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Masculinities and Femininities and Secondary Schooling: The Case for a Gender Analysis in the Postmodern Condition

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INTRODUCTION

Secondary schools are locations where students spend a great deal of time not only learning, but also navigating gendered.identities.[1] *People grow between the ages of 11 and 18. These 'tweenage' years are distinctive in the making of masculinities and femininities, since not only does the body change, but body meanings and the image repertoire of bodies become, in contradictory ways*, '*available*' (Corrigan, 1991, p206). Secondary students often struggle with the contradictions and demands of gender. However much we would like to think the social world is separate from the educational world, these struggles with gender are not disconnected from students' everyday schooling routines. The social obligations and restrictions on how gender is practised by individual students often conflict with the institutional discourses of public schooling.

By accounting for the plurality of gender performances by students, we open up greater possibilities to retheorize how the social details of student bodies affect

pedagogical practices and learning. There is a great need to analyse critically the breadth of gendered practices in school, and to acknowledge the long history of systematically resisting a gender analysis.

In the twenty-first-century postmodern condition of multiple subjectivities, new communications technologies and mass media infiltration, the reluctance to consider gender is more than an oversight. It is a political and ideological choice to hold on to modernist approaches to gender and education despite the fact that that modernist ways of understanding gender can no longer accommodate some of the social and gendered realities of contemporary students.

This chapter will aim to address how lived practices of gender continue to rub against the grain of discourses of secondary schooling. A critical examination of gender performances in schools, taking into account the complex ways that gender intersects the lives of students, may enable a shift away from understanding gender as a threat to education, and instead, offer an opportunity to re-examine how secondary educators might incorporate a gender analysis as a pedagogical tool to address the academic and social needs of students. Our hope is that this examination of the various moments where the seemingly tidy category of gender breaks down and often frustrates the project of secondary education, can offer some insight into what is at stake in the opposition to a gender analysis.

DIFFERENCE AND GENDER

Because the history and design of public education includes a high degree of social regulation, differences continue to remain problematic in schools. *Like and like go together. Likