positive and desirable images for boys. While the behaviour and
actions of some of the people in these sections, at some points in
their lives (e.g. Phil Lynnott's and Billie Holiday's drug abuse), do
not lend themselves to emulation, each of the characters has qualities

and engaged in actions, in our view, that merited acclaim and recognition in society and are worthy of inclusion in **EM**. Thus, **EM** provides, we think, a sufficient array of positive role models and images for adolescent boys. Third, the range of role models is diverse, whether it is in terms of area of achievement or notable experience, nationality, race, or gender. Sport, politics, literature, entertainment, and family life are among the areas of achievement or notable life experience of the potential role models. From the point of view of nationality, a wide array is presented from Ireland:

Seamus Heaney, Bono, John Hume, James Connolly, Bob Geldof, Mick McCarthy, Tom Hyland, Patrick Kavanagh, Christopher Nolan, Brendan Kennelly, Fergal Keane, Ferdia Mac Anna, George Bernard Shaw, John Treacy (former athlete), Owen Casey (tennis player), Dougie Hyde (swimmer), Dixon Rose (hockey and cricket player), Jamesie O'Connor, (hurler), Sean O'Grady (shot putt and discuss champion in para-Olympics), Conal Kelly (gymnast), Frank Nugent (mountaineer), Glen Ryan (Gaelic footballer), and Tony Ward (former rugby player).

Potential role models are also from many other countries: Jack Charlton (England), Nelson Mandela and Kadar Asmal (South Africa), Pope John XXIII (Italy), Chaim Herzog (Israel), Ken Saro-Wiwa (Nigeria), Martin Luther King, Bill Cosby, and Muhammad Ali (USA), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Pele (Brazil), and Mahatma Gandhi (India).

In terms of ethnicity, role models are diverse. In terms of gender, many male role models are portrayed throughout the manual and a small number of notable females is presented, and these could also act as potential positive role models (e.g. Rogbertu Menchu, Maya Angelou, Arundathi Roy, and Sojourner Truth, among others).

Drawing upon the literature on role models, we make a number of general points about the impact of potential role models on students participating in **EM**. First, identification with role models is complex, with both characteristics of the role model, as well as what the student brings to the situation, being very relevant. In this regard, Wortham (1995), discussing the impact on adolescents of characters presented in literature classes, notes that the impact of characters and their views was mediated by in-class transactions between teachers and students, which drew upon the biographies of both teachers and students. In addition, there are role model characteristics that influence the process of identification with role models. These, according to Bandura (1986), are: competence, perceived similarity, credibility, and enthusiasm. For example, competence refers to perceived model expertise in a particular domain. Because of their perceived success, students are likely to attend to these role models. In terms of **EM**, the potential of the various role models depends on portrayal of role models' competence and credibility, as well as on the similarity students perceive between themselves and the role model. Thus, one student's role model will not be another's. Furthermore, presentation of the same role model in one school may be more appealing to students in one class than another, in part due to the manner in which the role model is presented.

Second, there are a number of cultural patterns in adolescents' choice of role models that are important in understanding the choice and impact of role models. Two of these patterns are: cross-sex choice and location of role model. In terms of cross-sex choice, boys are less likely than girls to make such choices (Bucher, 1998; Gash and Conway 1997). In addition, as both boys and girls get older, they are more likely to choose role models from the public

arena rather than from the private or domestic sphere (Conway and Hapkiewicz, 2000). Thus, in terms of the impact of role models in EM, it is important to note that they are likely to be mediated through both identification processes and cultural patterns.

Third, it is important to pay attention to the difference between the planned, implemented, and received curriculum in understanding the impact of role models, be they positive or negative. As Wortham (1995) has noted, 'the moral and political consequences of school curricula require paying attention to the implemented as well as the planned curriculum; one should not jump to conclusions about the politics of official curricula without attending to their practical implementation' (p. 79). We know from our survey and interview data that teachers use images of boys and men in **EM** to counter, and critically engage with, stereotypes of boys and men that are presented in the wider culture (see Chapter 4).

In conclusion, **EM** offers many 'canonical images of self-hood' (Bruner, 1986, p. 130). However, the impact of these potential role models depends on students' biographies, classroom teaching, various cultural patterns and developmental patterns, as well as processes of identification. Thus, predicting the impact of these role models is complex and dependent upon the above factors, and specifically in relation to the curriculum, it is important to pay attention to tensions between the planned, implemented, and received curriculum. As such, claims by some critics of **EM**, regarding the pernicious impact of negative role models ignore the numerous mediating factors we identify here. Furthermore, it is likely that negative role models, in some instances, act in a positive sense in that students may choose not to be like this person rather than seek to emulate their actions (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, 1990;

Conway and Hapkiewicz, 2000). Finally, to reiterate a point made earlier, **EM** offers many glimpses into extraordinary and ordinary lives, across a wide variety of human endeavours, for inspiration and potential emulation by students.

Conclusion

In summary, the quality of the materials is excellent. They are relevant, practical, and consonant with the aims of the programme. There is strong evidence of internal consistency within lessons but also of an overall coherency at programme level. Our analysis of the materials, together with our survey and interview data, also indicates that some topics would benefit from updating, elaboration, and integration within a conceptual gender framework.

This chapter has described the materials in **EM** in the light of a number of relevant criteria for evaluating their worth. Overall, the **EM** materials are a rich and well-researched set of curriculum resources suitable for both transition year and senior cycle. Some sections of the materials could be enhanced or elaborated upon. Of particular importance, is the conclusion that the conceptual frameworks adopted by curriculum designers ought to be sites for critical engagement, especially when the issues are contested in social and cultural spheres.

C H A P T E R 3

Media attention to
Exploring Masculinities

Media attention to
Exploring Masculinities

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we address the second of our three research aims, namely to provide a narrative summary of the public debate about **EM**, its shape, and temporal trajectory. In this narrative summary, we present a chronological account of the **EM** debate between 1998 and 2002, and describe contributions to the debate. The narrative summary is framed by its temporal trajectory, which identifies its different phases. In an analysis of the summary, we show where the debate took place, who contributed to it, and the key issues identified. Finally, we situate elements of the public debate about **EM** within broader educational, social, and cultural contexts.

3.2 METHODOLOGY

Most of the attention to **EM** occurred in the print media, specifically in the opinion columns and letters pages of Irish national daily, evening, and Sunday newspapers. The Irish Times was particularly prominent along with the Irish Examiner, Irish Independent and Sunday Independent. **EM** also received some attention in a small number of radio and TV interviews, mainly during autumn 2000 (see below).

We identified contributions to the public debate about **EM** in Ireland through online searches, handsearches, and contributions from

individuals and organisations. Our search terms included 'masculinity', 'masculinities', 'exploring+masculinities'. Online archive sources included national newspapers, television and radio archives, government websites, and archives of debates and ministerial question time in Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. Internet searchs using Google, etc. were also undertaken and were useful for contextual contributions. Non-electronic searching of the NCCA archives was also undertaken.

Additional articles and letters were identified for us by several contributors to the NCCA consultative forums who, in order to assist the review, provided resources from their own archives, including copies of articles, letters, and news items that had been published. These latter were especially helpful for our narrative summary as they alerted us to sources in the non-mainstream and specialist print media, such as the dedicated Catholic and specialist press, and newsletters of organisations such as Gay/HIV News and Parents and Teachers for Real Education (PATRE). We have also drawn on our survey and interview data in our analysis and presentation of the media attention to **EM** and its contexts.

The Irish Times archive search engine is particularly comprehensive and makes contributions readily accessible, and this may have skewed representation from that source. Other limitations to the searches have also been considered. We were dependent on the usability and negotiability of the archive search engines of the other sources mentioned above. In addition, a number of specialist print sources were not available online and we acknowledge the contribution of the NCCA, ASTI, AMEN, PATRE, and others in making available to us their own print resources. Despite these limitations, it is likely that we have identified the main body of contributions to the public debate about **EM**.

3.3 NARRATIVE SUMMARY

We now present a chronological account of the media attention to **EM**. This account is framed by the six phases of the temporal trajectory identified during the course of the analysis. Although there was some overlap, the six phases formed distinct categories. These were:

• Introductory Phase (Phase I, Winter 1998 to 1999)

• Lull Phase (Phase II, January 1999 to September 2000)

• Substantive Phase (Phase III, Autumn 2000)

• Marginal Phase (Phase IV, December 2000 to Spring 2002), alongside

• Dedicated and Specialist Press Phase (Phase V, January 2001 to Spring 2002), and

• Review Phase I (Phase VI, Autumn 2001).

We note that, for extended periods between 1998 and 2002, little or no attention was paid to **EM** in the media (e.g. January 1999 to September 2000).

Figure 3.1 Temporal Trajectory of Media Attention to EM
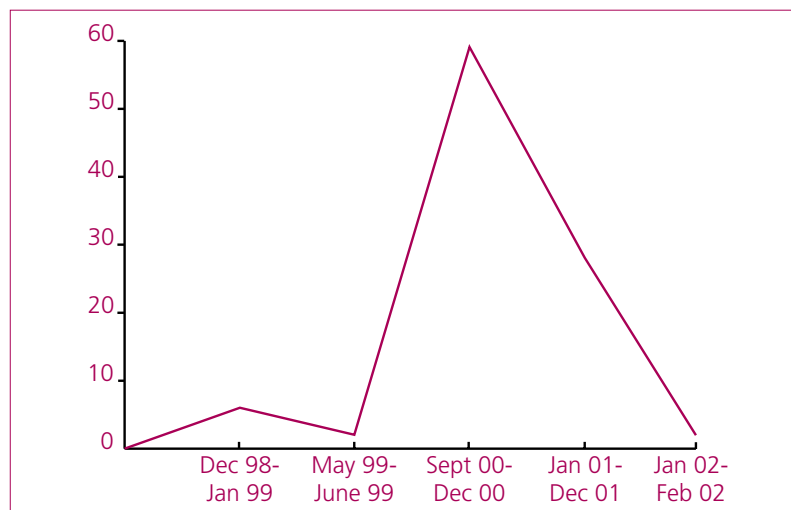
In the Introductory Phase, the focus was promotional, giving information about **EM**. During the Lull Phase, there was very little media attention for 20 months. This was followed by the Substantive Phase, and it was mainly during this phase that the real focus on the substance of **EM** took place. During this phase, criticism of and support for **EM** were based on differing views about the nature of gender, equality issues, domestic violence, schooling, and curriculum. In the Marginal Phase, the main focus was on other issues, but there were occasional passing, incidental references to **EM**. During the Dedicated and Specialist Press Phase, alongside the occasional passing references to **EM** in the national press, there was substantive attention within the confines of some sections of the dedicated Catholic and specialist media. During the Review Phase I, the focus was on the NCCA review of **EM**, and especially on issues arising during the consultative forums organised by the NCCA executive.

As we complete research for our section of the review (March to April 2002), a seventh phase, Review Phase II, is commencing with some media attention to our preliminary report on our research for sections of the NCCA review. Criticisms at the beginning of this phase include concern about lack of parental involvement in the NCCA review (Emmet Oliver, 'Report backs schools programme for male students', Irish Times, 8 April 2002; Emmet Oliver, 'Parents say report on course is flawed', Irish Times, 9 April 2002). It is helpful to reiterate at this point that our research brief does not include parents or students. The research which we were commissioned by the NCCA to carry out addresses the **EM** materials in an international comparative context, and teachers' experiences of the **EM** programme within the context of the public debate.

The Introductory and Substantive Phases (Winter 1999 and Autumn 2000) generated the most concentrated attention to the essence of **EM**, that is, during these phases there was some consideration of **EM**'s rationale, content, pedagogy, materials, and development. Consequently, the shape of the media attention in those phases is given the most detailed consideration in our account.

Table 3.2 Print media sources consulted for narrative summary of media attention to Exploring Masculinities including mainstream and dedicated press (only sources that referred directly to Exploring Masculinities are included).

Date	Contributor	Type of contribution (letter, article) & header on contribution	Media source
PHASE I	**December 1998 — January 1999**	**Introductory Phase**	
22-10-1998	Andy Pollak, journalist, Education Correspondent	News piece "Masculinity topic for teenage boys"	Irish Times
2-1-1999	Journalist	Opinion "Education for life"	Irish Times
15-1-1999	Noreen Coveney O'Beirne	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
19-1-1999	Catherine Foley (journalist)	Article	Irish Times E&L
25-1-1999	Prof. Harry Ferguson (academic)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
Jan. 1999	ASTI	News feature "Exploring masculinity in schools a great success"	ASTIR
PHASE II	**January 1999 — Autumn 2000**	**Lull Phase**	
25-5-2000	Journalist	News piece "Boys target of sexuality programme"	Irish Independent
June 2000	Journalist	Article "Developing equal opportunities for lesbian and gay students"	Newsletter of the Higher Education Equality Unit
PHASE III	**Autumn 2000**	**Substantive Phase**	
14-9-2000	Prof. Harry Ferguson (academic)	Feature "What makes a real new man?"	Irish Times
18-9-2000	Denise Hall (journalist)	Opinion column "Time for the new real man to stand up and be counted"	Irish Examiner

21-9-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter "Masculinity under threat from new school programme"	Irish Independent
23-9-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter "A view of men that has me very worried"	Evening Herald
24-9-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter "Emasculation"	Sunday Independent
28-9-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
28-9-2000	Ian O'Doherty (journalist)	News piece "School plan is accused of agenda"	Evening Herald
28-9-2000	Ian O'Doherty (journalist)	Feature, Men in Crisis, part 2 of 3 "Boys taught to be violent"	Evening Herald
1-10-2000	John Burns (journalist)	Article Focus: 'Learning to be a real man'	Sunday Times
1-10-2000	Paul Tierney	Letter (response to M. Cleary) "Masculine task"	Sunday Independent
5-10-2000	Damian Byrne (journalist)	Article "Let young males tackle growing pains on their own"	Irish Examiner
5-10-2000	Prof. Harry Ferguson (academic)	Letter (response to M. Cleary) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
8-10-2000	Brian O'Higgins	Letter "Violence views are damaging"	Sunday Times
11-10-2000	Alan McGivergan (parental perspective)	Letter (response to H. Ferguson) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
13-10-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter (response to H. Ferguson) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
14-10-2000	Breda O'Brien (journalist)	Opinion column "Design of boys' programme intrinsically flawed"	Irish Times
15-10-2000	Journalist	News "Reluctant department"	Sunday Business Post
15-10-2000	Patricia Redlich (journalist)	Opinion column/news analysis "Boys needs social clothes, not threadbare direction"	Sunday Independent
15-10-2000	David Quinn (journalist)	Opinion column "Real men stand up for what they know is right"	Sunday Times
15-10-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter (response to Paul Tierney) "Men reconstructed"	Sunday Independent
16-10-2000	Brendan Glacken (journalist)	Opinion column "The War between men and women"	Irish Times
19-10-2000	Journalist	News item "Public meeting on masculinity"	Irish Times
22-10-2000	Anastasia Murphy (parental perspective)	Letter "Gender prejudice harms Irish society"	Sunday Times, Irish edition

22-10-2000	D. Kavanagh	Letter "Undermining men"	Sunday Independent
23-10-2000	David Walsh	Letter (response to H. Ferguson) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
24-10-2000	John Walshe, (journalist) education editor	News piece "Teenagers "positive" about masculinity classes"	Irish Independent
24-10-2000	John Waters (journalist)	Article, E&L cover story "Big mac feminism on the education menu"	Irish Times E&L
24-10-2000	Liam O Gogáin (parental perspective)	Letter "Give parents a better say in children's education"	Irish Examiner
26-10-2000	Dr. Tom Inglis (academic)	Letter (response to Breda O'Brien column 14 Oct and Mary T. Cleary, 18 Oct [not EM]) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
27-10-2000	Danny Desmond (parental perspective, National Parent Teacher Alliance)	Letter "The end of masculinity?" Response to Sunday Times John Burns 1.10.2000	The Irish Family
29-10-2000	Declan Lynch (journalist)	Opinion/analysis "New pieties from a new priesthood"	Sunday Independent
Oct. 2000	ASTI	News piece "Males exploring masculinity"	ASTIR
1-11-2000	Damian Byrne (journalist)	Article "Schoolchildren's best interests are at heart of the lesson"	Irish Examiner
1-11-2000	Brendan Glacken (journalist)	Opinion ""Tempestuous Themes and Times"	Irish Times
2-11-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter (response to T. Inglis 26 Oct)"Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
2-11-2000	Rob Weatherill (psychotherapist/teacher)	Letter (response to T. Inglis 26 Oct) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
3-11-2000	Danny Desmond (parental perspective, (National Parent Teacher Alliance)	Letter (Response in support of L. O Gogain) re public meeting "Education programme is an insult to parents"	Irish Examiner
5-11-2000	Gemma Hussey (journalist)	Opinion column "Monthly media matters"	Ireland on Sunday
5-11-2000	Áine McCarthy (journalist)	Article "New male order"	Sunday Tribune
6-11-2000	Prof. Harry Ferguson (academic)	Letter (response to J Waters, 24 Oct) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
7-11-2000	Dr. Kathleen Lynch & Dr. Dympna Devine (academics)	Article "Factually incorrect and politically mischievous" (response to J. Waters)	Irish Times E&L
7-11-2000	Dr. Tom Inglis (academic)	Letter (response to letters from R. Weatherill and M. Cleary) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times

10-11-2000	Hugh F. Ryan (teacher)	Letter (response to T. Inglis) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
10-11-2000	Dr. Linda Connolly (academic)	Letter (in support of K. Lynch /D. Devine, response to J. Waters) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
12-11-2000	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter (response to G. Hussey, 5 Nov) "Mute masculinities"	Ireland on Sunday
14-11-2000	Dr. Tom Inglis (academic)	Letter (response to H. Ryan) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
14-11-2000	Harry Browne (journalist)	Article "NCCA called into boys row"	Irish Times
15-11-2000	Alan Glenn Phillips	Letter "Learn to love the whole man"	Irish Examiner
17-11-2000	Tom Callagy (parent)	Letter (response to T. Inglis 14 Nov) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
23-11-2000	David Quinn (journalist)	Article "Values programmes must be vetted by Dail says FG"	Irish Catholic
24-11-2000	Prof. John Coolahan and heads of education departments (academics)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
Nov 2000	Journalist	Article "Will this programme produce teenage louts?"/ "Teaching by example"	Alive
Nov 2000	Journalist	Front page article "'Boys will be girls' says Education Dept. New school programme 'will feminise boys'".	Alive
Nov 2000	Gerry Jeffers (academic)	Article "The Exploring Masculinities debate"	Newsletter of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland
8-12-2000	Charlie Lennon (ASTI general secretary)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
27-12-2000	Kathy Sheridan (journalist)	Article "Battle of the genders"	Irish Times E&L
31-12-2000	Niall Stanage (journalist)	Article "It's been a bad year for Irish men"	Sunday Business Post

PHASE IV	January 2001 – 3 2002	Marginal Phase	
8-1-2001	Rosie Meade (academic)	Letter "The meaning of feminism"	Irish Times
14-1-2001	David Quinn (journalist)	Article "Teachers need to show some class by getting real"	Sunday Times Ireland: Comment

8-3-2001	Emmet Oliver, (journalist)	Education correspondent, News piece "Parent to challenge school programme"	Irish Times
15-3-2001	Brendan Glacken (journalist)	Opinion column 'Soft Porn and Soggy Poetry'	Irish Times
2-7-2001	John Waters (journalist)	Article "Reasons for male suicide all too clear"	Irish Times
7-7-2001	Breda O'Brien (journalist)	Article "Time for a pro-marriage political stand"	Irish Times
22-10-2001	John Waters (journalist)	Opinion "When men are made ashamed"	Irish Times
3-11-2001	Ian O'Doherty (journalist)	Opinion "Week in, week out" whinge"	Evening Herald
4-11-2001	Alan McGivergan	Letter "Discrimination in favour of women"	Irish Independent
22-11-2001	Phil Mac Ghiolla Bhain (AMEN)	Letter "Male suicide and feminism"	Irish Times
7-1-2002	John Waters (journalist)	Opinion "Bending facts to prop up myths about male violence"	Irish Times
10-1-2002	Mary T Cleary (AMEN)	Article "Home truths and domestic violence"	Irish Times

PHASE V	January 2001 - November 2001		Marginal Except in Dedicated Press Phase
March 2001	Ann Marie Desmond (RE teacher)	Letter (response to Alive article, Nov 2000) "Exploring Masculinities"	Alive
March 2001	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter (response to A.M. Desmond) "Who runs the Department of Education?"	Alive
April 2001	Journalist	Article "Masculinity and growing boys"	PATRE review
May 2001	Sophie Gorman	Article "Striking a blow for parents"	Education Matters
1-6-2001	Danny Desmond (National Parent Teacher Alliance)	"National news", Article "Views on contentious EM program sought"	Irish Catholic
June 2001	Sophie Gorman (journalist)	Article "Legal battle over "'Exploring Masculinities'"	Education Matters
25-9-2001	Journalist	Article "Irish syllabus demonizes young men"	Catholic World News
1-11-2001	Journalist	Article "Too much emphasis on homosexuality in Irish education?"	Gay Community News
Nov 2001	ASTI	Feature "Schools vital in fostering tolerance"	ASTIR
Nov 2001	Bryan O'Connor (journalist)	Article "Exploring Masculinities under review"	Education Matters

PHASE VI	September 2001 – November 2001		Marginal & Review Phase I
21-9-2001	Emmet Oliver (journalist)	Education correspondent, Article "Programme is 'totally unsuitable' say parents"	Irish Times
16-10-2001	Catherine Fitzpatrick (president, ASTI)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
17-10-2001	Mary T. Cleary (AMEN)	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
23-10-2001	Journalist	Column "Teacher's pet"	Irish Times E&L
23-10-2001	Brian P. O Cinneide	Letter "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
1-11-2001	John Walshe (journalist) Education editor	News "School project 'over-emphasises homosexuality'"	Irish Independent
2-11-2001	David Hegarty (parental perspective, NCSPA)	Letter (response to C. Fitzpatrick) "Exploring Masculinities"	Irish Times
7-11-2001	Fiona Neary, Rape Crisis Network	Letter "Family secrets"	Irish Independent
9-11-2001	Alan McGivergan	Letter "Educating the males"	Irish Independent

PHASE VII	March 2003	Review Phase II

Introductory Phase

By December 1998, while it was still being piloted in schools, information about **EM** was in the public domain. During this phase, we identified seven contributions, of which five were positive about **EM**. The first news piece in the Irish Times on 22 December 1998 by Andy Pollak, Education Correspondent, appeared under the header 'Masculinity topic for teenage boys'. It called **EM** a 'programme to help boys explore their masculinity', the aims of which included raising boys' awareness of their changing roles in society, and promoting equality, understanding, and mutual respect among all young people. Attention was promotional and positive.

A piece on 22 January 1999 in the Irish Times under the header 'Education for Life' described **EM** as a 'welcome attempt to bring the realities of life into the classroom'. The writer regretted the confinement of **EM** to a 'relatively small number of schools' and was critical of the 'too timid and defensive' approach of the Department of Education to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme. The piece was critical of Fianna Fáil Minister for Education, Mr Martin, in relation both to the resourcing (not enough) and pace of implementation (too slow) of RSE. Foreshadowing a section of the media attention to **EM** that was to follow, the piece concluded:

In all this Mr. Martin is vulnerable to the criticism that he is reluctant to unsettle a small, but extremely vociferous, minority who appear to oppose any kind of school-based sex education programme. Some of the same grouping also opposed the Stay Safe programme, which is now an integral part of primary education. Mr. Martin should be less timid in his approach. He might also demonstrate a greater measure of political courage and frame a sex

education programme for modern Ireland where many children are more sexually active at a younger age and where children are bombarded with references to sex and sexuality in the media.

Although programme content in SPHE is broadly concerned with many kinds of relationships (individual, familial, community, citizenship, etc.), the **EM** section dealing specifically with Relationships, Health, and Sexuality represents approximately 18% of the resource materials. RSE content within this section represents less than 10% of the materials. It is erroneous, therefore, to describe **EM** as only, or even mainly, a relationships and sexuality education programme.

Nonetheless, opposition to RSE represents a significant and continuous strand of opposition to **EM** and is apparent throughout the media attention to **EM**. In this regard, **EM** is only one of a number of foci for those who oppose RSE in schools and there appears to be some overlap in those criticising RSE and **EM**. Within the same timeframe as the **EM** attention (1999-2000), separate media attention to RSE described that programme as pornographic, dangerous, a threat to children, and a complaint was made to the Garda Commissioner about the content of the RSE programme (O'Carroll and Szalacha, 2000, p.30). By comparison, much of the criticism of **EM** seems mild.

The initial coverage of **EM**, then, was generally positive, used phrases such as 'help teenage boys', 'pioneered', 'first of its kind in the European Union', 'welcome', 'pity ... that this programme is confined to a relatively small number of schools', and was anticipatorily critical of those who would be critical of such a programme. While the limited media attention to **EM** at this time focused mainly on its

RSE/SPHE context, the monthly professional journal (ASTIR) of the ASTI, in a two-page feature in January 1999, entitled 'Exploring masculinity a great success,' described **EM** as a 'major gender equality project'.

Two letters in the Irish Times appeared under the header 'Exploring Masculinities'. The first (Noreen Coveney O'Beirne, 15 January 1999) stated that **EM** did not promote gender equality because a similar, progressive programme had not been established for girls. A response by Harry Ferguson (25 January 1999) stated that **EM** deserved unequivocal support, that it was 'crucial to provide education programmes which meet girls' needs to explore femininity and identity,' but given that 'a strategic focus on gender issues for boys has been so studiously ignored, and that we now know that the cost for young men of not being able to deal more openly with issues such as vulnerability and power can be so potentially disastrous, it should be patently obvious that programmes like 'Exploring Masculinities' are an absolute priority'. Journalist Catherine Foley in an article in the Education and Living supplement of the Irish Times (19 January 1999), also set **EM** in the context of gender and equality programmes that had been developed since the early 1980s.

During this first phase, then, **EM** was variously presented as, a gender equality programme, an RSE programme, a programme to help teenage boys 'explore their masculinity', and a personal development programme. The phase consisted of a handful of items, written mainly by journalists, and largely positive about **EM**.

Lull Phase

The Introductory Phase effectively ended in January 1999 and the

Lull Phase started. Except for one small news item on 25 May 2000 in the Irish Independent titled 'Boys target of sexuality programme', there appears to have been little further mention of **EM** in the mainstream print media for 20 months until September 2000. The news item described **EM** as a programme dealing with 'gender and sexuality issues', saying that such a programme was considered necessary in boys' schools to 'raise awareness among male teenagers in school environments which have traditionally focused on academic goals, rather than preparing teenage boys for broader societal roles.'

Substantive Phase

The third, and main, phase of public attention to **EM** began in September 2000, peaked in October 2000, and by the end of November was largely complete. This Substantive Phase began immediately following radio and newspaper coverage of the launch of **EM** (materials and video), and the executive summary of the Limerick Evaluation in September 2000. Although this phase represented only a short period of time in the overall temporal trajectory (1998-2002), it accounted for the most substantial material peak.

There are two reasons for considering this the Substantive Phase of media attention. Firstly, it was numerically the most concentrated phase, generating by far the largest number of items of any phase. During this short phase, more than 60% of all items identified were published. This phase was also substantive in the sense that it was during this phase that attention was given to the substance of **EM**. Articles published during the Substantive Phase considered curricular issues such as content, method, and rationale in a way that was not evident in other phases.

We identified 56 items in the national and dedicated press – articles articles, opinions, letters – that were generated during this phase. Of these, more than half (n=28) were letters; and a single author, representing one organisation, wrote 29% (n=8) of letters. A further 25% (n=7) of letters made reference (either supportive or critical) to the position adopted by this same author. In large part then, the debate that took place in these letters converged around views expressed by a small number of people. Journalists and academics made many of the remaining contributions.

The debate started with a single letter about **EM** to the editors of several newspapers. This generated a small response and, additionally, some journalists focussed on **EM** in articles and opinion columns. As in the Introductory Phase, initial mention of **EM** during the Substantive Phase was positive (Harry Ferguson, 14 September 2000; Denise Hall, 18 September 2000, 'The excellent Exploring Masculinity Project'). A letter published in a number of newspapers and a small number of articles led quickly to **EM** being labelled 'controversial'.

Two articles by the same journalist appeared on the same day early in this phase, one somewhat positive and the other very negative (Ian O'Doherty, Evening Herald, 28 September 2000). The first item was part two of a three-part series titled 'Men in Crisis', that mentioned **EM** in the context of young male psychiatric disorders, suicide, academic underachievement, traffic accidents, and violence. In the sole reference to **EM**, O'Doherty quoted Maureen Bohan, 'director of the controversial State-sponsored "Exploring Masculinity" schools program,' that boys are 'still being socialised in such a way that encourages boorish, elitist behaviour.' **EM**, he wrote, was 'a way to address this and convince children that there is nothing wrong with

not making the rugby team or the football team. There are plenty of other valid ways of expressing maleness.'

In the second item on the same day, 'School plan is accused of agenda', he quotes an anonymous teacher saying that the programme's content was 'shocking', 'politically correct', and an, 'example of a global radical feminist agenda'. According to his source, nobody dared to be critical of **EM** either within schools or publicly, because of fear of censure by the anonymous but powerful Department of Education and Science.

Initial letter

Between 21 September and 28 September 2000, longer and edited versions of a letter from Mary T Cleary, National Coordinator of AMEN, were published in Irish daily, evening, and Sunday newspapers. AMEN is a 'voluntary group providing a confidential helpline, information, and support service for male victims of domestic abuse and their children' (AMEN publicity information). The letter appeared under headers such as: 'Masculinity under threat from new school programme' (Irish Independent, 21 September); 'A view of men that has me very worried' (Evening Herald, 23 September); 'Emasculation' (Sunday Independent, 24 September); and 'Exploring Masculinities' (Irish Times, 28 September). Some of the issues raised in this letter were raised again in the Sunday Business Post (13 October 2000) in a news piece entitled 'Reluctant department'. The writer was critical of **EM**, and of the Department of Education's failure to make copies of the programme available to Mary Cleary. The letter introduced most of the criticisms (explicit and implied) that would endure over the timespan of the media attention to **EM**. These criticisms were based on beliefs that **EM** was designed by feminists and that this was a negative thing; that boys

were portrayed negatively; that domestic violence was represented in an unbalanced manner; that parents and the public were excluded, specifically from having copies of **EM** made available to them but also from input into the development and approval of curriculum materials; and that the notion of masculinity as a social construct underpinned the programme and was flawed.

Response to initial letter

Although the letter was published in several national newspapers, response was limited. The initial and most detailed response (Harry Ferguson, Irish Times, 5 October 2000) was highly critical of the position adopted by the author in the letter ('highly confused and alarmist', 'smacks of paranoia', 'shows lack of understanding about **EM**') and of AMEN, and stated that the author and others had 'no real understanding of gender relationships, or of an approach whereby boys and men can work together with each other and with women.'

Harry Ferguson's letter generated three responses in the Irish Times, one from David Walsh (23 October 2000), one from Alan McGivergan (11 October 2000), and one from Mary T Cleary (13 October 2000). David Walsh's letter was critical of what he saw as the social constructionism underpinning **EM**, assumptions that males were solely responsible for violence, and the failure to include parents and particularly fathers in the development of **EM**. Alan McGivergan was also critical of the Department of Education's refusal to let him have a copy of **EM**, and also of **EM**'s 'potential to undermine the effectiveness of parents, with detrimental consequences for the family unit and a resultant increase in social and psychological problems.'

Mary T. Cleary's response (13 October 2000) to Harry Ferguson's

letter again criticised **EM** because it 'falsely portrays men as violent and abusive and women as victims of an oppressive male patriarchy' and EM's 'attempt to deconstruct and reconstruct men and masculinity'. In her letter she drew attention to AMEN's voluntary work, and introduced the issue of domestic violence and gender symmetry, stating that 'men and women are equally capable of violence.'

14-24 October 2000

A majority of the main series of substantive articles about **EM** appeared between 14 and 24 October 2000. Several opinion pieces appeared around the weekend of 14 October 2000 (Breda O'Brien, 'Design of boys' programme intrinsically flawed', Irish Times; Patricia Redlich, 'Boys need social clothes, not threadbare direction', Sunday Independent, 15 October 2000; David Quinn, 'Real men stand up for what they know is right', Sunday Times, 15 October 2000; Brendan Glacken, 'The War Between Men and Women', Irish Times, 16 October 2000) representing the main concentration of articles about **EM**.

These articles were largely critical of **EM**, citing the programme's negative portrayal of males, the emphasis on males as violent, the lack of portrayal of men as victims of domestic violence, and the absence of portrayal of emotional abuse by women (O'Brien). They also cited **EM**'s 'explicitly feminist and left liberal agenda'; its propaganda; its attempt to shape boys to suit a perception of the world which sees men as the problem; and, most particularly, mainstream heterosexual men; its failure to understand what it is to be a young male; its 'all-pervading message that power by definition is bad'; and 'its sowing of the seeds of uselessness, moral ambivalence, lack of courage, intellectual laziness, and absence of good authority'

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(Redlich). In addition, Quinn critised **EM**'s feminist propaganda, its attempts to feminise boys, its social engineering, and its phoney ideology. Glacken singled out the risk to boys from 'jargon infection, dubious ideology, generalisations and arrogance'.

These articles preceded a public meeting about **EM** held in a Dublin hotel on 23 October 2000 organised by AMEN (Áine McCarthy, 5 November 2000), which received a very small amount of media attention. A letter (D. Kavanagh, Sunday Independent, 22 October) in response to Redlich's article (Sunday Independent, 15 October) urged people to attend the public meeting.

A further article (John Waters, Irish Times, 24 October 2000) under the header 'Big Mac feminism on the education menu' listed **EM**'s 'well-known defects' as: its obliteration of positive notions of masculinity, active promotion of homosexuality, skewed attitude to domestic violence, insult to intelligence, dishonesty, feminist ideologies, and inherent danger in increasing suicide rates among young men. He described **EM** as 'a flabby, intellectually dishonest vehicle for the implanting by stealth of feminist ideologies in the heads of young boys. Mostly it reads like "doss-class" fodder, offering a break from serious schoolwork.' The content of the article appears to focus mainly on the **EM** video, but reference is made to the section of the manual on relationships and sexuality, noting that 'three pages are devoted to heterosexual relationships, while homosexuality gets ten pages.' The article is positive about the section on bullying.

This early part of the Substantive Phase has been described in detail because the concentrated attention during this phase had a 'big bang' effect in drawing negative attention to **EM**. From this point on, **EM**'s

critics frequently described it as 'controversial'. The remainder of contributions to the Substantive Phase are now presented thematically as critical or supportive of **EM**.

Contributions critical of EM

Those critical of **EM** raised a number of issues at the very outset, and these reappeared right throughout the media attention, in the print and non-print media. These issues were mainly the subject of other discussions in the media, and included domestic violence, feminism, negative portrayal of boys, sexuality, social constructionism, parents' role in education, and exclusion.

Some other criticisms were sporadically added. These included, criticism of the transition year programme, **EM**, and SPHE teaching methodologies, **EM**'s 'active promotion of homosexuality', 'left liberal agenda', and its potential to 'increase suicide rates among young men'.

Violence

A focus on violence, and particularly on domestic violence, was present during most of the media attention to **EM**. A number of contributions cited increasing levels of violence generally, and the need for young men to deal with issues of violence, as providing a rationale for the programme (Paul Tierney, 1 October 2000; John Burns, 1 October 2000).

Overall, however, most of the commentary relating to violence and **EM** was about domestic violence (see, for example, Mary T Cleary, 15 October 2000; Liam O Gogáin, 24 October 2000). Definitions of domestic violence and the nature of domestic violence received some attention. There were calls from contributors who were

positive about **EM**, as well as from those who were critical of **EM**, for broader definitions and conceptual clarity about domestic violence. There was evidence of agreement in relation to some of the issues raised in this debate (see, for example, Tom Inglis, 26 October 2000; Mary T Cleary, 2 November 2000; Harry Ferguson, 6 November 2000; Tom Inglis, 7 November 2000). Furthermore, questionnaire and interview data collected from teachers during the course of this research also indicate their agreement regarding the importance of engaging with contested issues in this arena.

Masculinity as a social construct

The summary Limerick Evaluation (Gleeson, et al., 2000) mentions on page one that 'it is a fundamental premise of the Exploring Masculinities programme that masculinity is a social construct.' Although this is not stated anywhere in the **EM** materials themselves, the term was regularly referred to right throughout the media attention (John Burns, 1 October 2000; Tom Inglis, 26 October 2000; Rob Weatherill, 2 November 2000; Tom Inglis, 7 November 2000; Kathleen Lynch and Dympna Devine, 7 November 2000; Hugh F. Ryan, 10 November 2000; Tom Inglis, 14 November 2000; Alan Glenn Phillips, 15 November 2000). Despite the number of contributions that referred to construction, reconstruction, deconstruction, unreconstructed, etc., it is not apparent what contributors mean when they use those terms.

Social constructionist approaches to understanding human action draw on many disciplines within the social sciences and humanities, including cultural studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and literary theory (see, for example, Benson, 2001; Gelman and Taylor, 2000; Gergen, 1999; Tomasello, 1999; Berger and

Luckmann, 1966). Of all the media contributions that referred directly or in passing to 'masculinity as a social construct', only one referred to any theory of social constructionism (K. Lynch and D. Devine). Two other contributors (R. Weatherill and T. Inglis) referred to issues of identity. None of the other contributors offered an opinion on the meaning of 'masculinity as a social construct'. A consequence of this lack of engagement with social constructionism at a theoretical level was that the term was used to soak up different meanings, and to communicate in a vague way a range of possible interpretations.

The (generally) negative complexion imputed to the notion of 'masculinity as a social construct' could, however, usually be read from the tone of the contribution. For example, it was often clear from the context that critics considered such a notion to be dangerous to young males in schools because boys could be 'deconstructed' by the **EM** programme and could then be 'reconstructed' into girls, or feminised boys according to a 'global feminist agenda'.

Parental exclusion

Some letters during this phase were concerned specifically with parental exclusion from curriculum development and access to **EM** materials. Criticisms included parental exclusion from input to **EM** generally, and specifically the unavailability of **EM** resource materials (Liam O Gogáin, 24 October 2000); reported parents' frustration about departmental obstruction, lack of consultation, and the provision of irrelevant material under Freedom of Information requests (Danny Desmond, 3 November 2000); and parental exclusion from input to the programme (Tom Callagy, 17 November

2000). Parental involvement in Irish education has received little research attention (Hanafin and Lynch, 2002) and parents' role in education generally, and SPHE in particular, merits further research (see Vincent, 1997; Crozier, 2000).

Classrooms as therapeutic arenas

A small number of contributions critical of **EM** focused on **EM** classrooms as therapeutic arenas. Some of the criticism of **EM** in these articles derives from a belief that teachers should teach subject knowledge and leave social, personal, and health education to others ('the private morality and emotions of the individual are no business of educators or the state. Education should be left to educators and social work to social workers. With **EM**, the roles become blurred', Damian Byrne, 1 November 2000). In an earlier article, the same journalist criticised the creation of 'touchy-feely' environments, indoctrination, and brainwashing, criticising **EM** because it:

> encapsulates many of the more malign trends in contemporary Western societies. It has the dumbing down of education, the pathological obsession with health, the encroachment of the State upon the realm of personal relationships and private morality. It also reflects the growth of a therapeutic culture that fosters thin skins and emotional incontinence, that derides the habit of self-reliance and self-control and places frailty, vulnerability and victimhood upon a pedestal. (Damian Byrne, 5 October 2000)

A similar point was made in a contribution in the dedicated religious press (David Quinn, 23 November 2000, Irish Catholic) in a piece that picked up on a question asked in Dáil Éireann. Under the header '"Values programmes must be vetted by Dáil" says FG TD', he

reported John Bruton's assertion that programmes that set out to inculcate values into the next generation 'should not be delegated to experts' (such as teachers) and should be placed before the Dáil for approval. These critics appear to be concerned not only with the disclosure associated with therapeutic arenas but also with teaching methodologies such as group discussion and role play, for example, **EM**'s 'touchy-feely' talk, and 'ridiculous antics' in classrooms mentioned in another contribution (Danny Desmond, 27 October 2000, The Irish Family). The issue of relativism in the context of values education forms part of a larger discussion in Irish education reflecting the tensions between theocentric and market/secular influences in Irish society (O'Sullivan, 2000). This is evident in earlier discussion about values clarification in the 1980s, and in disquiet expressed about SPHE-type programmes, Stay Safe (Casey, 1993), and RSE programme in the early 1990s. In our view, consideration of the setting up of a formal arena within which such matters might be discussed in their full complexity would be worthwhile.

A defense of teaching methodologies (Áine McCarthy, 5 November 2000) noted that methods and approaches used in **EM** are typical of social/personal development courses that raise questions, refuse didacticism, and encourage discussion and thought rather than conclusions. She argues that a 'careful' reading of the material 'makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that its critics are fired by an anti-feminist stance (in some cases, obsession) that blinds them to what is really in boys' best interests.'

The creation of safe environments and non-therapeutic arenas by **EM** teachers are considered in Chapter 4, as is the handling of disclosure. Specifically in relation to the public debate, however, one teacher responded that:

Any teacher with a bit of cop on will not go down the road of in-depth discussions of these matters. Provide the material – let them make up their own minds. (Teacher questionnaire)

A broader curricular question about young people's rights to privacy and the rights of church and state regarding regulation remain to be answered. This is not just a question for **EM**, or even for SPHE, but for the curriculum generally, and we believe that this merits further research and consideration in tandem with the partners in education.

Feminism

During the Substantive Phase, many of the contributions critical of **EM** mentioned 'feminism' in passing (a global radical feminist agenda; offensive feminist dogmas; a virulent, feminist, aggressive, left–wing, liberal agenda). Only one contributor (10 November 2000, Linda Connolly) addressed feminism under the header of 'Exploring Masculinities', although it also received some attention within the context of other contributions (see, for example, Rosie Meade, 8 January 2001).

List approach

One further feature of criticisms of **EM** merits mention. A key characteristic of contributions that were negative about **EM** was the list approach. In this, writers included several, often unrelated, criticisms, sometimes even in a short letter. For example:

- **EM** conditions boys to tolerate assaults by females; social constructionism is 'a core belief of radical feminism', at best a contentious theory, at worst junk science; **EM** is a 'grievously misguided attempt at social engineering, based on offensive feminist dogmas about the nature of masculinity' with no place in

a 'modern secular libertarian society' (Brian O'Higgins, 8 October 2000).

- **EM** was constructed on the views of feminists and their supporters and cannot be balanced; it portrays negative images of males to young men; and 'it is dangerous to say that if you have homosexual or lesbian thoughts it is okay to physically explore or experiment as long as you use protection. Young people are vulnerable to peer pressure. What do feminists want? To make girls out of boys?' (Anastasia Murphy, 22 October 2000).

- **EM** contains vulgar language, represents the traditional family as 'only a cereal pack norm', teaches sons about 'exploring alternative sexual lifestyles', about how males are especially prone to violence, crime, and failure, dismisses AMEN, contains indoctrination and feminist propaganda, and uses inappropriate methodologies (Danny Desmond, 27 October 2000).

This list approach was also evident in many of the articles that appeared around this time, (see, for example, the series of articles between 14 and 22 October 2000). A consequence of the list approach is that it dampens rather than stimulates debate, because of the inherent difficulty of engaging with individual issues when so many are mixed together.

Contributions in support of EM

While criticisms of **EM** focused on potential shortcomings in relation to the materials themselves, much of the positive attention about **EM** during October and November 2000, focused on a rationale for the programme. Various rationales were put forward, drawing on policy and legislative frameworks, social issues,

curriculum issues, and research on boys and boys' schools. Findings from the Limerick Evaluation about **EM** were also presented in support of **EM**.

EM was situated within the wider educational, policy, and legislative context, and the previous focus on interventions for girls noted (Kathleen Lynch and Dympna Devine, 7 November 2000). Other rationales presented for **EM** included increased levels of violence (Paul Tierney, 1 October 2000), and opportunities offered by programmes such as **EM** to consider issues of violence (John Burns, 1 October 2000; Harry Ferguson, 6 November 2000; Tom Inglis, 7 November 2000).

EM in its transition year context was also supported (Kathleen Lynch and Dympna Devine, 7 November 2000; John Coolahan and four other professors/heads of education departments, 24 November 2000), as was its extensive curriculum development over a period of five years (Kathleen Lynch and Dympna Devine, 7 November 2000).

The need for opportunities for boys to explore issues relating to their own gender, to give them opportunities to examine a wide range of important issues that are significant for them during their adolescence and adulthood including health, bullying, disability, human rights, work and careers, sport, relationships, and family (John Coolahan and others, 24 November 2000), and to provide opportunities to help young adult males to 'reflect critically' on the various constructions of male identity – including 'old-fashioned' virtues – and thus be in a better position to construct their own identities, were noted (Tom Inglis, 26 October 2000).

Research findings pointing to low SPHE provision in boys' single-sex schools were also put forward as a rationale (Kathleen Lynch and

Dympna Devine, 7 November 2000). Many of those arguing for better provision of SPHE for boys, and particularly for boys in single-sex schools, drew on research findings about boys and schooling. Articles drawing on the 'what about the boys?' discourse (John Burns, 1 October 2000; Áine McCarthy, 5 November 2000; Kathy Sheridan, 27 December 2000), led to consideration of issues such as underachievement, physical and mental health, and violence. Negative attitudes among boys in single-sex schools to Travellers and gay people were also presented as a rationale (Áine McCarthy, 5 November 2000; Charlie Lennon, 8 December 2000).

Overall, it can be seen that although contributors who were positive about **EM** tended towards evidence-based research, they were far fewer in number than contributors who were negative about **EM**. We identified only one item between the publication of the Limerick Evaluation in September 2000 and the present time that drew on the research findings of the Limerick Evaluation (John Walshe, 24 October 2000). In that article, research findings that most male students taking part in **EM** were very positive about it were noted. Other evidence from the Limerick Evaluation that teachers welcomed **EM**, and were discriminating in what parts of the resource materials they used, and how, were also mentioned in the article. In the context of presenting evidence-based research findings, it is astonishing and regrettable that so little of the substantial body of data from the Limerick Evaluation made its way into the public domain. In particular, the absence of students' perspectives is unfortunate, given the largely positive impression of their participation in **EM** presented in the Limerick Evaluation. These findings had the potential to alleviate anxieties about some elements of the criticisms put forward about **EM**.

Summary and conclusion of the Substantive Phase

This phase accounted for the greatest number of items in the public debate. We have noted that many of the contributions were made by a small number of people, and 8 out of 56 items identified were made by one individual during this phase. A number of key issues have been identified, and it is clear that many issues are blurred by virtue of their primary focus elsewhere.

By the middle of November, this phase was almost over, with only a trickle of positive comments from contributors supporting **EM** to follow (John Coolahan and others, 24 November 2000; Charlie Lennon, 8 December 2000; and Kathy Sheridan, 27 December 2000).

Marginal Phase

The lack of substantive consideration of **EM** lasted from January 2001 until March 2002 and so Phase IV may be thought of as a Marginal or Incidental Phase. The first nine months of 2001 saw very little mainstream media attention given to **EM**, with little more than passing references in a small number of letters (Rosie Meade, 8 January 2001) and articles (David Quinn, 14 January 2001; Brendan Glacken, 15 March 2001; Breda O'Brien, 7 July 2001). The only substantive mention of **EM** during this time was in relation to a proposed constitutional challenge to **EM** by a parent who was opposed to his 14-year-old son taking the programme. He claimed that **EM** 'contravenes Article 42 (of the Irish constitution) that the 'primary and natural' educator of the child is the family' (Emmet Oliver, 8 March 2001). From late autumn 2001 onwards, **EM** was mentioned only marginally in relation to other substantive topics, apart from references in the two phases mentioned below: the dedicated press and review phases.

Other than the constitutional challenge, no new issues were raised during this phase and, among others, attention continued to be focused on perceived feminist malevolence. For example, under the header 'Discrimination in favour of women', a letter objecting to the 'National Plan for Women's Rights', refers in passing to **EM** as a 'fairy tale saga . . . compiled by the wicked stepmother and the ugly witch, in a perverted social reconstruction of Prince Charming' (Alan McGivergan, 4 November 2001).

Under the header 'Male suicide and feminism', a letter attributing young male deaths by suicide to 'a feminist State, underpinned by a misandrist culture', a passing reference to **EM** states that it was 'created by feminist ideas' and will have a negative effect on young men when they are at 'highest risk of taking their own lives' (Phil MacGiolla Bhain, 22 November 2001).

Several articles and letters about domestic violence appeared between December 2001 and February 2002. Although the articles were substantively about domestic violence, **EM** was mentioned in passing in some of them (Medb Ruane, 14 December 2001; John Waters, 7 January 2002 ['doomed' EM]; Mary Cleary, 10 January 2002 [**EM** has been 'exposed as deeply flawed']). In these, the reference to **EM** amounted to no more than a few words in the articles.

During the marginal phase, the main substantive topic of contributions that mentioned **EM** was domestic violence, with an emphasis on issues of gender symmetry. Other substantive topics included young male suicide, the oppression of men, and particularly fathers, by feminist social policy, and legislative inequalities. In these contributions, **EM** was mentioned only in passing or peripherally. The mention was often no more than a sentence or phrase in

contributions mainly concerned with subjects other than **EM**. **EM** was used to exemplify the substantive issue or as 'evidence' of a point being made. A consequence of this was that **EM** remained in the public eye during an extended time period when there appeared to be little or no interest in it, apart from some sections of the dedicated and specialist press, and the interest that arose during the NCCA review.

Marginal except for Dedicated Press Phase

Alongside the Marginal or Incidental Phase that began in December 2000 and continued until March 2002, there were ongoing references to **EM** in some sections of the dedicated Catholic and specialist press. This may be thought of as the fifth distinct phase of the public attention to **EM** because, although temporally it was subsumed within Phase IV, its distinctive character rendered it worthy of separate consideration. During this phase, attention continued to be paid in the dedicated Catholic press to feminism, and to **EM**'s sections on gender and sexuality, and most, but not all, of the contributions were negative (Ann Marie Desmond, March 2001, Alive; Mary T. Cleary, April 2001, Alive; journalist, 'Masculinity and growing boys', April 2001, PATRE review; Danny Desmond, 1 June 2001, Irish Catholic).

Phase IV lasted from January until September 2001. During this period, by comparison with other emphases in the mainstream media attention, **EM** faded. Since most attention occurred in the dedicated and specialist press, this phase can be considered as a Dedicated Press Phase. No new themes emerged during this phase.

Marginal and Review Phase I

The fifth discrete phase of the media attention to **EM**, the Review Phase I, represented an interruption to the Marginal Phase. It occurred during autumn 2001 and consisted mainly of the reporting of issues that arose in the course of the NCCA's review of **EM**. The main criticisms at this time related to **EM** and sexual orientation, domestic violence, and violence.

A submission by the Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association (CSPA) to the consultative forums held as part of the NCCA review received some attention in a news piece in the Irish Times, under the header, 'Programme is "totally unsuitable" say parents' (Emmet Oliver, 21 September 2001). Calling for **EM** to be withdrawn, the CSPA claimed that it undermined young boys by asking them to disclose their feelings about private and personal matters in the classroom; offered group therapy; and over-emphasised homosexuality. The CSPA's positive comments about some good and praiseworthy topics, such as **EM** drawing attention to domestic violence, were also reported. The reporting on a small proportion of the CSPA's wide-ranging submission to the NCCA review (the only one of seventeen submissions to receive media attention), generated a small amount of response in the period that followed. A letter on behalf of the ASTI criticised the CSPA's 'intemperate comments' and situated **EM** within the contexts of a legislative framework for equality, and concern for boys (Catherine Fitzpatrick, 16 October 2001).

Commentaries on **EM**'s negative images of men, social constructionism, and the impact of feminism on the education system, and on society in general, appeared again during this phase. **EM**'s 'consistent theme' was that men are the 'flawed, evil, violent,

and powerful half of the human race' (Mary T. Cleary, 17 October 2001). **EM** represented a 'mutant form of man-hating feminism' (John Waters, 22 October 2001). **EM** was a 'PC masterplan for schools' (journalist, 23 October 2001); violence towards animals is a naturally occurring masculine trait that is not learned (Brian P. O Cinnéide, 23 October 2001); **EM** was designed without input by parents, and was an attempt to incorporate 'politically correct secular ideologies' into Catholic secondary school programmes (David Hegarty, 2 November 2001).

Another account of the NCCA review of **EM** (John Walshe, 1 November 2001) also picked up on the CSPA submission ('School project "over-emphasises homosexuality"'). Responding to the CSPA's objection to boys being involved in the 'time-wasting and objectionable activities of being induced to reveal personal and family matters,' Fiona Neary of the Rape Crisis Network endorsed **EM** as 'an excellent programme that could contribute to a better understanding of the extent and nature of sexual violence' (7 November 2001). Responding to this, Alan McGivergan repeated the assertions that EM starts from the basis that 'all men are bad and evil', and that EM is 'an intent of social reconstruction . . . devised by the feminist movement, hidden in the hallways of power' (9 November 2001).

The salient characteristic of this phase was the focus on the CSPA's submission to the consultative forums held as part of the NCCA review of **EM**. Criticisms revived during this phase were focused on what critics perceived as feminist ideologies, social constructionism, negative portrayal of males, and denial of parents' rights as moral educators of their children. This phase was also characterised by a lack of attention to the programme itself and, rather, a focus on the NCCA review, and issues raised in one submission.

Review Phase II

As this report is being concluded, a new phase (Phase VII) is beginning. This phase is drawing attention to a preliminary report by the authors of this report submitted to the executive of the NCCA to assist them in their review. Our research report, commissioned by the NCCA, focuses on the **EM** resource materials and the experiences of teachers and principals in implementing **EM** within the context of the public debate. Current criticisms of **EM** appear to be primarily focused on the exclusion of parents with a secondary emphasis on the criticisms raised during Phase II.

Questions to Minister for Education in Dáil Éireann

Between 18 May 1999 and 12 December 2001, we identified twelve questions on **EM** put to Ministers for Education (and Science), Mr Micheál Martin and, subsequently, to Dr Michael Woods. Of the twelve questions, five were raised during the Substantive Phase. A further five were concerned with the review itself, the numbers of schools providing **EM**, and when a report would be available to the Minister. Mirroring the public debate, early questions and the Minister's responses in Dáil Éireann were positive about **EM**. In September 1999, Minister Martin replied to a question about the introduction of the recommendations of the National Task Force on Suicide, saying:

The Department of Education and Science is aware of the gender dimension in suicide statistics. In response, a programme specifically for boys and young men has been developed and will be disseminated later this term. The programme *Exploring Masculinities* deals with aspects of male life contributing to suicidal feelings. It also deals with the changing roles of men and women, with violence and with sport. Information on support services is also included.

During the early phases, both Ministers were very positive about RSE and **EM**. As time went on, there was less focus on the positive aspects of **EM**. The Minister's answers to the last seven questions identified (between November 2000 and September 2001) focused on the awaited review.

3.4 ISSUES ARISING FROM THE MEDIA DEBATE

Overview

This section outlines the contributions to the public debate about **EM**, who made them, the type of contributions, where they occurred, and issues arising.

Who contributed?

Four groups contributed to the mainstream print media attention to **EM**: journalists (37), organisations (14), academics (11), and others (17) (Figure 3.2). Eight journalists accounted for 57% of the 37 contributions made by journalists. Several journalists made only one contribution, and, while a small number made ongoing contributions, few of these were substantively concerned with **EM**. Most of the contributions from academics took place in the letters pages of the Irish Times. Organisations represented included the ASTI, AMEN, National Parent Teacher Alliance, Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association, and the Rape Crisis Network. Special interest groups, and particularly AMEN, played a significant role in keeping **EM** in the public eye. In particular, Mary T. Cleary, the national coordinator of AMEN, in addition to her other contributions during this period, made eleven contributions that specifically mentioned **EM**, ten of them in the mainstream print media. In addition, she contributed to the television programme Questions and Answers in October 2000, asking a question about

radical feminism and **EM**. As well as the two named parents' organisations, several individuals who contributed letters indicated that they were writing from a parental perspective.

Almost entirely lacking from the media attention were male students who had participated in **EM**. Apart from the Pat Kenny radio programme during which six male students from four different schools were interviewed, along with Maureen Bohan, project director, about **EM**, and one print-media reference to the Limerick Evaluation, the voices of male students themselves were absent from the public debate. As suggested by our available empirical data (the Limerick Evaluation, our surveys, and interviews with teachers), male students were generally positive about the programme. We think a greater emphasis on, and appreciation of, the experiences of the male students would be desirable. The project director did not make an authored contribution to the media attention but was referred to frequently, mainly during the Substantive Phase.

Figure 3.2 Percentage of contributions according to category of contributor
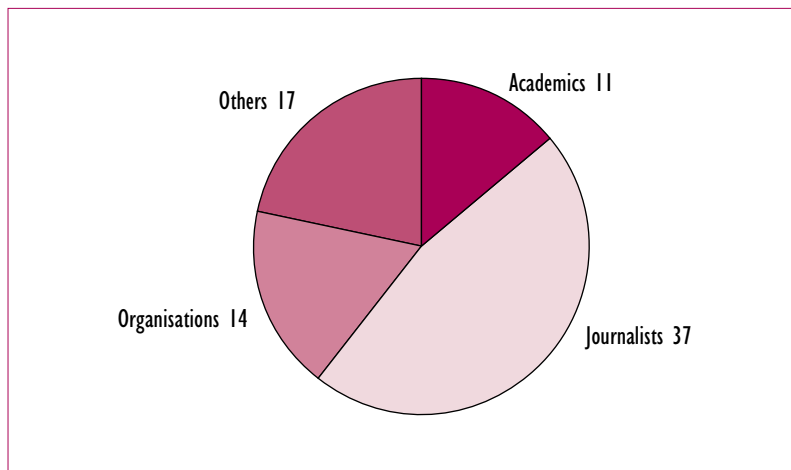
In total, we identified 96 contributions of which 79 were in the mainstream national print media (Table 3.2). Most contributions on EM were letters and opinion pieces or articles, with a small number of news items (Figure 3.4). More than a third (36%) of the letters were written by three people. About two-thirds of the contributions were negative about the programme, criticising it on various grounds detailed earlier. The main positions of both those critical and supportive of **EM** are detailed earlier at the end of the section on the Substantive Phase.

Figure 3.3 Number of contributions according to category
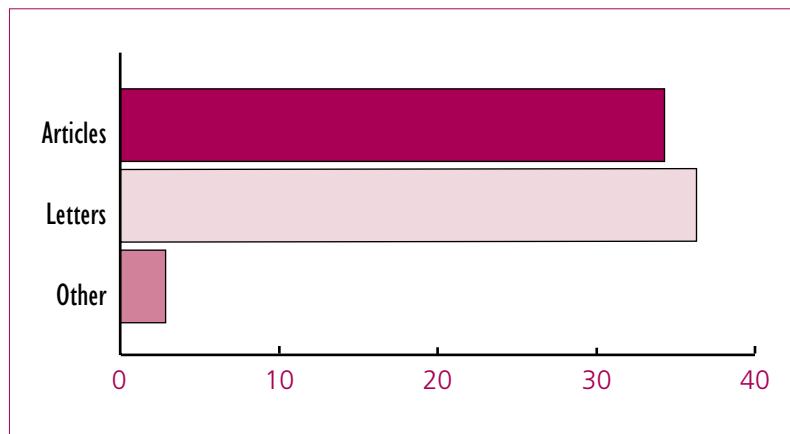
Questionnaire and interview data collected during the course of this research indicate that criticisms of a 'feminist agenda', imbalanced portrayal of domestic violence, negative portrayal of boys, emphasis or over-emphasis on homosexuality, and methodologies that lend themselves to personal and family disclosure in **EM**, are considered by teachers of **EM** as unwarranted and unsustainable. There was, however, a strong sense among teachers in our research that claims in the public debate over-emphasised a small part of the programme, and thus misconstrued the import of the programme in its entirety:

I find the claim incredible. I feel they over-emphasise a tiny part of the programme. (Teacher questionnaire)

Teachers also reported that some critics of the programme misunderstood the motives and practices of classroom teachers.

I think (named individual) is growing increasingly daft…they are attacking those of us who care most about men/boys. They focus on a very narrow aspect of the programme and use that to undermine the whole thing. I do agree with (named individual) that men get treated unfairly in the courts…etc., custody…etc. I do not think men should be effeminate or deny their masculinity (though kicking the family pet is hardly proof of one's masculinity!). I think men are in a tough place now: the old man is a 'boorish pig' and the new man is a 'wimp'.

Yours, Father, son, husband, brother – increasingly rare male teacher. (Teacher questionnaire)

We were particularly struck by how different teachers' experiences were from what was reported in the media. Teachers communicated a wide range of views about **EM**, and their areas of interest (detailed in Chapter 4) represented a much stronger emphasis on educational needs and pedagogical imperatives than was apparent in the polarised positions adopted in the media.

Continuity

A high degree of continuity was apparent in the contributions to the media attention over the period of this debate. Many of the contributions also reflected continuity over a much longer time period, echoing earlier debates about RSE and lifeskills programmes.

Nature of materials

Lack of clarity about the curricular nature of **EM** has been considered in Chapter 2. This led to at least some of the dissatisfaction with the programme expressed in the media attention. What kind of educational initiative was **EM** understood to be in the media attention? Contributors appeared to have different understandings about the nature of the intervention, variously describing it as a gender equality programme; a personal development programme; a programme dealing with 'masculinity and how to improve the behaviour of boys and young men' (Ian O'Doherty, 28 September 2000); an attempt by feminists to reconstruct boys; and a social, personal and health education programme.

Mixed positions about EM

Critics of **EM** are not a homogenous group. Different groups disagree about which parts of **EM** merit criticism. For example, Breda O'Brien (14 October 2000) in an overall negative article considered the section on sport to be quite good in raising 'important questions about excessive competitiveness and the ongoing commercialisation of sport.' John Waters (24 October 2000) considered the same section obsessive about 'competitiveness, locker–room culture, bullying, racism, and drug abuse, but [with] minimal celebration of the tremendous achievement and satisfaction available to youngsters through sport. The approach is as if to "empower" the most weedy, unathletic boy in the class, and bring the rest down to his level.'

It should also be noted that the contributions, while somewhat polarised, were not completely so. In the media attention,

contributors who were generally critical of **EM** also identified positive elements (e.g. John Waters, 24 October 2000 was positive about the section on bullying). Moreover, those who were generally positive and supportive of **EM** also identified aspects of the programme that could be improved. These aspects included references to both methodologies and content.

Although there was sustained media attention, there was little engagement with the substance of the programme in relation to topics raised in the media. For example, although subjects such as domestic violence received media attention as important subjects in their own right, there was no substantive analysis of **EM** materials themselves in relation to these subjects. Furthermore, apart from domestic violence, there was little substantive expansion of other issues (social constructionism, feminism, boys and masculinity, parents and education) during the span of the public attention to **EM**.

In relation to the substance and process of the media attention, we were struck by the role of the media in social democracy at a time of rapid social and cultural change. Although submissions to the NCCA's consultative forums were not part of our brief, we found them very helpful as an elaboration of many of the positions taken up in the media. Limited space and truncated time spans led to a scarcity of dialogical opportunities, rendering the letters pages and opinion columns of national newspapers inadequate to meet the needs of individuals or groups who have something to say about educational matters. Much of what we noted about the media focus on **EM** points to the need for a forum where extended dialogue about educational matters can take place, a forum that would be felt to be inclusive of the education partners, as well as providing an opportunity for the inclusion of a diverse range of views.

3.5 Conclusion: shape and temporal trajectory of media attention

Attention to **EM** in the media commenced in December 1998 and has been ongoing until the present time (Spring 2002). The shape changed and the amount of attention fluctuated during these years. We initially thought of this attention in terms of a 'public debate' and in our research proposal we anticipated tracking the shape and temporal trajectory of the debate as a narrative summary. As we familiarised ourselves with contributions in the media on **EM**, however, it became clear that 'sustained media attention' was a more accurate description than 'public debate'.

First, there were considerable periods during those 3+ years when **EM** was either not the focus of any media attention, or was the focus only in marginal relation to some other subject, which was the primary focus of the attention (e.g. domestic violence). Second, the number of substantive contributions on **EM** was not that high compared with the overall number of contributions on related areas such as gender and masculinity. Out of a total of about 79 contributions in the mainstream print media that we examined, fewer than a dozen articles/opinion columns were concerned substantively with **EM** as an educational programme. Many of the contributions, both articles and letters, made only a passing reference to **EM**.

Third, within this relatively small number, the level of debate on the substantive issue was also limited. **EM** itself (specifically the materials) received little real analysis. As all of the main criticisms were introduced early on and repeated over time, the debate did not develop conceptually over the duration. Fourth, a relatively small number of contributors was responsible for quite a high proportion

of the contributions. A small number of contributions generated a handful of responses each (in letters to newspaper editors published in the national newspapers) but, generally speaking, each series of letters dried up quite quickly, and many articles and letters generated no response at all. All of the above meant that what was initially thought of as a 'public debate' came to be seen as extended attention to particular aspects of a subject, whose main interests for the contributors were exemplary and segmented rather than substantive and holistic.

Conflation, EM and the public debate

We have mentioned that we see a need for critical literacy, and for perspective and precision in relation to several aspects of **EM**, and this is also the case in relation to the public debate, where **EM** issues have frequently been conflated with other issues. This conflation occurred in relation to social concerns, and to school and curricular concerns. It was further facilitated by a general lack of understanding, and imprecision, about the nature of teachers' work as well as apparent lack of trust in teachers (see Chapter 4).

First, much of the criticism of **EM** reflected concerns about broader societal issues that were not specific to **EM** but which it was understood to exemplify. Second, much of the criticism developed from broader educational concerns not specific to **EM** but which it was understood to exemplify. Third, conflation was compounded by vagueness and ambiguity about curriculum and the nature of teachers' work, particularly in relation to social, personal and health education.

We attempt here to identify and categorise these various concerns in order to separate **EM**-specific concerns from concerns expressed in

the context of **EM**, but which might just as easily be expressed in other contexts. These other contexts could include all SPHE programmes, RSE programmes, gender equality programmes, and policy and legislative contexts, especially Family Law contexts. The public debate about **EM** included many contributions that reflected broader societal issues such as concerns about the gendered representation of violence and, specifically, the gendered representation of domestic violence; concerns about young male suicide and about male vulnerability; concerns about state policy and legislation on equality-related matters; concerns about the treatment of men and fathers by society and by the courts in particular; concerns about the erosion of traditional Judeo-Christian religious values, specifically in respect of sexual identity/orientation, and diversity of family forms; and beliefs about a singular feminism responsible for many social ills. We turn to this latter point to provide an exemplar of how conflation can more easily occur when a complex phenomenon is portrayed in a unitary fashion. In this example, we draw upon recent work in developmental psychology that explicates various feminist theories that inform research and policy over the last number of decades.

In their analysis of the implications of feminism for developmental psychology, Rosser and Miller (2000) draw attention to the range of feminist theories, suggesting that '[i]ndividuals unfamiliar with feminist scholarship or women's studies often assume that feminist theory provides a singular and unified framework for analysis' (p. 11). They identify different feminist theories and the questions that each would raise about psychological development, show how each can serve as a critique of current accounts of development, and suggest new applications to the study of development. In doing this, Rosser and Miller (2000, p. 12) provide the following useful table which we reproduce here.

Table 3.2 The varieties of feminist theories, reproduced from Rosser and Miller (2000)

Feminist theory	Critique	Developmental implications
Liberal	Inequities: need to correct bad science	Remove barriers to girls' achievement; more inclusive and less biased samples, topics, methods, practices
Socialist	Neglect of gender/class power structure or social contextualism	Social constructionism; attention to power and social class
African-American/Ethnic	Neglect of race as source of oppression; critique of dichotomous categories	More inclusive and less biased samples, topics, methods, practices
Essentialist	Biological differences in anatomy and hormones form the basis for social differences	Attention to biological input
Existential	Biology forms the basis of social construction of otherness	Attention to the normalising role of masculine concepts and language; the social construction of girls' otherness
Psychoanalytic	Re-examination of the origins of gender in early family practices	The early origins of gender
Radical	Gender oppression is deepest, most widespread oppression; make women the focus of analysis	Redefinition of topics in development; models of development based on girls' experiences
Postmodern	Questions possibility of universalising any knowledge or category, including gender	Deconstructs 'development'; questions universality of development
Postcolonial	Neglect of power underlying dominant-subordinate relations; coloniser to colonised parallels male to female; reinforces gender oppression	Places economic and social development in a common framework; attention to power

In addition to the concern about feminism, as we have noted, a range of other concerns was apparent. For many of those critical of **EM**, one or more of these other concerns was primary. Concerns were filtered through **EM** but were also filtered through other educational programmes such as the RSE/SPHE curriculum. This occurred because these concerns are not specific to **EM**. Rather, individuals' or groups' concerns about broader issues are operationalised or materialised into concerns expressed about **EM**.

The second layer of concerns relates to foundational educational matters within which curriculum, schooling, and **EM** are located. These include the purpose of education, the nature of transition year, and the place of SPHE and RSE programmes in education. For example, some critics of **EM** have argued that the purpose of schooling should be the transmission of academic knowledge, concentrating on a traditional 3Rs curriculum or a vocationally-oriented curriculum. From this position, syllabuses or programmes – including **EM** – dealing with social education, citizenship education, health education, and equality, are seen to have no place in the curriculum, the classroom, or the school.

Opposition within this perspective has been visible for a sustained period in Irish education. In this regard, a report on the implementation of RSE suggested that a small, organised, vocal lobby is opposed to RSE and that the 'other side must organise and be just as vocal if RSE is to survive' (O'Carroll and Szalacha, 2000, p. 30). Their research identified a 'strongly conservative, organised laity, opposed to the introduction of sex education within schools. Several interviewees reported that there appeared to be a strategy to ensure that people of a particular political and religious philosophy were involved at all levels of the RSE process, from teachers involved in

the training, to parent representatives on the school policy committees, to media commentators. The ultimate aim of this strategy, it was alleged, was to scupper the introduction of RSE' (pp. 29-30).

Imprecise propositions about **EM**, curriculum, schools, and the nature of teachers' practice, particularly in relation to social, personal and health education have supported the conflation of issues about **EM**. Teachers' practice was a particular focus of this research and is considered in detail in Chapter 4. It is worth noting at this point that, throughout our research activities for this section of the review, we have found no evidence that **EM** supports the creation of therapeutic arenas in classrooms. On the contrary, our findings clearly show that teachers exercise considerable care in classrooms in order to avoid this and, in so doing, have at their disposal a range of highly-developed and structurally supported strategies such as private reflection, boundary-setting, referral on, etc. Concerns about teaching methodologies have also been expressed, and again the evidence from the data we have collected from teachers is that they are discriminating in relation to content selected and methods used and also in how they use them. It is possible that at least some of the conflation of issues that has arisen relates directly to imprecise propositions regarding teachers' work generally, and specifically the work of SPHE teachers. We recommend that more precise information about this work be made available to parents, and especially about the establishment of codes of good practice to provide safe and protective classroom environments. This would, we feel, help to allay fears regarding student vulnerability in classroom situations. For example, Unit 1 establishes a charter of good practice for **EM** classrooms, drawing on approaches to the teaching of SPHE

developed over a twenty-year period (Dorr and Flynn, 1990). We give a detailed account of Unit I in Chapter 2.

Conflation ultimately operated as an effective mechanism, in which many unrelated issues became caught up in the mobilisation of **EM** as a cultural flashpoint[1]. **EM** served to materialise other concerns and interests. Abstract issues, such as 'global feminist agendas', were made apparently concrete through the programme, often through the use of a list approach, vivid imagery, and satire. As such, **EM** became a tangible, recognisable, nameable phenomenon capable of holding and conveying unease and disagreement about social change. A consequence of this, especially in terms of what remained unengaged with, undefined, and unexplained was that **EM** took on an amorphous character, implicated in social discontents originating at national and global levels. Our research evidence strongly suggests that this representation, along with being limited and inaccurate, is unhelpful to students and teachers in schools.

We now turn to debates and issues raised in relation to boys' schooling internationally. Some of the issues raised in those debates resonate with some aspects of the media attention to **EM** over the last three years in Ireland.

[1]   We are grateful to Professor Denis O'Sullivan, Education Department, National University of Ireland, Cork, who suggests the relevence of the concept "cultural flashpoint" and who helped us in explicating its application in this context.

3.6 INTERNATIONAL COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

Exploring Masculinities in an international context: 'What about the boys?'

This section reviews international literature and identifies approaches that inform curriculum approaches to boys in schools (Lesko, 2000). It is an important starting point. By revealing existing internationally based approaches to boys' social and personal education, we set up an evaluative device that can pick out corresponding strengths and weaknesses in the **EM** programme. This section begins by focusing on two major approaches, evident in studies of boys, schooling, and curriculum initiatives.

The first approach consists of rigorously conducted research that investigates boys and schooling through the notion of masculinity. It developed as a critique of the highly influential sex-role theory (Bem, 1981). The latter perspective has a lot in common with current popular accounts of men's problems, particularly with reference to women, that speak of a gender polarity of fixed notions of masculinity and femininity, in which gender identity is seen as an attribute of the individual. Earlier definitions of masculinity were closely connected to psychological paradigms that perceived masculinity as present in different behaviours and attitudes (Stoller, 1968). There are a range of approaches drawing upon sex roles as a concept to understand masculinity that have tended to be closely developed with theories of socialisation (Parsons and Bales, 1956). Through socialisation, sex role theorists argue, males and females are conditioned into appropriate roles of behaviour. Polarised norms and expectations between genders are central to the definition of masculinity. Consequently, attitude tests, according to one strand of sex role theory, can be used to measure levels of socialisation by the

amounts of masculinity that males possess (Bem, 1981). Within this perspective, masculinity is subject to objective and unproblematic measurement through an index of gender norms. Interestingly, from a specific concern with educating boys, Pleck (1981), suggests that living up to a gender role is more problematic for boys because of the pressure of social expectations that males experience. In particular, expectations of strength, power, and sexual competence form the basis of male roles. Boys, he argues, are likely to experience failure because of the contradiction between the ideal 'role' and lived experience. For Pleck, this is the necessary basis for an understanding of masculine identity formation.

The first approach as a critical account of sex-role theory emerged as part of a wider growth in men's studies (Connell, 1989; Thorne, 1993; Brod and Kaufman, 1994; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Frank and Davidson, 2000). It builds on earlier feminist research that makes visible the gendered nature of education and places power relations at the centre of its analysis. Moving beyond sex-role theory, it argues that masculinity is not one-dimensional identity but rather needs to be thought of in the plural, that is, in terms of a number of different male lifestyles or masculinities. It suggests that certain men have differential access to power, practices of power, and experience differentially, the effects of power. From this perspective, masculinity is a useful way of explaining these power relationships.

This approach to boys also suggests that research in education needs to think about this area of study as being situational (in terms of particular societies/schools/subjects), relational (male students developing their identity in relation to other boys as well as girls), and dynamic (as an important, active aspect of male students' developing personality). Such an approach to boys has demonstrated

that male students at senior-cycle level adopt a range of masculine styles, such as: the academic, the anti-school student, the sportsman, etc. Furthermore, in developing their gender identity, this takes place not only in relation to girls but most importantly in relation to and with other boys. Hence, the importance of peer groups for boys' responses to teaching and learning. At the same time, it is suggested that rather than focusing upon one category, that of gender, we need to address the complex interaction of diverse categories, including social class, gender, sexuality, and disability. Interestingly, evidence from international studies shows that social class is the key variable in relation to academic achievement for both boys and girls. Hence, in an Irish context, rather than assuming that all adolescent boys are failing or a problem, we need to ask: which boys? Research enables us to identify such individuals and whether specific patterns are emerging, for example, around particular social categories and/or particular schools or subject areas.

The second approach focuses upon 'failing boys' (see O' Doherty, 1994; Teese et al, 1995; Sukhnandan, et al, 2000; Collins et al, 2000). It addresses a major limitation of the first approach, that of the failure to indicate to policy makers and teachers how recent theoretical advances might be translated into curriculum initiatives and classroom strategies. In an atmosphere that encourages quick fix policy solutions, there is little engagement with the masculinities and schooling literature. This approach to understanding boys conflates 'boyness' with masculinity. This means that boys' behaviour is understood in terms of whether they have 'too much' or 'too little' masculinity. Thus, masculinity can be instilled or removed. Masculinity initiatives in Sweden and England provide clear examples of this approach. In these societies there is much concern

that boys are becoming effeminised by the absence of males in their learning environments. Strategies of getting males into teaching, or males as mentors, are currently being adopted. This is a complex debate within gender studies. But some major effects of curriculum interventions using this conceptual confusion are as follows. By focusing upon boys rather than masculinities, there is a tendency to operate within an unhelpful gender dichotomy, in which boys' schooling experiences are simplistically compared to girls (AAUW, 1999).

Skelton (2001) notes other limitations of the 'failing boys' literature, which suggests solutions that are piecemeal and unsubstantiated. Internationally, an explosion of studies appeared in the late 1990s, with recommendations based on individual schools' specific experiences that were then generalised to all schools. This in turn has contributed to a notion of a crisis in male students' schooling. These studies tend to make assertions concerning a wide range of aspects of boys' social behaviour, including academic failure, bullying, emotional underachievement, and lack of literacy and communication skills. However, these assertions, often based upon personal/professional instinct, are made without being interrogated by systematic research. Hence, a reading of international studies makes clear that the resulting arbitrary curriculum interventions are underpinned by contradictory solutions that include suggestions of single-sex classroom teaching, and mixed gendered groups, in order to target boys' assumed problems. At the same time, boys' problems are implicitly connected to females, in both of these proposed solutions. In the first, boys need to be separated from girls. In the second, boys need to be with girls.

Implicit within these initiatives are several explanations about 'failing

boys'. A major difficulty with them is their failure to make clear if the perceived problem of male students is caused by the school itself, in the wider society, or from within boys themselves. If the primary reason for some Irish boys' experience of failure is the school, this may suggest the need to direct resources into addressing schools' approaches to boys' gender relationships. This would require a fundamental examination of school organisation, management objectives, and institutional processes, including: disciplinary policy and practice, student grouping, pedagogical styles, and teacher/student relationships. In other words, a critical examination of the whole ethos of the school would have to be undertaken. If the problem is located within the wider society, then other institutions, such as the family, work/training, the media, and the church, alongside schooling, need to be identified as potential educational sites. In short, there is a need to make a conceptual distinction between (compulsory) schooling and education. In response, curriculum policy requires multi-agency strategies to deal with a multifaceted social problem. This becomes all the more important at a time of rapid social, economic, and cultural change, that has specific implications for different social groups, as the 'winners' and 'losers' of the recent expanding economy (Coulter, 1994; Crowley and MacLaughlin, 1997; O'Hearn, 1998).

The third option, that boys themselves are the problem, suggests that male students need to be the direct object of curriculum interventions. Different emphases have developed within this option. For some, boys' natural ways of behaving, unpinned by biological and psychological processes, are being challenged by wider social and cultural changes, in which traditional ways of being men are under threat. For others, anti-sexist policy initiatives have gone too far, in

which boys are seen to be the new victims of contemporary gender arrangements. From this perspective, much of the literature on failing boys is seen as promoting a deficit view of boys, as part of a wider social and political disparaging of men and masculinities. Feminism is often cited as the main cause of this anti-men trend. In an American context, Hoff-Sommers (2000) has spoken of 'The War Against Boys', instigated by a 'misguided feminism that is harming our boys'. In return, feminists see such responses as part of a political backlash against girls' and women's gains made during the last thirty years.

Each of the above explanations has their own accompanying discourses. Most significantly, for education policy-makers, in identifying different causes, these explanations suggest different solutions. Of course, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, each explanation may be seen as offering a particular insight into contemporary boys' experiences of schooling. However, one needs to be clear about the complex origins of what is currently seen as a major social issue. More specifically, in developing a curriculum initiative, one needs to be precise about its purpose in attempting to address what it is one wishes to achieve. In short, what constitutes success in an intervention into this area of the curriculum? This is all the more salient at a time when there is a lack of consensus within national arenas concerning how we conceptualise our concern with commonalities of gender or sexual experiences, and specific experiences of the social world, in the context of rapid social and cultural transformations at global and local levels.

Purpose: curriculum design

EM shares some of the strengths and weaknesses found in the international literature on curriculum initiatives into boys' schooling.

On the positive side, a more inclusive understanding of gender relations has argued for male students' as well as female students' experiences to be addressed. Alongside this, a new vocabulary is emerging that adopts a boy-centred pedagogical approach (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2002). On the negative side, the most serious limitation is that the purpose of curriculum intervention projects within national contexts is often not made clear. For example, one cause of this is that there is a 'pick and mix' approach from the main explanations, listed above, that results in a failure to make clear why boys' schooling is currently seen as a problem. An examination of the **EM** themes reveals that the writing team may not have had a shared understanding about the purpose of the initiative. Like many such curriculum interventions, they appear to have adopted a range of explanations about why male students are assumed to constitute a problem. To be fair, this may not necessarily be a major weakness. It may be argued that by incorporating such a pluralistic approach, individual teachers are able to choose the specific themes or lessons that meet their students' needs. The Limerick Evaluation, and participating teachers that we have surveyed and interviewed, provide evidence to support this view, praising the **EM** programme for its flexibility in enabling them to select material appropriate to their classroom needs. However, from a curriculum development perspective, a lack of clear focus is a main cause of the ineffectiveness of implementing a curriculum initiative into schools (Fullan, 1993). As Gammage (1998, p. 192) points out with reference to teaching social and moral education: 'it is especially important for teachers to be clear and purposeful about their aims and objectives. If schools do not achieve this clarity their programmes will be ragged, incoherent and even more vulnerable.'

Some curriculum reform initiatives operate with the first and second assumptions (the school and society), while others work with the latter (the boys themselves). The **EM** programme is located within an Irish curriculum development tradition that places high status on, and has high expectations of, the production of materials. One unintended effect of this is a tendency to underplay the organisational structure and cultural ethos of schooling. Implicit in the **EM** programme is a belief that its aims can be achieved without addressing schools' approach to gender relationships. Underlying this psychological-based approach is the assumption that masculinity (and an accompanying notion of power) is primarily the property of individual boys. In contrast, the literature on masculinities and schooling suggests that gender relations, including issues about boys and masculinity, are a consequence of social institutions and cultural practices. Schools do not simply reflect (or reproduce) the gender values of the wider society (Connell, 2000; Mac an Ghaill, 1994). Rather, they can be seen to actively produce gender and sexual styles; ways of being boys and girls that help shape students' developing sense of self and social behaviour towards others.

Within the specific context of the **EM** programme being taught in Irish single-sex boys' schools, this perspective argues that different schools selectively produce specific expectations about 'proper' masculinity and ways of becoming men. A main concern identified in the international literature on urban schooling is that a culture of survival leads to 'tough schools' helping to make 'tough boys' (Connell, et al, 1982; Mac an Ghaill, 1988; Weis, 1991). This has been found to have particular negative effects on working-class and ethnic minority male students attending failing schools who produce failing boys. Research has also pointed to the other end of the socio-

economic schooling continuum, in which tough boys are developed in their preparation for high-powered positions in society. As the social historian, Heward (1991, p. 36) points out, in her comparative study of private schools:

> *Preparing for power was about producing a particular sort of masculinity, first, through rigorous selection of the recruits on social class criteria, followed by prolonged socialisation through harsh processes of psychic hardening in a competitive hierarchy in which the fittest survived, the weak suffered silently and the weakest were eliminated.*

Gleeson et al. (1999), in their presentation of four case study schools involved in the **EM** programme, finely illustrate the complex messiness of mediating a curriculum initiative, and, more specifically, individual schools' impact on implementing boy-centred programmes. (See also Kathleen Lynch's (1989) discussion of school ethos with reference to girls' schools.)

From an international perspective on curriculum development, the **EM** programme is difficult to classify. At one level, it can be seen as radical, in terms of its aims and objectives. However, at the same time, it adopts a more liberal curriculum stance in not addressing the need for a fundamental restructuring of the Irish schooling system, in order to achieve its intended outcomes. Hence, the overall emphasis of the programme is pragmatic – an incremental change approach. However, a further paradoxical feature is that unlike a liberal curriculum perspective, that would focus upon individual boys' responses to school, the **EM** programme addresses boys' collective social behaviour, attitudes, and values. From an international perspective, curriculum interventions into boy-centred education are a relatively new area of curriculum policy.

As indicated above, **EM** is part of a longer history of gender initiatives that originally focussed on girl-friendly schooling. A main finding from the international projects is that individual national initiatives are at the beginning of what will be a long process. **EM**, which needs to be located within this long-term trajectory of socio-economic and cultural transformations, is an ambitious curriculum project. Interviews with participating teachers in **EM**, and evidence from the Limerick Evaluation, indicate some of the consequences of this. In this initiative, like many curricular initiatives, there appears to have been insufficient attention to a number of institutional factors: the diverse range of schools with their particular cultures; the wider cultural ethos of individual schools; the need to involve parents and students; and the need for high-quality developmental work with teachers. The latter was all the more important as, at the time of the implementation of the **EM** pilot project, other curriculum initiatives were being implemented in schools (e.g. revised Leaving Certificate syllabuses, development of Leaving Certificate Applied and Vocational Programmes). However, the programme designers could not have anticipated the media-led public response to **EM**. As we explain above, the main reasons for this response do not derive directly from this educational programme. Rather, the latter has become the target of a larger socio-political debate, in which it has been caught up. For example, evidence to support this derives from the fact that nearly all the EM materials have already been in use in schools within various curriculum initiatives. Attentive to the importance of the social and cultural context of the school within which **EM** is taught, we now turn to school and classroom contexts.

C H A P T E R **4**

Classroom practice and EM: lessons from the teacher surveys, interviews, and focus group research

Classroom practice and EM: lessons from the teacher surveys, interviews, and focus group research

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is divided into five sections. We draw on a number of data sources including: the teacher survey, the focus group meeting in Dublin, phone interviews with school principals, and one-to-one interviews with key personnel involved in the development of **EM**. The first section describes teachers' reports and accounts of students' response to **EM**. The second section focuses on the role of parents in the context of **EM**, as part of SPHE, during either the Transition Year or senior cycle. The third, and main section of the chapter, describes teachers' classroom practices in teaching **EM**. The fourth section describes the nature of professional development experienced by teachers in the context of **EM**, to date, and the potential scope of professional development in future developments of **EM**. Finally, the chapter draws together the various findings from the preceding sections.

There are a number of lessons about the nature of teaching **EM** that we learned from our focus group research with teachers, the teacher survey, phone interviews with principals and teachers, and one-to-one interviews with key informants. The story of **EM**'s implementation resonates with many other curricular innovations in terms of the various constraints and affordances at the classroom,

school, and system level which influenced its enactment in local contexts. We have summarised these under the following headings:

- Grammar of schooling: Organisational and cultural constraints on changing classroom practice

- Outcomes of **EM**

- **EM** is a pathway to influence peer group norms

- The media debate influenced teachers

- An awareness and concern for social boundaries was a central feature of teachers understanding of the SPHE and **EM**

- Understanding students: moments of insight

- Autonomous professionalism

- Resources and nature of professional development

- Setting expectations for **EM**

- Depth over breadth.

We return to these themes at the end of the chapter and situate our discussion of **EM** in the context of the literature on educational change (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1993). In particular, we pay attention to the need for subject specific professional development for teachers in SPHE (Brophy, 2001), drawing attention to the assumptions about teacher learning (or continuing professional development), and teacher knowledge underpinning such professional development (Guskey and Huberman, 1995; Borko and Putnam, 1995; Putnam and Borko, 2000; Sugrue, et al., 2001).

4.2 TEACHERS' IMPRESSIONS OF STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO THE PROGRAMME

According to teacher reports, students' responses to the individual units in **EM** were generally positive. Thus, most students were positive, some students had mixed reactions, and a small number of students had negative reactions. Of the ninety-eight possible responses to the seven units by fourteen teachers, there were 41 non-responses and 57 responses. The high no response rate – 41 of 98 possible responses – reflects the non-use, or partial use, of a number of the units by the teachers (see Table 5.1). Of the 57 responses, 34 were either 'very positive' (3) or 'positive' (31), 18 were 'mixed', and 5 were either 'negative' (4) or 'very negative' (1). Excluding the non-responses, 60 per cent of responses were 'positive' or 'very positive', 32 per cent were mixed, and 8 per cent were either 'negative' or 'very negative'. Overall, we can conclude that, according to teachers, pupils' responses to **EM** were mainly positive. Two teachers who did not complete the table about students' responses to the units, made the following comments endorsing the view that students responded positively to the programme:

> *Participated well – some heated discussions! I find the manual a valuable resource.*

> *Any material I have used has resulted in a positive response.*

	Very positive	Positive	Mixed	Negative	Very negative	No response
Starting out: Communication skills (Unit 1)	–	–	7	1	–	6
Men working (Unit 2)	1	7	2	–	–	4
Men and power (Unit 3)	–	5	3	1	–	5
Relationships, health, and sexuality (Unit 4)	1	6	3	1	–	3
Violence against women, men, and children (Unit 5)	1	2	5	1	1	4
Men and sport (Unit 6)	–	4	1	1	–	8
Wrapping it up: Role models (Unit 7)	–	–	3	–	–	11
TOTALS	3	31	18	4	1	41
Classroom materials (e.g. handouts)	1	4	8	–	–	1
Video	–	5	4	–	–	5
Overall response to the programme	2	3	7	–	–	2

Most of the teachers taught some of Units 1–5 and the responses by students were positive. Units 6 and 7 were rarely taught. Some of the teachers reported 'mixed' responses by students to Units 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7 and these were distributed across a number of units. Of all the units, Unit 5 – Violence against women, men, and children – generated the least positive and most mixed response from pupils. Only three of the units, according to teachers, generated the highest rating, that is, a 'very positive' response from students. One teacher

nominated each of the following units as one to which students responded 'very positively'. These units were: Men working; Relationships, health, and sexuality; and Violence against women, men, and children. A point to note here is that even though Unit 5 was overall least positively received, it generated the highest rating from some students. This, we think, is a helpful reminder about the importance of understanding the actual taught version of each **EM** unit, rather than the potential curriculum outcomes as outlined in the manual itself.

Five of the thirteen teachers who completed the items on this section of the survey added comments. The comments by teachers draw attention to issues of curriculum context, students' understanding of **EM** content, the need to adapt some of the content, and the overall positive response of students to **EM**. With regard to the role of **EM** in the transition year and its place vis-à-vis the Leaving Certificate programme, one teacher noted that:

> *Some pupils refuse to take the programme seriously, as it is 'not a Leaving Cert academic subject' and therefore 'not worth working at'.*

Other comments provide further support for the claim that students responded positively to the materials:

> *Weekly [written] evaluations suggested that pupil responses were primarily positive.*

> *It is very important to present material in a balanced form. Some of the material on the video/text has to be diluted. The students welcomed the opportunity to exchange views on many of the topics. Occasionally there are students who are dismissive and negative towards the programme.*

It is generally well received because I set the theme in a context. For example, health and sexuality can fit into a module on….

For the most part, response to the programme is positive. They found it informative and interesting, deemed some of the exercises to be too childish – some remarking that they were more suited to a national school.

It is unclear why some students may have viewed some of the teaching methodologies and activities in **EM** as childish. At post-primary level, active learning methodologies have been developing in the last fifteen years (see Callan, 1997), and are particularly evident in Transition Year (Millar and Kelly, 1999; DES, 1996).

4.3 ROLE OF PARENTS IN **EM** AS PART OF **SPHE**

Table 3.2 illustrates teachers' responses to the following question about parents' role in **EM**: In what ways has your school involved parents in the introduction and implementation of Exploring Masculinities? Teachers were asked to tick all that applied in their school context. Four points are worth noting in relation to parental involvement.

First, overall, there were few mechanisms for parental involvement with only half of the schools providing one or more mechanisms. Of the fourteen schools, seven indicated no type of contact or involvement with parents about **EM**. Seven indicated some contact.

Second, of the schools that have mechanisms for involvement, they typically provide more than one mode. Schools 3 and 4 had one mode of contact, and the five others had two or more modes of contact with parents. Three of the schools used written communication containing general information about Transition Year

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programmes, including **EM**. Three of the schools used a general meeting for parents about transition year/senior cycle, including **EM**, to communicate with parents. Schools 5 and 6 communicated with parents at PT meetings (see notes with Table 3.2).

Third, the preferred mode of communication was of a general nature and directed at informing parents about senior cycle (including **EM**), rather than focused specifically on SPHE or **EM**. Thus, general information about senior cycle (Options 2 and 4), either in the form of written communication or a general meeting with parents, was the preferred strategy for communicating with parents. We note that five of the seven schools used one or both of these strategies. What types of communication about **EM** were least likely to occur? Schools did not use any mode of communication that informed parents solely about **EM**, either in terms of written communication (Option 1), or opportunities to view the **EM** manual in the school (Option 11). Furthermore, meetings for parents solely about SPHE or **EM** did not occur in any school.

Fourth, more focused attention on **EM** in the context of parent–teacher meetings, or individual meetings with parents, was used in three of the seven schools (i.e. schools 5, 6, and 7; see response to Option 10 and notes to Table 3.2). Overall, we can conclude that, when mechanisms for parental involvement are provided in schools, these typically involve more than one mode of communication. Furthermore, information about **EM** is provided in the context of general written or oral communication and with supplementary individualised communication if necessary.

Table 4.2 Schools' modes of communication with parents about EM

Mode of communication with parents	School						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Written communication to parents solely about Exploring Masculinities e.g. letter home, announcement in newsletter							
2. Written communication containing general information about transition year programmes, including Exploring Masculinities	x	x	x				
3. Written communication containing general information about social, personal and health education (SPHE) programmes, including Exploring Masculinities	x						
4. General meeting for parents about transition year/senior cycle, incl. Exploring Masculinities		x			x		x
5. General meeting for parents about SPHE, including Exploring Masculinities							
7. Specially convened meeting for parents about Exploring Masculinities							
8. Discussion at Parents' Council meeting(s)							x
9. Discussion at Board of Management meeting(s)	x						x
10. Meetings with individual parents						x	x
11. Provided opportunities for parents to view programme materials							
12. Other – please specify					x	x	
13. Other – please specify: ('Introduced programme at September meeting with parents of cohort and received their support' – see comment, School 4)				x			
14. Have not involved parents to date							

KEY:
    x   this mode of communication was used by the school.

NOTES:
School 2. 'The content of programme was made known to parents at transition year evening.'
School 4. 'The transition year programme is evaluated 3 times a year and all responses are communicated back to parents.'
School 5: Other: 'Spoke with parents at parent-teacher meetings.'
School 6: Other: 'Parents informed at parent-teacher meeting.'
School 7: 'Parents' council consulted. Parents' conferences on justice/peace issues.'

Parents' comments to teachers about EM

According to teachers, parents, typically, neither made positive or negative comments about **EM**. However, some teachers noted very positive comments from parents. One respondent reported that some parents were concerned about **EM**, with this concern due primarily to media attention on the programme. These findings may, in part, be due to the fact that only half the schools had one or more modes of communication with parents in place in relation to **EM**. Nevertheless, the lack of parental comment – one way or another – presents some evidence that the programme was not of a major concern to parents. In this regard, we also note that since many of the schools have taught **EM** for one or more years, many groups of students will have had experience with the programme, and the absence of pointed objections, over a number of years, is noteworthy. Furthermore, we also note that in response to the question, 'How many families in your school, if any, have withdrawn their son(s) from Exploring Masculinities since the introduction of the programme in your school?', teachers said that no student had been withdrawn in any school.

In response to the question: 'In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been supportive or positive about Exploring Masculinities?' The other five teachers' comments were as follows:

All have been very supportive and positive and expressed delight that boys would be taught about the 'real world'.

In comments, individual discussions.

One parent remarked that were it not for EM her son would not have reported a testicular abnormality.

> *Some parents spoke positively about elements of the programme at P/T meetings.*

> *Active in anti-bullying. Active in drugs awareness programme.*

Three of these comments point to what we see as a more general consensus in Irish society, that schools address issues such as drugs, abuse, growing up, and bullying. As such, these comments provide some insight into what some parents find appealing about SPHE programmes. In light of increasing attention to men's health issues in the media and by health authorities (see Men Talking, North Eastern Health Board, available online at: http://www.nehb.ie/mentalki.html), we think that the potential of SPHE and **EM**-like programmes to provide information to boys about men's health concerns, merits further research.

In response to the question: 'In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been critical or negative about Exploring Masculinities?', none of the teachers reported negative comments from parents. However, one of the teachers commented as follows:

> *But I am sure there are some who have been influenced by media reporting of EM. I believe one parent inquired if it was possible for his son to leave the class. But the student did not leave.*

Overall, we can say that parents' comments to teachers about **EM** were few and far between. However, to the extent that comments were made, these were positive. A more extensive study of parents' views of **EM** could engage in focus groups and/or one-to-one interviews with parents whose sons participated in **EM**. While recognising the significant sampling difficulties of such an endeavour, we recommend that, as part of the development of SPHE, such a

study be undertaken, particularly given the acknowledged importance of parents and the wider community in the area of SPHE (Department of Education and Science, 2000, p. 3).

4.4 CLASSROOM PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF EM: LESSONS FROM THE TEACHER SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUP

The focus group research (Morgan, 1993) with teachers took place in Dublin in February 2002. The meeting was held on a Saturday to facilitate teachers' attendance. The seminar was structured around two sets of issues related to **EM**: (1) classroom practices, and (2) classroom practices in the context of the school and media attention to **EM**. The initial focal questions for the meeting and our responses to these were informed by our analysis of the teacher surveys, insights from the Limerick Evaluation, the consultative forums, exploratory interviews, as well as our knowledge of the nature of educational change (Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1993) and classroom teaching practice (Lampert, 1985; Loughran, 1996).

Four teachers attended the meeting, that is, three of the six who are currently teaching **EM**, and one other teacher who had taught **EM** for four years but is no longer teaching it. All four teachers had fifteen or more years of teaching experience and thus were typical **EM** teachers as profiled in our survey. Three of the teachers were female and one was male. All four taught in the voluntary secondary sector or secondary schools under Catholic management. The teachers had taught **EM** for a total of 19 teaching years: Mary, Breda, and Jim each for five years, and Amy for four years. All four said that their principals had been supportive of their teaching of **EM** and had also been involved in the initial adoption of **EM**.

What comes to mind when teachers think about teaching EM?

The focus group lasted for four hours. Prior to talking about the topics of interest to us as researchers, we asked the teachers to write in response to open-ended questions about **EM**. The first question was as follows: What comes most readily to mind when you think about the actual teaching of **EM** in the classroom? Why? This open-ended question was intended to elicit teachers' perceptions of salient teaching-related aspects of **EM**. Their detailed responses provide some insight into key aspects of classroom practice in teaching **EM**.

What was on Amy's mind? Discussion, interaction, reflection, and written feedback:

Amy had taught **EM** for four years. She said that there had been some debate amongst her colleagues about the goals and content of **EM**. Amy was very enthusiastic about **EM**, had undertaken some action research in conjunction with her own teaching of it, and the other teachers in the focus group said that they thought they might use some of the teaching and evaluation strategies she suggested at a future date. Her comments highlight the power of teachers in paying attention to students' written reflections about classroom learning experiences. The insights she gained from the weekly use of students' written reflections informed her subsequent planning and teaching of **EM**.

> **Amy:** *What I wrote down was discussion, of interaction, of debate, and fun. At times it was difficult to motivate and to generate interest. Depending on the groups. Some groups it was a lot of fun and you really enjoyed it, while with other groups it was hard going. I also did a bit of research on it myself. Part of that process was a good deal of*

reflection for me and for the kids. Some of that was negative and some of that was positive. It was a real learning experience. Well, I suppose it did confirm for me the value of the exercise. At times you'd say was it worth it but when you saw the kind of thing they wrote down spontaneously and unprompted, you kind of thought, gosh this is really worth the effort. Because they were gaining insights. It was very valuable and an awful lot of it was very positive. I continued to do it. I did find it very valuable. The kids were very honest. They had a choice of things to say about it and they had free space to write. Very often they'd say boring and then they'd say it was interesting. Even though you might not have got that from the group but when you sat down and spread out the eighteen sheets in front of you you'd actually see that you got quite a positive result.

Amy's attention to students' thinking is consistent with active learning methodologies in which students' sense-making is a critical concern for teachers (Duckworth, 1996). A particularly important point to note here is that Amy would, by her own account, have had a very different assessment of the impact of **EM** were it not for her use of written reflections by students in which they could express their views regularly. This regular feedback provided her with energy to continue and insight as to what approaches to take in planning. Jim picks up on this issue of feedback and how not having it made a difference in his teaching.

What was on Jim's mind? What is the impact of EM?

Jim, with five years teaching experience in **EM** and longer in SPHE, wondered whether **EM** could make a significant impact on students' overall personal and social development. He was the most experienced of the focus group teachers in SPHE. He had been

involved in teaching SPHE for over ten years and was very positive about it in general. Based on his extended experience, he was also perceptive about the challenges that arise in teaching SPHE programmes. His comments resonated with the other teachers, one of whom wondered how much impact a few hours of **EM** could have in the context of all the other forces and influences on adolescent boys' lives, including their home lives, community experiences, and combined learning opportunities across curricular areas in the classroom, and their extra-curricular lives in the school. Jim's comments draw attention to his uncertainty about the impact of **EM**, and the caution with which he adopts methodologies that might leave boys vulnerable in front of their peers. His comments followed an account by Amy of how she used written reflections regularly with students to gauge their impressions of **EM** classes:

> **Jim:** *I didn't get any feedback…and that saps the spirit at times. What came to mind for me with the teaching of it is doubt really. I'm kind of an agnostic really even though I've been in it from the start….*

Jim also commented on the constraints on innovative classroom practices, how any curriculum initiative is embedded within a particular school culture, and the impact of both the norms and values about teaching and learning held by the teacher and students. He went on to describe how he tends to spend a considerable amount of time on both setting ground rules, and then on a small number of issues drawing upon **EM** as a resource, rather than as a bounded syllabus.

> **Jim:** *We might have a chat but often very little is covered. I spend a lot of time when we begin, at the start of the year, setting out a set of ground rules for the group, confidentiality listening, respect for each*

other, all that kind of thing. I just use a part of it. There are other things. I effectively focus on bullying, health, and I have only touched on that aspect. Again I find the pace of it is slow. You don't want to be ticking a box and saying, 'Now we have identified something, then we go onto coping, then we go onto a safe environment'. Do you know what I mean? Things spill over. Something may have happened in the school and that takes time. You have to allow for that flexibility.

Jim raises an important issue in focusing on student learning rather than coverage of the materials. His focus on the effective use of **EM** resources means the actual pace is slow. In the broader context of efforts to promote active learning at second-level, the system-level pressures on coverage of syllabi are at odds with what might be needed in teaching SPHE effectively. Jim resolves his doubt about the impact of **EM**, at least in part, by focusing on a few key materials, and is also cautious about letting the classroom space become confessional, with subsequent inappropriate self-disclosure by students. In guarding against the classroom becoming confessional, he raised an issue that we think is indicative of sound professional practice: namely, setting appropriate social boundaries. Jim talked about this in terms of a stance or disposition from which he works, and he, and other teachers, elaborated on this operating principle. They referred to specific strategies they employ to set social boundaries, including: setting ground rules, referring students to the guidance counsellor or out of school support, talking with students outside of class, monitoring student reaction to class activities, and, when necessary, intervening in case students might 'lose face'. Based on these, and other teachers' comments that resonated with Jim's, we recommend that professional development in SPHE and **EM**-like initiatives ought to address issues such as curriculum coverage, pacing, and social-boundary setting.

What was on Breda's mind? Self-awareness, responsibility, and images of masculinity

Breda has been teaching **EM** twice a week for five years. Her principal handed her the manual and since then has timetabled her to teach **EM** each year. According to Breda, beyond that, **EM** is not a central feature of school curriculum or conversations among staff. Breda thought that **EM** provided opportunities for boys to re-think and seriously challenge the prevailing macho images of the culture within which they are growing up.

> **Breda:** *Because I think that's the whole idea behind Exploring Masculinities is to bring boys to realise that they are responsible for themselves, for their own actions. But what I think of is the breaking down of the macho image that young men have of themselves and bringing them to realise that they are responsible for their actions, for their achievements, for their success or their failure. To make the boys aware that their actions and behaviour affect others and themselves…*

Breda identifies core features of **EM**, namely its focus on self-awareness and responsibility for one's actions. She later commented on how she sought to develop a supportive class atmosphere within which macho images could be explored. Breda thus viewed **EM** as a curriculum site within which hegemonic masculinities could be challenged (Connell, 1996; Davies and Corson, 1997; Lynch and Lodge, 2002). There is a danger here of feeding back into negative images of boys, however, the international literature on boys' schooling suggests the productiveness of providing a safe public space to counter dominant negative images (Connell, 1996). Consequently, consideration of a more diverse, positive, and realistic set of male images presents **EM** as a forum for critical literacy. As such, Breda's focus is on challenging and raising questions about cultural images from which boys learn about particular masculinities.

What was on Mary's mind? Ground rules, 'the group', and photocopying

Mary teaches religion, English, and **EM**. Her response highlights the importance of what teachers sometimes refer to as the 'chemistry' of teaching particular class groups, as well as the volume of preparation needed in getting ready for teaching an active learning-focused class like **EM**. As with Jim, she emphasised the importance of ground rules with each group of students.

> **Mary:** *Usually I set out my stall at the start of the year and we could end up having a very good discussion and it might go on for a week or two weeks. I wouldn't have as many worries about people getting upset. I say at the start, is there anything I have said, 'Here that is offensive to you?' The second thing I say is that what goes on in here will stay in here and they will respect my confidentiality. I would disclose to them that unless I feel that I can trust them, they can't trust me. I teach English to all years so by the time my students get to 6th year they know me very well.*

Mary, like Jim, also spoke about gauging content for students and putting particular emphasis on the interests, knowledge, and experiences of different groups of students

> **Mary:** *Over the year I would teach over a hundred students….Like at the start of the year if you don't photocopy enough for the year you could get into difficulty. The second thing is that because we rotate the classes I have a different set of students every eight weeks. And I think there is great sensitivity. In one way I can see why I don't photocopy 100 sheets at the start of the year because I can see why subconsciously I may not use all that stuff with the group.*

Mary's comments highlight the importance of the relationship between the teacher and students in teaching SPHE or **EM**. She relies both on her relationship with class groups over a number of years and on her confidence in setting appropriate class norms in which confidentiality is the key factor. Whereas Jim wondered, at times, about the efficacy of talk and 'just having a chat' in **EM**, Mary sees the actual extended discussion over a week or two as indicative of learning. We will return to the issue of classroom discussion later in this chapter.

What can we learn from what teachers say comes most readily to mind when they think of **EM**? Perhaps the most notable matter is how each teacher chose a different issue or set of issues. Thus it is clear that there is a diversity of ways in which teachers make sense of their practice in the context of **EM**. Nevertheless, there are some recurring themes: the importance of ground rules, sensitivity to students, the challenge of assessing students' understanding and impressions of **EM**, and the power of macho images in a male world. In the context of the media attention to **EM**, it is worth noting that most of the issues central in teachers' recollections do not resonate with issues raised most frequently in the media.

The potential of **EM** to cause damage to boys was not something teachers viewed as central to their day-to-day teaching of **EM**, nor did it characterise their feedback about **EM** from students. Sensitivity to students was a concern of two of the teachers in particular. Teachers' focused on setting appropriate learning contexts, understanding students' conceptions of issues raised in **EM**, and negotiating the local constraints on teaching an SPHE module such as **EM**. Finally, teachers' concerns were about a broader set of issues, sometimes more mundane, than those raised in the media attention

to **EM**. Teachers' critical incidents provide some further insights into **EM**, as well as raising a range of other organisational, cultural, and pedagogical issues.

Learning from critical incidents

Critical incidents are a widely used tool in research on teaching, and in social science more broadly, as a means of portraying and understanding significant moments in professional practice, for the purposes of both research and professional development (Flanagan, 1954; Tripp, 1993; Woods, 1993; Denscombe, 1999). All four teachers readily identified critical incidents from their experiences teaching **EM**. Each of the incidents served as a generative and positive moment for these teachers. A variety of different critical incident protocols have been developed. Drawing on some common themes from these protocols, we adopted the following set of prompts:

Q. 2. Important or insightful moments in teaching are often called 'critical incidents'. We'd like you to think of a 'critical teaching incident' that occurred while teaching **EM**.

- Please describe what happened. Sequence of events, your role, students' role.

- Why was this incident significant?

- What did you learn from this incident?

Each teacher mentioned at least one critical incident. In the following four sections, we describe four incidents, one from each teacher. These incidents cover four different topics, all addressed in **EM**: sexual harassment, men's health concerns, name calling, and work.

Amy's critical incident: students taking a stance on sexual harassment

Amy recounts a memorable incident in which the students challenged each other's opinions about sexual harassment (see Unit 3, Men and Power: 'Just of bit of a laugh', pp. 124–127). The most telling comment, from Amy's standpoint, was when one student claimed that all the boys had 'touched up' girls at one point or another but would not admit it. Interpretation of this incident raises a number of questions. Among these, is the issue of whether students' actual comments can be taken literally. For example, some times students may attribute behaviour to others based on little or no evidence. In addition to providing a space for discussing, exploring, and challenging whether some, many, or all students had in fact touched up girls, an important space is also provided, within which students can address this and other issues that form part of adolescents' real or imagined lives. Thus, talk about one's own or others' real or imagined experiences may facilitate meaningful learning spaces.

> **Amy:** *When I look back at the four years when I was teaching it, the one class that always went well was when we looked at the whole issue of sexual harassment. The exercises in Exploring Masculinities where I would read out statements one at a time and they'd have to take up a role and they would have to argue between themselves as to why they were standing where they were standing. It was always a good exercise because they'd challenge each other much better than the way we'd challenge them. I remember on one occasion where I think the example was that someone was touched up on the bus: do you think that was acceptable, unacceptable or don't know? They took different roles. It was really good. There was terrible honesty in it. One kid who was getting*

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> *a terrible time and I asked if he was embarrassed. 'No miss' he said,*
> *'sure we've all done it but are too embarrassed to admit it.' I was*
> *delighted with that and with the honesty of it. They were engaging with*
> *the issue and were thinking about it, they were challenging each other.*
> *There was no nastiness in it, nobody was hurt by it. My reaction was*
> *that it went very well and that they had thought about the issues.*

A number of features in this critical incident are worthy of comment. First, the way the students, according to the teacher, challenged each other about their attitudes to sexual harassment. Some of the teaching activities in **EM** invite students to take a stance on an issue and then engage with each other around this issue. The capacity of this activity in **EM** to tap into peer influence in a non-threatening, enjoyable, and open manner was for this teacher indicative of how the students were *'engaging with the issue and were thinking about it, they were challenging each other.'*

Second, over time, many teachers develop a repertoire of activities upon which they rely from year to year. In doing so, they draw upon their knowledge of the age group of students, the particular group they are working with in a given year, the relevance of the activity to the students' lives, and the focal topic. Third, the teacher acknowledges the limitations on her own power to influence the students' beliefs about sexual harassment, compared to the power of students challenging each other; *'they'd challenge each other much better than the way we'd challenge them'*. This is a good example, in our view, of how well-chosen and well-orchestrated classroom activities may begin to challenge dominant, pervasive, and unacceptable peer group norms. As such, these activities may raise questions, and enhance student awareness, even if they do not immediately change behaviours.

Mary's critical incident: a student with testicular problem

Mary talked about how, as a result of participation **EM**, one of her students realised that he may have had a testicular problem (see Unit 5, Relationships, health, and sexuality: Bald Head, pp. 177-181).

> **Mary:** *One of the areas I touched on while teaching this [***EM***] was testicular cancer. I talked about their awareness of it etc. I talk about breast cancer and tell a story about a friend of mine who had it and how important it was to catch it early.*

This incident is addressed in narrative form using an extract from Ferdia Mac Anna's book Bald Head. As we noted earlier, this incident points to an area of men's health which has been the focus of attention in recent years.

Breda's critical incident: students discussing the work involved in fundraising

One of the units in **EM** addresses the nature of different types of work and how work has been and continues to be gendered (see **EM** video and Unit 2, Men and work: Worlds of work, pp. 41-50). Breda recounts how reflection on voluntary work undertaken in preparing for a fundraiser, might feed into the upcoming section on work in **EM**.

> **Breda:** *There was a fund raising event in school last week. And I always ask them what work is. One of our sections is a work section and I always ask what work is and is not work to them? Fundraising and that sort of thing, they don't consider it work. They haven't up to now. Charity work and working for the third world, they don't consider it work. This time I was very interested. A number of the transition years were taking part in this fundraising event and when it was over,*

I was just congratulating them, and I asked them how much money was raised, and what part they had played in the fundraising, and a number of them had more of a role than others. They gave their feedback and they realised the importance of co-operation and support from others and the planning and all that that had to go into it. In that way they realise when we go in to do the work section that they will be a bit more positive.

Researcher: *They recognised it as work as well?*

Breda: *They really didn't realise the amount of work and the amount of planning that was involved in it and then standing on the stall for three hours that was a long time as well and speaking to the people who came along and serving them teas or coffees. They were very impressed by their own performance.*

What may be, perhaps, most illuminating about this example is that it demonstrates how **EM** can contribute to students' understanding of a range of cultural experiences both in and outside of school. The experience of planning and engaging in a fundraising event may spur the students to rethink their beliefs about the nature of work. Given that work of various kinds – work at home, voluntary work, and paid work – plays such a central part in people's lives, the possibility to take a reflective and critical view of this within the context of students' in-school and out-of-school experiences indicates the relevance of this topic, and of framing it from the perspective of gender within **EM**. As such, **EM** provides the opportunity to engage with wider cultural images as a form of critical literacy.

Jim's critical incident: a student who was being called names

Jim spoke of the limitations, within a classroom context, of addressing issues such as bullying when individual students may feel they have to make others aware of their vulnerabilities (see Unit 3, Men and power: It's only words; Coping with Bullying, pp. 129–132). Jim was concerned that the manner in which others might treat the student was of less concern than the way in which students themselves might feel they had compromised themselves or 'lost face' in front of their peers:

> **Jim:** *During transition year we had been doing something about name-calling. After it, a student came to me because he felt that that was very important and useful. That was encouraging. It was personal to that student because I knew he was getting a fair bit of slagging because he had an English accent. In one sense it was encouraging, in another sense it wasn't, as we didn't have the resources to work with him through that. He found it difficult to speak out in a class context, much and all, as you would say you'd respect pupils and that you'd listen closely. Again if he spoke in a group he would have been revealing a vulnerable spot in himself. That's what I was saying earlier as well.*

Immediately following Jim's description of his conversations with this one student, the issue of how teachers notice student concerns worthy of follow-up or referral illustrated how these matters are part and parcel of teaching, and not just issues that arise in the religion, social, and personal health lessons. Sometimes, as in Jim's case, a student raises an issue, whereas often concerns are raised in other classes and don't just arise in RE, SPHE or **EM**.

> **Researcher:** *There are some situations where it is obvious that you refer a student and there are these other situations where…you might*

have concerns about the impact about how you deal with it or how you are ready to deal with it?

Mary: *There is and that can come up anywhere. I mean it can come up in an English class. It could come up when you ask a fellow why haven't you got your homework done? And you'd say well I want a chat with you. Clearly if someone said that they were in serious danger of harming themselves you'd look out for it.*

Researcher: *These issues don't just arise in EM classes?*

Jim: *For the most part we see the kids that have trouble a lot of the time misbehaving and that….*

Mary: *They'll stop doing their homework for you, which is the biggest indicator of all that something is wrong. That they'll stop all of a sudden. You'll see it. Whereby they may think about it in Exploring Masculinities the issues will show up somewhere else.*

Perhaps the main lesson to be learned from this extended conversation is that teaching by its nature involves teachers' knowledge of some aspects of students' personal, family, and social lives. Religion classes or SPHE programmes, such as **EM**, provide one forum in which reflection may occur on, sometimes painful, experiences occurring in students' school or home lives, but the experiences themselves trickle into teacher–student relationships in other ways beyond the confines of these lessons, and invite a caring response from the teacher and school community – sometimes beyond what the teacher and/or school can provide.

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What have we learned from these four critical incidents?

First, all four are topics addressed in **EM**: harassment, men's health concerns, name-calling, and work. The teachers viewed **EM** as a 'safe space' within which these issues could be addressed. **EM**'s first unit, 'Starting Out', is important in setting up this 'safe space'. The unit recommends the setting of ground rules about classroom behaviour and communication in the **EM** class in the form of a code of practice. These ground rules are meant to recognize and promote respect, fairness, and human dignity. The incidents of harassment and name calling, recounted by teachers in the context of **EM**, note violations of these expectations and the manner in which these violations could be addressed in an educational context. The international literature on boys' schooling suggests that peer cultures in boys' schools provide a context for bullying and harassment (Connell, 1996). The **EM** context addressed these issues both in an instrumental sense, in addressing their immediate impact on students involved, but also in a proactive manner by setting expectations for future moral behaviour. As such, **EM** provided a context within which questions could be asked about powerful prevailing norms in the wider culture as well as the more immediate peer group context.

Second, as was the case with teachers' initial comments on salient experiences in the context of **EM**, the capacity of **EM** to facilitate students' questioning of peer norms is evident in the critical incidents. For example, Breda's account of how students valued the voluntary work undertaken in the context of the fundraiser is a worthwhile conversation for adolescent boys in the context of their current and future lives as workers at home, in the community, and in the labour force.

Third, students' personal lives enter into the teacher-student relationship beyond the confines of more personal and socially oriented curricula such as RE, SPHE, and **EM**. Teachers often notice students' personal concerns and may or may not be able to provide the type of care needed (Norman, 2002).

Fourth, **EM** appears to promote debate and expression of differing viewpoints on a range of consequential personal and social policy issues. The promotion of debate among students in a non-threatening environment has a range of desirable social and cognitive outcomes (for a review of 55 studies see Schlaelfli, et al., 1985). A more recent review of findings from studies that sought to promote understanding of social issues among secondary school students also concluded that:

Curriculum projects and instructional interventions that require students to investigate social issues, consider alternative views, deliberate about consequences of alternatives solutions and make decisions about preferred policy have yielded positive results. (Torney-Purta, et al., 2001, p. 389)

Consequently, in the light of the above research, **EM**'s potential capacity to nurture critical literacy through debate, and consideration of alternative views on personal and social issues, is noteworthy.

Finally, it is important to note the contrast between the critical incidents described here and the power, ascribed to **EM** in sections of the media attention, of **EM**-related classroom practices to cause damage to male students. What is under-represented in the media is the ordinary and day-to-day experience of classroom and school life. From the teachers' viewpoint, the latter is central in students' social, emotional, and moral development.

Advice for teachers about to start teaching EM

In a study of experienced US high-school social studies teachers, Hess (1998) concluded that teachers with many years of classroom experience in teaching curricular areas laden with controversial issues might have much to offer teachers new to that curricular area. In this vein, we asked the focus group teachers what advice they would give to someone who is about to start teaching **EM**. We present their advice in summary form rather than teacher-by-teacher. In this section, we note teachers' responses to the above question, and also describe various teaching strategies and other advice the teachers suggested at various points during the focus group research.

Teachers focused on four areas they thought would be important for those about to start teaching **EM**. These were:

- have support in place for yourself as a teacher – inside and/or outside school

- include some strategy for evaluating **EM** as you teach it

- choose the content in light of the group of students and be well prepared

- be realistic: 'small bits', 'not to be too ambitious'.

Formative evaluation of **EM** on a week-by-week or topic-by-topic basis was a strategy the teachers thought of as important. As noted earlier, two of the teachers had developed this in their teaching of **EM** to date.

Researcher: *Do you use evaluations?*

Breda: *Yes, but not very regularly. Sometimes I ask them to take work home with them, work on questionnaires on relationships and that sort of thing. If they undertake to do a certain amount of work at home they have to do it. That's one thing I do.*

Amy: *I just designed one to suit me. I said to ask for training from the Department of Education, to think clearly about the topics and to prepare them well, to choose topics that they would be comfortable with, and not to be too ambitious and aim to cover everything.*

Choosing content in light of the group being taught involved a number of strategies including: discussing with students what they know or don't know, talking with students about what was 'covered' in previous classes, teachers' appraisal of students' depth of understanding of particular topics, knowledge of topics that had worked well the previous year, the teacher's personal comfort level with particular topics, teachers' knowledge of students' life experiences, and the number of students in a group.

Researcher: *How would you decide what material is suitable and what is not?*

Amy: *Well, I suppose we know how we respond to a particular topic. You have to sense what will be appropriate for a group and what won't. We might use some videos, it's hard to pin down exactly what you wouldn't use.*

Jim: *I'd agree with that. It certainly is helpful if you do a class with stuff that is relevant, in a sense something might have happened in the school. And you deal with that. In terms of what you'd exclude, I think very much what the teacher is comfortable with.*

Amy: *Sex education, I don't want to presume that I'd educate them. Very often I'd say to them let's design a sex education module for secondary school because they won't say themselves… So I find that if you get them to design something like they say, 'Oh, we covered that in Junior Cert.' They have had Biology and so forth but they really don't know. I think you're right, if you're not comfortable with something, leave it out.*

Breda: *I leave that to religion and science. I know they do reproduction and that in the biological sense. It's on their course longer that it is on mine. It shows just how badly it's taught in schools. Religion teachers more then most are in the front line. But if its left then there are definitely classes that won't have it covered. Some of them will because they'll have it at home and that sort of thing. I don't want to criticise my colleagues but a lot of the teachers are not terribly comfortable with it. That they realise that it's a part of their lives. And I feel that there's a gap between the fantasy of it and the daily working of it in their own homes. I try to make the topic relevant, be organised and use evaluation sheets. If I switch of it, they are going to do the same.*

This extended transcript illustrates a number of important points. First, evaluating what students know about a topic is complex and involves integration of a number of sources of information, including: knowledge of topics covered in previous classes, teachers' appraisal of students' claims about their understanding of topics, and knowledge of how colleagues might address or not address topics. Second, the actual **EM** curriculum is mediated by significant numbers of factors at the level of topic choice. It will of course be further mediated in its enactment as students engage in different ways with the actual chosen topics in a given classroom, as discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to role models (Wortham, 1995). Teachers

offered other suggestions, including the following:

- find a physical space conducive to **EM**

- small class size necessary.

In relation to physical space, the main point was that classrooms usually favour a transmission style of teaching focusing on coverage of the examination syllabus. If teachers of SPHE or **EM** want to move from the typical arrangement of four rows of desks to a circle or u-shaped seating arrangement, this often eats into valuable time that could be spent on **EM**. As such, the prevailing norms about how the classroom as a teaching and learning space is habitually organised works as a constraint on **EM** teachers who want to create a somewhat different teaching and learning space in their **EM** lessons.

With regard to class size the teachers were unanimous that groups of between fifteen and eighteen students are optimal.

Researcher: *How many in your groups?*

Jim: *15*

Mary: *15-20*

Amy: *Anywhere from 15-25.*

Researcher: *They vary so.*

Breda: *I feel they are too big at 24. This year I had a smaller group of 17 and there's a huge difference in the amount of work that you can get done with a group that size that is the case with a larger one.*

Researcher: *If you had to pick a number for an ideal group what would it be?*

Teacher: *15 I would say.*

Jim: *Just say if you had 20 in a group you couldn't do it. The room wouldn't take it. By the time you'd have the desks pushed back and in place you'd have so much time wasted. By the time you'd have a round done that would be another thing. You couldn't do it.*

Breda: *In a class of 20-25 you couldn't do this sort of stuff. Whereas if you have a group of 10-15 perhaps who would have spent maybe 6 months working in that type of group you would have a better chance of succeeding, of them being receptive to it rather than them getting lost in the game playing.*

Our account of teachers' comments and insights into classroom practices in the context of **EM** points to a number of factors that are important in understanding the impact of **EM** on students: the mediation of **EM** at the level of the school, the teacher, particular class groups, and students themselves. We now turn to teacher professional development, assessing its scope and potential in the context of **EM**.

4.5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We discuss professional development based on data gathered from the focus group research and from results of the teacher survey.

- Q. 4. What kinds of professional development do you think teachers, in general, need to teach **EM**?

- Q. 5. What kinds of professional development do you need to enhance your capacity to teach **EM**?

In response to the question, 'What kinds of professional development

do you think teachers, in general, need to teach **EM**?', teachers focused on three areas:

- Training in group work and facilitation skills (4 teachers).

- Knowledge of SPHE issues (3 teachers).

- Training as discussion leader (2 teachers).

Overall, there was consensus among the four teachers about the type of in-service they felt they needed themselves. Specifically, the need for training in group-work skills was something all four teachers wrote on their reflection sheets, and they were in agreement that this was a crucial area in which they themselves felt they needed further training.

In response to the survey question: In teaching the Exploring Masculinities programme, what supports have you found most helpful?, nine teachers did not respond. Six teachers responded with the following set of comments:

> *Life-experience – greatest support in-service in 1998 was insufficient.*

> *The presentation by the regional trainer.*

> *School manager principal.*

> *Writing team colleagues and Inspector Maureen Bohan are always at the end of the phone line. Teacher guidelines are clearly explained at the beginning of the chapter.*

> *Work sheets are great there is great scope for teachers to use any methodologies he or she chooses.*

What support?

NWHB (North-Western Health Board) programme on personal development.

With only six respondents, we are somewhat limited in our capacity to identify supports teachers experienced, nevertheless, two of the teachers noted the lack of support or insufficient support, two mentioned the **EM** materials, and two mentioned presentations (one by an **EM** regional trainer and another mentioned a MWHE [Mid–Western Health Board] programme on personal development). Given both the low response rate to this question and the diverse and rather limited nature of supports identified by those who did respond, it appears that there is scope for considerable development in this area. More in–depth and detailed comments from teachers during the focus group research support this conclusion. These teachers identified both the urgent need for greater professional development, and the potential format and scope of such professional development. However, we first note some of the recommendations of teachers who responded to the survey.

In response to the survey question: 'What additional supports would you like to see in place to support the teaching of the Exploring Masculinities programme?', six teachers did not respond. The remaining eight teachers responded as follows:

Use of cluster groups as support unit.

Workshops on group activities facilitation.

We got no training, no introduction to programme. Maybe info wasn't passed on.

A more intensive training session – what we got was limited to presentation rather then an in-service.

While the **EM** *manual contains a wealth of materials the bulk of the tome is uncomfortable to work with. Should we divide each topic into a separate manual?*

The importance of small groups (not more than 12) is essential. I wouldn't touch it in a class of 24 or more students. I would like more teachers to share programme and not be a one-man or one-woman band.

A twice yearly meeting of those teaching the **EM** *programme might be valuable forum (regional basis). One or two people to visit schools and provide support. My previous experience with SPHE is that I was alone on the staff. My enthusiasm waned and I would have been re-energised by meeting others doing similar work – same happened here.*

A networking system or other whereby interaction could take place re. approaches opinions to the programme.

In summary, teachers had specific suggestions with regard to professional development in terms of both its role as preparation to teach **EM** and the scope of ongoing professional support for teachers involved in SPHE and **EM**. Having reported on teachers' perspectives on **EM** in terms of students' impressions of the units, modes of communication with parents, and classroom practice issues, we now summarise the themes that emerged from the data.

4.6 CHARACTERISING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

In many respects, **EM** is unique in the Irish educational context and marks out new boundaries on gender education practice. Nevertheless, the constraints on **EM**'s implementation at the level of the classroom, school, and system point to its similarity with other educational or curricular innovations. The story of its implementation resonates with that of many other curriculum innovations in terms of the constraining influences of existing classroom and school structures (Sarason, 1993).

The focus group research with teachers provides informative insights on the nature of the constraints on changing classroom practice in general, but also with specific reference to the teaching of SPHE and **EM**. We summarise these under ten headings:

- Grammar of schooling: organisational and cultural constraints on changing classroom practice.

- Outcomes of **EM**.

- **EM** is a pathway to influence peer group norms.

- The media debate influenced teachers.

- An awareness and concern for social boundaries was a central feature of teachers' understanding of the SPHE and **EM**.

- Understanding students: moments of insight.

- Autonomous professionalism.

- Resources and nature of professional development.

- Setting expectations for **EM**.

- Depth over breadth.

Grammar of schooling

Tyack and Tobin (1994) used the phrase 'the grammar of schooling' to characterise the manner in which innovations and change in schools are often stymied, slowed down, and systematically mediated by the frequently intractable structural features of schools and classrooms. Among the structural features of schooling that appear to have influenced the teaching of **EM** are the following:

- Timetabling: one and two-period constraints.

- Class size.

- Room size and allocation.

- Furniture arrangement.

- Cellular structure of schools as organisations.

Outcomes of EM

Teachers' overall impression of students' responses to **EM** as well as teachers' reported critical incidents provide some evidence of how **EM** is impacting on students. Both of these sources of evidence suggest that the programme, in its varied instantiations in practice, is having a positive impact, overall, on students. None of the teachers reported instances in which they thought students had been affected in damaging or negative ways as a result of **EM**. Neither did teachers report that parents of the hundreds of students who have participated in **EM** to date, have reported damaging or negative impact on their

sons. In the light of some of the expressed concerns about the impact of **EM** in the media these findings are important.

Alongside some moments of insight and some clear feedback from students about the impact of **EM**, the teachers also noted how they were at times uncertain regarding its efficacy in meeting its goals. Jim's doubt is a good example of this. This finding points to the need to provide support for teachers in appraising students' ongoing understanding (formative evaluation) of SPHE curricula and the overall impact of such programmes (summative evaluation) (Norwich and Kent, 2002).

One of the key insights from teachers' reports of **EM** in practice is that the teaching strategies can tap into processes of peer influence. This feature of **EM** is both an outcome of the methodologies adopted and a characteristic of the classroom process in teaching **EM**.

EM as a pathway to influence peer group norms

In light of the prominence of the peer group during adolescence (Seifert, 2000), a notable feature of **EM**, according to the focus group teachers, is that it allows teachers to understand and influence peer group norms and values. For example, three of four teachers in the focus group research spoke about how, in addressing topics in the context of **EM**, it allowed students to challenge each others' ideas and behaviour, then or later, around important and consequential issues such as sexual harassment, value of different types of work, attitude to women, and name calling among others. Teachers' accounts provide evidence of the impact of **EM** in challenging the negative images of male peer culture and the assumption of boys' incapacity to discuss social, emotional, and moral issues. In contrast

to stereotypical views of boys, teachers' accounts illustrate the productiveness and generative nature of adults providing safe spaces to discuss these issues.

The media debate about EM influenced teachers

The media attention to **EM** influenced how some teachers thought about **EM**, their comfort in teaching certain topics, and their realisation of the contested nature of certain topics in **EM**, in terms of what they addressed and how they addressed it in the classroom. In addition, the media focus appeared to create greater awareness among teachers of the potential role of parental input in the context of **EM**. Nevertheless, teachers' conceptions of parents' input present a restricted view of parental involvement, typically confined to information-giving, rather than a partnership model in which both parties would have significant input.

An awareness and concern for social boundaries was a central feature of teachers' understanding of the SPHE and EM

Teachers' attentiveness to the impact of **EM** on students was particularly evident in their awareness of social boundaries and reported use of a variety of appropriate strategies (Hawkins and Shohet, 1989). These strategies appear to be underpinned by three assumptions: respect for privacy, teaching is not therapy, and limitations of teacher role and competence. While teachers used a variety of strategies, we note that the issue of social boundaries plays out in the moment-to-moment transactions of classroom life and demands on-going attentiveness by teachers. Furthermore, in engaging in active-learning methodologies, teachers invite students to bring their prior knowledge and experiences into the classroom, in

order to enhance curricular engagement, thus making teachers' attentiveness to the balance between sharing and privacy one of the recurring dilemmas of classroom practice, especially in the context of SPHE, **EM**, and similar curricular areas.

Respect for privacy was evident in strategies that focused on the use of writing to provide private reflection, a stance of not pressing for personal revelation or self-disclosure, and readiness to refer students to the school guidance counsellor, school chaplain, or outside agency without prying into the details of a students concern, beyond what was needed to make an astute judgment as to students' needs.

A basic assumption that teaching is not therapy reflected itself in teachers setting expectations at the beginning of **EM**, and being generally watchful that the classroom did not become confessional.

Knowing both the limitations of the role of the teacher and the limits of their own competence, meant that teachers were ready to refer students for help outside of the classroom and/or school setting, as needed. Implicit in critics' accounts of **EM** is a mistrust of teachers. Researching **EM**, we were especially impressed with the professional stance and sophisticated range of strategies teachers deployed in setting appropriate social boundaries in classrooms. This finding is especially important in the light of Hargreaves' observation (2000), that teachers are increasingly expected to take a greater role in attending to students' social and personal development.

Understanding students: moments of insight

Teachers talked about how they remembered particular moments when they learned about students' prior experiences, preconceptions, or understanding of **EM** content. We have already

noted the incident Amy remembered, when one student claimed that many boys had touched up girls at one point or another. Another teacher spoke about how, when she asked the boys to write about when they had last cried, one said: 'boys shouldn't be asked that question'. For her, this remark characterised powerfully some norms in the culture of masculinity for many boys.

In addition to insights from students' verbal comments, teachers learned a lot by using writing as a tool for both student reflection during activities as well as post-lesson or unit evaluation. Teachers who had not used written evaluations in the past intended to do so in the future. As one of the teachers remarked, writing might allow students to be at least be honest with themselves. He said he regularly asked students to write in commencing topics, and then students were allowed to tear up their written reflection if they so wished.

Autonomous professionalism characterises current stance of teachers involved in EM

Hargreaves (2000) has described four different ages of teacher professionalism: pre-professional, autonomous, collegial, and post-professional or post-modern professionalism. Although he notes that 'current experiences and perceptions of teacher professionalism and professionalisation draw, it is argued, on all these stages' (p. 151), nevertheless, we think that the experiences of teachers involved in **EM** are most consistent with autonomous professionalism. The autonomous professional is characterised by a high degree of individual discretion at the classroom level, but also experiences a high degree of professional isolation around the core of his or her practise, namely classroom teaching. Almost all the teachers we surveyed commented on the effect of the cellular organisation of

schools, which left them to their own devices in the classroom. As one teacher described it: 'ploughing my own furrow'. This is reminiscent of what the OECD called, in its 1991 report on Irish education, the 'legendary autonomy' of the Irish teacher. The autonomous and solo nature of teaching in general, and of **EM** and SPHE teaching in particular, may be in the process of slow change, through initiatives such as School Development Planning (SDPI) that may enhance collegial professionalism. Indeed, many of the suggestions teachers made about how they would like to see both preparatory and ongoing in-service, in support of **EM**, adopt a more collegial and interactive format. Specifically, the teachers spoke of the need for in-service to shift from transmission or presentational style to more interactive formats, for the development of a cluster or network of schools, and the funding of support teachers across schools as well as in-house support structures. All of these are indicative of at least a call for, if not a move toward, more collaborative and networked visions of teaching and continuing professional development (Huberman 1999).

Resources and nature of professional development

As noted earlier, teachers had clear suggestions about the form and content of future professional development in SPHE and **EM**. In addition, they had suggestions about the nature of resources that might be useful for **EM** and SPHE teachers. The teachers made the following suggestions:

• putting **EM** manual on CD-ROM

• website as a resource for updating material.

Teachers' suggestions about the need for new modes of in-service

resonate with some of the recent research on cognition and learning, which has major implications for teacher professional development at pre-service and in-service levels (Putnam and Borko, 2000). The teachers in the focus group noted how **EM** and SPHE demand a different stance by both students and teachers. We address the latter here, and highlight some of the implications for a reframing of teacher-learning in the light of recent research on knowledge and learning.

As Putnam and Borko (2000) note, an influential and developing body of knowledge on cognition and learning suggests that cognition is situated, social, and distributed. The idea that cognition is situated draws attention to how we have typically viewed thinking, that is, 'manipulation of ideas in the mind of the individual' (p. 4). However, situated views remind us of how thinking is nested within the context of tools and other representation systems, and these interactive systems offer a more appropriate unit of analysis than the individual mind. Thus, in terms of teacher learning, teacher thinking cannot be isolated from the context of teaching, that is, the classroom the and school.

Second, the notion that cognition is social shifts our conventional psychological focus from 'individualistic accounts of learning' (p. 5), which only focus on the role of social factors as contributors to individual knowledge construction, to the position that how we think is the result of participation in cultural settings over time. In terms of teacher learning, this points to the power of local practices at both organisational and cultural levels.

Third, *cognition as distributed* draws attention to how our understanding of thinking as solely the property of individuals is limiting, and that it is more appropriate to think of cognition as

'"stretched over" the individual, other persons and artifacts such as physical and symbolic tools' (Putnam and Borko, 2000, p. 5).

Putnam and Borko (2000) draw out the implications of these three assumptions for teacher learning, focusing on: where to situate teacher learning experiences, the nature of discourse communities, and the importance of tools in teachers' work. The main implications of this perspective on cognition for teacher professional development are the following:

- Ground staff-development in teachers' learning experiences in their own practice by conducting it on-site at schools and in the classroom.

- Encourage teachers to bring experiences from their own classroom to staff development on practice that are extended over a number of weeks or months.

- Incorporate multiple contexts for teacher learning (both site-based, drawing on teachers' own practice, as well as involving the perspectives of 'outsiders' such as in-service providers, inspectors, university lecturers etc.).

Teachers' calls for in-service that is more collaborative in focus resonate with much of what is being discussed in recent research on cognition and learning. However, the development of such professional development models would constitute a considerable shift in both perspective and resources from what is currently available to teachers in SPHE or indeed other subject areas. One promising avenue might be to develop some cases of teaching SPHE and/or **EM** which could then be used as the basis for case-based reasoning and decision-making with teachers (Anderson, et al., 1999;

Leinhardt, 1992). To our knowledge, little use has been made of case-based reasoning in Irish teacher education to date at either pre-service or in-service levels. We think it is important to note here that SPHE represents a 'break with experience', by that we mean the well-practiced ways of organising teaching and learning in secondary school classrooms. As one of the teachers we spoke with noted, SPHE presents a 'clash' of teaching and learning cultures when 'the lads are so used to sitting in rows'. Consequently, while attentive to the demands of paying attention to teachers' existing practice the need to provide a 'break with experience' and present new images of teaching, a new language to characterise classroom practice, and conceptual frameworks through which to understand gender in the classroom and curriculum, are paramount.

Setting expectations about EM

A point made both in the media about **EM**, and by a minority of contributors at the consultative forums, was that **EM** was a waste of time, detracted from the serious work to be done in the real work of school and was, as one media commentator put it, 'a doss class'. Teachers noted this point as something they themselves had to address, particularly in commencing **EM** with a group of students. One interpretation of some students' perception of **EM** as a doss, or at least not worthy of the same attention as other classes, is that it reflects the achievement and instrumental bias in the culture of secondary schools, and that this is one of the very issues that **EM** is trying to address. All of the teachers in the focus group emphasised how important it was, from their standpoint, to position **EM** as important and serious work from the outset. One of the dilemmas (Lampert, 1985) **EM** teachers faced was, that in making a case for its equal status with other work, they were also trying to institute a

different teaching and learning culture in the classroom, which may have undermined their efforts to have it taken seriously (e.g. one teacher noted how some students thought the activities were too childish, and another student commented on how **EM** was not real learning like leaving certificate subjects).

Depth over breadth

The teachers in the focus group emphasized the importance of setting reasonable expectations about what might be accomplished in **EM**. They noted that indepth development of a few units in **EM** was preferable, in their view, to cursory coverage of a greater number of units. As noted earlier, there is a tension here between the notion that EM is a syllabus, and the autonomy of teachers to adapt the material as they see fit. In adhering to the principle of depth over breadth, teachers may miss out on important **EM** material (e.g. final unit on role models).

4.7 CONCLUSION

The 'teacher as dilemma manager' is an image of the teacher and the work of teaching that we find compelling in the light of what teachers told us about their classroom teaching. This image of teachers' work focuses our attention on how the teacher is 'an active negotiator, a broker of sorts, balancing a variety of interests that need to be satisfied in classrooms' (Lampert, 1985, p. 188). Among the dilemmas teachers had to manage, in terms of **EM**, were: the need for some sharing of students personal and social lives with the setting of boundaries and respect for privacy; the importance of addressing students' individual concerns about bullying and being slagged with these students' integration in the peer group; the demands of 'covering' the extensive **EM** programme while striving for student

understanding; and the demands of moving ahead with **EM**, while including space for many or all of the students to contribute and have an input on topics as they were being addressed. One of the advantages of the 'teacher as dilemma manager' image is that it highlights how teaching demands, particularly when conflicts arise, the choice between contradictory alternatives, such as privacy or disclosure, or the dilemma between building curriculum around students' interests or subject matter. Furthermore, in the light of some of the concerns expressed in the media, and frequently unclear notions of what teachers do in classrooms in SPHE, we think the 'teacher as dilemma manager' is helpful in characterising the complexity and dynamic nature of classroom life. Teachers do not have the luxury of saying they will only think about subject matter and ignore students' background experiences; neither are they in the position of saying they do not want to know anything about students' personal or social lives; nor are they in the position of saying they want to know everything, or want students to share everything. Teachers negotiate, evaluate, and broker these dilemmas in the moment-to-moment transactions of classroom practice.

Finally, we reiterate a point we made earlier, namely that, in the context of the media attention to **EM**, it is worth noting that most of the issues central to teachers' recollections of teaching **EM** do not resonate with issues raised most frequently in the newspapers, radio, or television about **EM**. Even though almost every adult has spent 15,000 hours in classrooms during primary and post-primary schooling, the nature of teaching is often poorly communicated to those outside classrooms and can sometimes be poorly understood. The evidence we present in this chapter provides some insights on the dilemmas teachers face in teaching SPHE, the complex multi-level mediation of **EM**, and school and community contexts within which **EM** is taught.

C H A P T E R **5**

Findings, recommendations, and conclusion

Findings, recommendations and conclusion

In this chapter we provide a brief overview of our main findings and recommendations under three headings: system, public/media, and school/classroom. Findings and recommendations are also contained in the text of the report. We conclude with a commentary on the significance of **EM** as a focus of media attention and as an educational innovation, and situate these in the context of an emerging focus on boys' schooling internationally. What do we know now about **EM**? The following sections outline our main findings, drawing together various aspects of our review. However, they are best understood in the light of the preceding chapters, all of which provide important contextual information.

5.1 SYSTEM-LEVEL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of our research in relation to system-level issues are as follows:

Rationale and scope of EM

- Evidence from our surveys, interviews, and document analyses indicate strongly that there is widespread agreement, across a wide range of informants, regarding the need for a programme of social, personal, and health education for boys. The rationales offered for such a programme varied and depended, to some

extent, on the interests of those who identified and proposed such a programme.

- International comparative studies on boys' schooling shows that during the last decade curriculum interventions have been emerging as a policy and research focus in many western societies. Similar aims, methodologies, and pedagogical styles were found between **EM** and comparative international material.

- SPHE, and **EM** in particular, are ambitious curricular initiatives that require and merit substantial professional development and resources.

- Some of the concern that has been expressed about **EM** relates to potential damage to boys and young men. Reports from teachers suggest that there was no evidence of this.

- All teachers we spoke to, many of the submissions, and almost all of those who wanted **EM** rescinded from schools saw a need for a programme to address 'boys' development'.

  We recommend that data be collected on the provision of gender studies programmes in schools and the extent to which programmes are still available. We also recommend that gender studies programmes be made widely available in schools.

- SPHE is a contested curricular area. Our findings indicate that the media provide a limited space in which to discuss foundational issues in education.

We recommend that

- consideration be given to the setting up of a semi-permanent forum for such discussion

- research be carried out on social, personal, and health education to elaborate SPHE issues, including rationale, provision, professional development, student learning, and mechanisms for parental involvement

- critical literacy be adopted as a guiding principle in the design and teaching of EM

- a conceptual framework, particularly in the design phase of curriculum development, be formulated that conveys the contested nature of the SPHE domain.

Teachers and professional development

- Currently, teachers involved in **EM** were very experienced (18.5 years on average) and taught the programme using a broad repertoire of appropriate teaching strategie,s and were also cognisant of their own and the school's limitations. Teachers experienced in teaching **EM** have much to offer by way of continuing professional development for those getting involved in **EM**.

    - **We recommend that future professional development programmes draw upon the expertise of experienced EM and SPHE teachers.**

- Teachers overwhelmingly expressed a need for sustained interactive professional development encompassing both content and teaching methodologies employed in SPHE. Except for the

initial writing group's experiences over a number of years, preparation for teaching EM was limited to 'presentation' focused professional development (i.e. one-shot workshop).

We recommend that

- **professional development initiatives in SPHE consider the recent research on the situated, social, and distributed nature of cognition and learning, as the basis for designing and evaluating future teacher professional development**

- **research be undertaken to gather portraits of SPHE teaching, as the basis for case-based reasoning in the continuing professional development of EM and SPHE teachers.**

- Self-directed teacher professional development was largely responsible for the expertise and professional profile that teachers brought to teaching EM.

- Formal continuing professional development opportunities, to date, for those involved in EM have been very limited According to teachers, considerable support is essential to ensure on-going teacher competence in EM and in SPHE generally.

We recommend that

- **a regional professional development support structure be put in place for teachers of EM and SPHE. This regional support structure would facilitate the provision of support for teachers at a number of levels including in-school, local networks of teachers, and local SPHE teacher**

support team consisting of educational psychologists, guidance counsellors, and social workers

- future teacher education and professional development structures in SPHE and EM-like programmes target three distinct groups of teachers: (1) pre-service teachers, (2) teachers new to SPHE, and (3) teachers with some experience teaching EM or SPHE.

• EM teachers have developed a range of skills relevant to teaching EM, drawing upon their initial subject training, professional development in RE, non-DES training in social, personal, and health education, postgraduate education, and action research.

• Teachers outlined an array of 'knowledge and skill domains' that might form the basis of pre- and in-service teacher education. Among the most important of these are group facilitation skills, strategies for boundary setting and referral/consultation, and specific content in SPHE.

- **We recommend that specialist postgraduate programmes of teacher education be developed for teachers of social, personal, and health education. We also recommend that initial teacher education programmes include a module on SPHE.**

• Almost all of the sources (positive and negative about the programme) that we consulted agree that there is a need for programmes for boys (survey, submissions, media, interviews).

5.2 PUBLIC/MEDIA FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The public debate on **EM** is situated within a number of socio-cultural and educational contexts, including: an ongoing and complex debate on many facets of gender relations; a focus on boys' educational, health, and social experiences (with considerable concern being expressed around a core set of issues, e.g. gender gap in leaving certificate achievement, high suicide rates, higher levels of incarceration, crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and road deaths); gender and domestic violence; the scope and nature of the transition year and SPHE curriculum; and the role of parents. In fact, **EM** became caught up in a larger, complex, ongoing debate about gender relations in Irish society, and it became a temporary focal point for other issues, and functioned as a 'cultural flashpoint'.

- Autumn 2000 was the most intense period of the media attention.

- The scope for debate on the intricacies of classroom teaching is limited by constraints on communication in the newspapers.

We recommend

- **that a small fund be made available for the development of materials for use in transition year. Any interested group could apply for funding to support the development of materials in areas that they believe might be of educational interest within SPHE**

- **the formulation of policies and the development of a transparent set of procedures for making information on SPHE and similar programmes more readily accessible to**

parents. In this vein we also recommend that: (1) the
unpublished report of the external evaluators (Gleeson,
Conboy, and Walsh, 1999) be published, and (2) that
information be made available about the value-laden
nature of the curriculum in order to correct the
impression that subjects other than SPHE are 'value-free'.

• Teachers believe that **EM** has been misrepresented in the public
   debate.

• A wide range of issues were addressed by those critical of and
   favourable towards **EM**.

Positions critical of EM

A wide range of criticisms about the rationale, content,
methodologies, and effects of **EM** evident in the media attention, and
elaborated in submissions to the NCCA consultative forums:

• Content-specific criticisms about **EM** materials alleged that there
   was promotion of feminist ideologies and agendas; promotion of
   homosexuality; negative portrayal of boys; 'deconstruction' or
   elimination of traditional forms of masculinity; negative portrayal
   of families; and use of foul language.

• **EM** in its intent was alleged to be anti-male, a feminist
   programme designed to 'reconstruct boys', and to 'make girls out
   of boys'. Critics suggested that **EM** does not take account of male
   oppression by state social policies.

• **EM** was believed to undermine the constitutional position of
   parents as the primary educators of their children, particularly in
   relation to 'moral education'. (For example, some media attention

was given to a father who initiated legal proceedings on the grounds that **EM** undermined his constitutional right as primary educator of his son.) They believed that **EM** was introduced without proper consultation with parent bodies and complained that some individuals, parents, and groups were unable to secure copies of **EM** from the Department of Education and Science.

- **EM** was seen by some critics to rely on values clarification and not to provide absolutist moral tuition. Critics see the school curriculum as inappropriate for social, personal, and health education. A related position is critical of transition year programme and therefore of **EM**.

- Criticisms about **EM**'s teaching and learning methodologies, particularly about role play, and group discussion (seen as group therapy and therefore a 'counselling-type' activity), related to beliefs that the classroom was being constructed as a therapeutic arena and that such methodologies encouraged idleness and laziness.

- Questionnaire and interview data collected during the course of this research indicate that criticisms of a 'feminist agenda', imbalanced portrayal of domestic violence, negative portrayal of boys, emphasis or over-emphasis on homosexuality, and methodologies that lend themselves to personal and family disclosure in **EM** are considered by teachers of **EM** as unwarranted and unsustainable. There was, at the same time, a strong sense that claims in the public debate over-emphasised a small part of the programme, misrepresenting both the scope of the programme and the nature of classroom practice.

Positions favouring EM

The main grounds cited in the media attention, and elaborated in the submissions to the consultative forums, in favour of **EM**, were as follows:

- The social, personal, and health education curriculum in boys' schools was considered much less developed than in girls' or mixed schools. Successive reports over a 15-year period had called for increased SPHE provision for boys in single-sex schools. **EM** was seen as an attempt to provide an SPHE programme for boys.

- Boys were believed to need interventions to address 'problems' they had, including academic underachievement and social and personal problems. **EM** was seen as a mechanism for giving them opportunities to talk about issues and helping them to deal with problems.

- Legislative and policy frameworks at national and European level require consideration of equality issues in schools. The aims of **EM** were seen to promote equality between all students.

- Gender equality programmes were available to students in girls' and co-educational schools but not previously available to boys in single-sex schools. **EM** was seen as an attempt to redress the curriculum imbalance by providing a programme for boys.

5.3 SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **EM** has not been withdrawn from schools. It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of schools providing **EM**. According to the **EM** programme director, 27 schools used it during the

initial introduction. In our census survey of all-boys' single-sex schools, we received completed questionnaires from fourteen schools which said they had taught it at some point. Of these, seven currently teach **EM** using selections from the resource materials with transition year students, and some of these schools also have used, or use it, with senior cycle students. An important point to note here is that all schools used only selections from the **EM** materials rather than the entire programme.

- Time spent on **EM** was very small in the overall contexts of transition year, SPHE, and the post-primary curriculum.

- **EM** is typically taught by individual teachers rather than by teams of teachers, echoing earlier research on the teachers' 'solo flight' in this area (Gleeson, et al., 1999).

- Rural and small schools are unlikely to be using **EM**. In our survey no school with fewer than 250 students completed questionnaires.

- Many of the findings in our research, across a range of issues, are in accord with the conclusions of the Limerick Evaluation. In particular, a number of school organisational and school cultural factors were critical in schools' capacity to initiate and sustain **EM**.

- **EM** is mediated at a number of levels: school, teacher, and student.

- Schools mediate **EM** as a result of organisational decisions (including timetabling, class size, room allocation, furniture options, and allocation of one or more teachers to teach **EM** etc.)

and school culture (including formal and informal support for, and resistance to, **EM** from peers and management, and the typical cellular organisational culture of schools).

• Teachers mediate **EM** at a number of different levels including choice of topic, choice of supporting materials, integration of students' life experiences into lessons, choice of particular teaching methodologies and activities, and use or non-use of formative and summative evaluation.

• The varied datasets that we have drawn upon in carrying out this research strongly suggest that the delivery of **EM** in schools is based on discerning and sophisticated practices by experienced teachers who reported that the experience is, in general, a positive one for themselves and their students. In this, we support the findings of the Limerick Evaluation that examined in some detail the experiences of students in classrooms.

• Parents were hardly involved at all in **EM**. Seven of fourteen schools that returned surveys had one or several mechanisms for parental involvement, and then only in a marginal manner.

• There has been almost no negative or positive comment by parents about the introduction or implementation of **EM**. No boys were removed from the **EM** programme by parents in any of the schools in our survey.

We recommend that

– **schools develop enhanced mechanisms for parental involvement in SPHE**

– **school organisational arrangements for an 'opt out' clause be clarified for parents of students who do not wish their**

son or daughter to participate in SPHE programmes, and
that this be undertaken in such a way as to ensure that
the family and/or student is not left feeling overly
conspicuous in their schools as a result of adopting the
'opt out' clause.

- The EM manual is a rich resource in terms of both content and
suggested pedagogies. It is used as a resource pack rather than a
syllabus, with teachers using some, rather than all, as classroom
material. Teachers were very positive in general about EM but
also critical of various sections of the materials and, in particular,
of the video.

We recommend that

- consideration be given to content areas that would
benefit from revision, updating, the addition of new
material, and representations in different formats (e.g.
strategies for critical literacy, teaching controversial issues,
updating statistical data, integration of unit content with
masculinities, greater elaboration on gender and domestic
violence, and the placement and use of role models)

- a unit on 'men and technology' be considered for
inclusion as a theme, given that technology has been
described as a site of hegemonic masculinity

- the Exploring Masculinities materials, subject to the
recommended revisions, be disseminated more widely to
transition year and senior cycle students, to include girls'
single-sex schools and mixed-sex schools.

- Parts of the video, for example the section on bullying, are widely believed to be valuable, even by those largely critical of EM. There was general agreement across the varied data sources regarding the need for updating and revision of some of the textual materials and, in particular, the video.

  - **We recommend that the video be updated. Its production values could be enhanced and certain sections elaborated in light of the ongoing revision of the programme.**

- Based on data from our surveys, interviews, and focus group research, as well as on the Limerick Evaluation, and the students heard on the Pat Kenny radio show, there is much evidence that students are generally positive about **EM**. Given the absence of students from the public debate about **EM**, we recommend that findings from research carried out directly with participating boys be put in the public domain.

  - **We recommend that the opinions of students participating in EM and SPHE be included in future discussions about the nature, scope, and impact of such programmes.**

5.4 CONCLUSION

Exploring Masculinities, despite its small beginnings, has taken on a significance far beyond that originally intended or expected. Few curriculum innovations garner such attention. In this respect, **EM** is very unusual. We have attempted to highlight the contexts that might explain this unexpected and unprecedented focus on a gender intervention project in Irish schools. Nevertheless, the fate of **EM** in Irish schools is similar to that of most curricular innovations, in that its implementation was constrained by existing internal organisational

and cultural factors. Issues raised in the media attention to **EM** resonate with some of the issues raised in the international discourses on boys' schooling. Issues raised in Ireland, however, have not been merely an echo of those in other countries, but distinctive in their own right. Some of the issues raised elsewhere have not featured prominently in the Irish context. We think it is likely that the purposes, nature, and scope of boys' schooling, in single-sex or mixed settings, are likely to become more prominent in the coming years in Ireland. As such, the public discourse on **EM** to date, and what follows from this report and beyond, has the capacity to make a productive contribution to the education of both girls and boys in Irish schools over the next number of years.

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A PPENDICES

Appendix 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR NCCA REVIEW OF EM

1. The remit for review

The letter of remit from the Department of Education and Science presents two main components for the review:

• To evaluate the response to, use, and outcomes of the programme in schools, including, especially, the views of teachers, parents, and young persons participating in the programme

• To evaluate the content and process of the programme, having regard to best practice in this and other countries; the implications of current relevant policy and legislation in this area; and the issues raised in the current public debate on the programme.

No time frame is identified in the letter of remit; such a timescale will emerge from discussions on the framework for the review and will depend on the resources made available to the Council in undertaking this work. It should be noted that no provision for this work has been made in the 2001 business plan.

It is likely, however, that a final report on the review will be made to the Council for its approval by October 2001, with an interim report in June 2001. Any research commissioner will be asked to report as part of the review.

2. The contexts for review activity

Arising from this remit, four contexts for review activity can be identified:

- schools, including pilot schools, which implement the programme

- teaching and learning materials which constitute the programme

- public and policy context within which the programme was implemented

- national and international comparable initiatives.

While these contexts are closely linked, for the efficient management of the review, some division will be needed. Also, consideration might be given to more than one commission, or to at least one of the contexts (for example, the public and policy context in which the programme was implemented), being handled within the executive of NCCA. Those contexts which feature a strong research component are likely to be the subject of commissioned research.

3.1 The schools

The remit indicates that the response of students, teachers, and parents will need to be included here. The use of sample case studies seems ideal in this regard.

It is likely that this would constitute commissioned work or part of the commissioned work.

3.2 The programme

The evaluation of any teaching and learning materials needs to draw

on comprehensive and clear criteria. For this evaluation, two sets of criteria will need to be prepared:

- generic education criteria

- gender education criteria.

While the evaluation of the material could be informed by the case study work at 3.2 above, there might be some merit in looking for comment on the programme from outside this country. Such an international perspective might overcome any sensitivities arising from the fact that the programme has already been evaluated.

3.3 The public and policy contexts

The legislative background could be researched in-house. In support of the collating of public reaction to, and opinion of, the programme, a series of forums could be hosted by the NCCA. These consultative meetings, to which identified groups/individuals would be invited to make submissions, would provide the relevant data, while also facilitating the inclusion of a wide range of interests in the review. These submissions would be summarised in the final report and included as an appendix.

4. Comparable initiatives

Work on this is likely to have three components:

- an appropriate literature review

- overview of other comparable initiatives

- a comparison of the Irish programme with these intitiatives.

It would seem logical that this work would be undertaken as part of the same commission to evaluate the materials.

Appendix 2a

LIST OF WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO NCCA
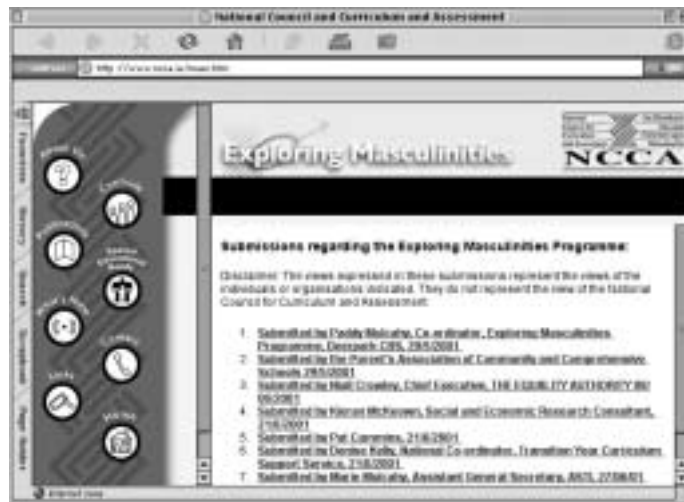
Available online at: http://www.ncca.ie/masc.htm accessed March 1, 2002 (submissions removed from website June 30, 2002). Submissions regarding the Exploring Masculinities Programme. Disclaimer: The views expressed in these submissions represent the views of the individuals or organisations indicated. They do not represent the view of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

1. Submitted by Paddy Mulcahy, Coordinator, Exploring Masculinities Programme, Deerpark CBS, 29/5/2001

2. Submitted by the Parent's Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, 29/5/2001

3. Submitted by Niall Crowley, Chief Executive, The Equality Authority, 08/06/2001

4. Submitted by Kieran Mckeown, Social and Economic Research Consultant, 21/6/2001

5. Submitted by Pat Cummins, 21/6/2001

6. Submitted by Denise Kelly, National Coordinator, Transition Year Curriculum Support Service, 21/6/2001

7. Submitted by Marie Mulcahy, Assistant General Secretary, ASTI, 27/06/01

8. Submitted by the Education Department of the St. Patrick's College of Education, 28/6/2001

9. Submitted by David Hegarty, CSPA Director, National Parents' Council Post Primary, 29/6/2001

10. Submitted by A.M.E.N, 29/6/2001

11. Submitted by Roger Eldridge Co. Roscommon, Ireland, 29/6/2001 (eldridgeandco@eircom.net)

12. Submitted by Dr. Michael Kane, National College of Ireland , 29/06/2001

13. Submitted by Margaret Hogan, Birr, Co. Offaly, 05/07/2001

14. Submitted by Margaret Garvey, Parent, Teacher, Parent representative, Co. Roscommon, 12/07/2001

15. Submitted by Brian Sheehan, Project Director, Nexus Research, 28/08/2001

16. Submitted by David Noel Doyle, Chairman, Parents and Teachers for Real Education, 11/10/2001

17. Submitted by the South East Men's Network, 7/10/2001

Appendix 2b

COVER SHEET FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO NCCA

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Review of Exploring Masculinities

Cover sheet to accompany submissions

Name of submitting organisation or individual	
Address	
Phone/Fax E-mail	
I/we would like to make an oral presentation on the basis of this submission . . . .❏ I /we do not need to make a further presentation . . . . . .❏ **Please tick one**	

For NCCA use only

Date received _____

Number _____

Appendix 3

SAMPLE TRANSITION YEAR MODULES

Modular programmes found in transition year, (from Denise Kelly, December 2001)

• Gaisce – President's Award

• Irish Hotels' Federation Programme

• Medicines and You (Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association)

• Open (social enterprise module sponsored by the Credit Union of Ireland)

• Tourism Awareness Programme

• Ros na Rún (media studies/Irish programme)

• Information Studies (to help students look for, manage, and present information)

• Exploring Masculinities

• Balance (a gender studies course)

• Project Forest (sponsored by the Tree Council of Ireland)

• In Search of Europe

- St Vincent de Paul Education Pack

- Financial Life Skills Pack

- Art in Transition

- Food Safety Authority Pack

- Shaping Space (architecture)

- GAA Coaching

- Cork Citizen's Information Programme

- European Computer Driving License

- Family Awareness Module

- Agri-aware Biotechnology Challenge

- Mini-company

- Exploring Electronics

- Mental Health Matters

- Staying Alive (National Road Safety Council)

Appendix 4a

SURVEY COVER LETTERS TO TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, AND TRANSITION YEAR COORDINATORS

20th November 2001

Re: Review of Exploring Masculinities programme

Dear Transition Year Coordinator,

As members of a team carrying out sections of the NCCA review of the Exploring Masculinities programme, we are conducting a survey to elicit teachers' views of the programme.

As it has not been possible to identify which schools are and are not using the programme, we have included two questionnaires with this cover letter. One is for schools in which the Exploring Masculinities programme is or has been used over the last six years (Survey A), and the other is for schools in which it has not been used (Survey B). If your school is not using the programme please complete survey B. If the programme is or has been in use in your school, we would be grateful if you would please ask the teacher of the programme to complete Survey A.

Please complete the questionnaire appropriate to your school and return it in the stamped addressed envelope on or before Tuesay11th December 2001.

The enclosed questionnaires form one of a number of data sources upon which the review team will draw in making its report on the Exploring Masculinities programme. We are conscious that this is a busy time of year in schools, but we hope that you will find time to complete and return the appropriate questionnaire, so that the broadest possible range of teachers' opinions may be included in the final report. We estimate that the questionnaires take between 10 and 25 minutes to complete. If you have any question about the survey please contact either of us at the contact details below.

Sincerely,

———————————————   ———————————————

Dr Paul Conway   **Dr Joan Hanafin**
Education Dept.   Education Dept.
University College, Cork   University College, Cork
pconway@education.ucc.ie   jhanafin@education.ucc.ie
PH: 021–490–3841   PH: 021–490–2696

20th Nov. 2001

Re: Review of Exploring Masculinities programme

Dear Teacher,

As members of a team carrying out sections of the NCCA review of the Exploring Masculinities programme, we are conducting a survey to elicit teachers' views of the programme.

The questionnaire addresses a number of aspects of the Exploring Masculinities programme: school context, programme rationale, programme units, materials, parents, public debate, and professional development. Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the stamped addressed envelope on or before Tuesday 11th December 2001.

The enclosed questionnaire forms one of a number of data sources upon which the NCCA will draw in its review of the Exploring Masculinities programme. We are conscious that this is a busy time of year in schools, but we hope that you will find time to complete and return the questionnaire, so that the broadest possible range of teachers' opinions may be included in the final report. We estimate that the questionnaire takes between 20 and 25 minutes to complete. If you have any question about the survey please contact either of us at the contact details below.

Sincerely,

_____   _____

Dr Paul Conway   Dr Joan Hanafin
Education Dept.   Education Dept.
University College, Cork   University College, Cork
pconway@education.ucc.ie   jhanafin@education.ucc.ie
PH: 021–490–3841   PH: 021–490–2696

13th Dec. 2001

Review of the Exploring Masculinities programme

Dear Teacher,

We want to thank you if you have already returned the Exploring Masculinities survey. We would like to get as broad a range of teachers' views as possible. If your school has not already returned a survey, we would very much appreciate if you could return a completed survey in the stamped addressed envelope included in the previous mailing.

If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

——————————   ——————————

Dr Paul Conway   Dr Joan Hanafin
Education Dept.   Education Dept.
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pconway@education.ucc.ie   jhanafin@education.ucc.ie
PH: 021–490–3841   PH: 021–490–2696

Appendix 4b

TEACHER SURVEY

Teacher questionnaire to be completed in schools where Exploring Masculinities is being/has been taught

School context
(Please circle all that apply)

1a   My school is   City   Town   Rural

1b   The current school enrollment is   <250   250–500   >500

2   I am   Male   Female

3   Please circle the years that Exploring Masculinities was taught
      in your school   1996/'97   1997/'98   1998/'99
                            1999/'00   2000/'01   2001/'02

4   If your school was using Exploring Masculinities but has now
      stopped, please indicate why: _____

      _____

      _____

      _____

5   To what group(s) of students in your school is Exploring
     Masculinities taught? (Please circle all that apply)
     Transition Year   5th year   6th year
     Other, please specify_____

6   How many years of teaching experience do you have?
     _____ years

7   What are your main teaching subjects?

     _____
     _____
     _____

8   What qualifications, if any, do you hold that help you in
     teaching Exploring Masculinities?

     _____
     _____
     _____

9   What experience, if any, do you have that helps you in
     teaching Exploring Masculinities?

     _____
     _____
     _____

10   For how many years have you been teaching Exploring
     Masculinities? _____ years

11   For how many lessons each week is Exploring Masculinities
     timetabled?
     1 lesson   2 lessons   3 lessons
     Other, please state _____

12   Approximately how many hours do students spend on the
     Exploring Masculinities programme over the course of one
     school year? _____ hours

13   I am the only teacher in my school teaching Exploring
     Masculinities at present   YES   NO

14   If no, how many other teachers in total are teaching or have
     taught Exploring Masculinities? _____

15   The following themes are included in the Exploring
     Masculinities programme.
     A. Please indicate the extent to which you teach/have taught
     each theme in the Exploring Masculinities programme.
     B. Please indicate your overall impression of the units in the
     Exploring Masculinities programme:

A. I teach/have taught			B. My overall impression of each of the following units is…				
All	Some	None	Very positive	Positive	Negative	Very negative	No opinion

Starting out: Communication skills (Unit 1)

     A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Men working (Unit 2)

     A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Men and power (Unit 3)

     A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Relationships, health, and sexuality (Unit 4)

     A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

A. I teach/have taught			B. My overall impression of each of the following units is...				
All	Some	None	Very positive	Positive	Negative	Very negative	No opinion

Violence against women, men and children (Unit 5)

      A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Men and sport (Unit 6)

      A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Wrapping it up: Role models (Unit 7)

      A   B   C   A   B   C   D   E

Please elaborate:

Very positive _____

Positive _____

Negative _____

Very negative _____

No opinion_____

My overall impression of Exploring Masculinities is

        A   B   C   D   E

C. Please indicate which themes you would include if you were designing a programme for boys in the senior cycle of single-sex post-primary schools.

I WOULD INCLUDE

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Communication skills	A	B	C	D
Men and working	A	B	C	D
Men and power	A	B	C	D
Relationships	A	B	C	D
Health	A	B	C	D
Sexuality	A	B	C	D
Violence	A	B	C	D
Men and sport	A	B	C	D
Role models	A	B	C	D

If there are other units you would include please indicate

these here:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Pupil response

16.   Please indicate your evaluation of pupils' response to the
following units/aspects of the programme

Very positive	Positive	Mixed	Negative	Very negative	Do not know

Starting out: Communication skills (Unit 1)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Men working (Unit 2)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Men and power (Unit 3)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Relationships, health, and sexuality (Unit 4)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Violence against women, men and children (Unit 5)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Men and sport (Unit 6)

A	B	C	D	E	F

Wrapping it up: Role models (Unit 7)

     A   B   C   D   E   F

Classroom materials (e.g. handouts)

     A   B   C   D   E   F

Video

     A   B   C   D   E   F

Overall response to the programme

     A   B   C   D   E   F

Please elaborate on pupils' responses to the programme:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Materials

17   My impressions of....

Very positive	Positive	Negative	Very negative	No opinion

Exploring Masculinities teachers' manual

     A   B   C   D   E

Exploring Masculinities video

     A   B   C   D   E

Teaching methodologies suggested in Exploring Masculinities

     A   B   C   D   E

Please elaborate on any of the above if you wish.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Professional development and support

18   In teaching the Exploring Masculinities programme, what
supports have you found most helpful? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19   What additional supports would you like to see in place to
support the teaching of the Exploring Masculinities
programme? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Programme rationale

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	No opinion

20   There is a need for a programme which gives boys
opportunities to talk about a broad range of personal, socials,
and health issues

A   B   C   D   E

Please elaborate: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parents

21   In what ways has your school involved parents in the introduction and implementation of Exploring Masculinities? (Please tick all that apply).

❏   Written communication to parents solely about Exploring Masculinities e.g. letter home, announcement in newsletter

❏   Written communication containing general information about Transition Year programmes, including Exploring Masculinities

❏   Written communication containing general information about Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programmes, including Exploring Masculinities

❏   General meeting for parents about Transition Year/senior cycle, including Exploring Masculinities

❏   General meeting for parents about SPHE, including Exploring Masculinities

❏   Specially convened meeting for parents about Exploring Masculinities

❏   Discussion at Parents' Council meeting(s)

❏   Discussion at Board of Management meeting(s)

Meetings with individual parents

Provided opportunities for parents to view programme materials

Other – please specify _____

_____

_____

_____

Have not involved parents to date _____

_____

_____

_____

Please elaborate on any ways in which your school has involved parents. _____

_____

_____

_____

22a   In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been supportive or positive about Exploring Masculinities? If none, please state none.

22b   In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been critical or negative about Exploring Masculinities? If none, please state none.

23.   How many families in your school, if any, have withdrawn their son(s) from Exploring Masculinities since the programme was introduced in your school?

Public debate

24   Some commentators have been critical of what they describe in the Exploring Masculinities programme as a 'feminist agenda', imbalanced portrayal of domestic violence, negative portrayal of boys, emphasis or over-emphasis on homosexuality, and methodologies that lend themselves to personal and family disclosure. What do you think?

25   In what ways, if any, has the public debate influenced:

(a) What you think about the Exploring Masculinities programme?

(b) Your teaching of the Exploring Masculinities programme?

26   If you wish, please comment on any other aspect of the programme (using the back of this page if necessary).

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope on or before Friday 14th Dec.

Questionnaire to be completed in schools where Exploring Masculinities is NOT being/ has not ever been taught

1   What, if any, Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) programmes are available to boys in the senior cycle of your school?

2.   Please indicate the reasons why Exploring Masculinities has not been introduced in your school.

3a.   We have a copy of the Exploring Masculinities teachers' manual   YES   NO

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

3a   There is a need for a programme which gives boys opportunities to talk about a broad range of personal, social, and health issues

    A   B   C   D

3b   I am broadly familiar with the content of the Exploring Masculinities programme

    A   B   C   D

Please elaborate:

4   Are there plans in your school to introduce the Exploring Masculinities programme?   YES   NO

Please expand:

5   If you plan to introduce the Exploring Masculinities programme in the future, what supports would you like to see in place?

6a   In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been supportive or positive about Exploring Masculinities? If none, please state none.

6b   In what ways, if any, have parents of pupils in your school been critical or negative about Exploring Masculinities? If none, please state none.

7   Some commentators have been critical of what they describe in the Exploring Masculinities programme as a 'feminist agenda', imbalanced portrayal of domestic violence, negative portrayal of boys, the emphasis or over-emphasis on homosexuality, and methodologies that lend themselves to personal and family disclosure. What do you think?

Any other comments:

Thank you for completing this survey. Please return it in the enclosed stamped addressed envelope on or before Friday 14th Dec.

Appendix 5

FEBRUARY FOCUS GROUP REFLECTION SHEETS

Classroom Practices: Questions

Please write about your experiences of teaching EM.

a   What comes most readily to mind when you think about the actual teaching of EM in the classroom? Why?

b   Important or insightful moments in teaching are often called 'critical incidents'. We'd like you to think of a 'critical teaching incident' that occurred while teaching EM.

   i   Please describe what happened?
      1   Sequence of events
      2   Your role
      3   Students role
   ii   Why was this incident significant?
   iii   What did you learn from this incident?

c   What advice would you give to someone who is about to start teaching EM?

d   What kinds of professional development do you think teachers, in general, need to teach EM?

e   What kinds of professional development do YOU need to enhance your capacity to teach EM?

Please write about your experiences of teaching EM

f   To what extent is there a need for parental involvement in the context of EM that is different from other subjects?

g   To what extent has EM been a topic of conversation between you and your school colleagues? What issues have arisen?

h   In what ways, if any, has the public debate (in the newspapers, radio, and television) influenced your teaching of EM?

i   What role has your principal played in the context of EM?

j   What is the most salient aspect of the debate in terms of how you think about your teaching of EM? Why?

k   Other comments.

l   Do you have any questions? If yes, please elaborate.

Appendix 6

ASTIR ADVERT

Review of Exploring Masculinities (reminder)

Transition Year and Senior Cycle Single Sex Boys' Schools

As members of a team carrying out sections of the NCCA review of the Exploring Masculinities programme, we have been conducting a survey to elicit teachers' views of the programme. This notice is directed to transition year and senior-cycle teachers in single-sex boys' schools whether they have taught (in part or full) or have not taught the Exploring Masculinities programme.

If you have not already completed a survey but would like to respond, in the context of the ongoing review of the programme, please contact us for a questionnaire. Please indicate in your e-mail or phone call whether you have/have not taught the programme, and we will forward you the relevant questionnaire.

Dr Paul Conway,   Dr Joan Hanafin
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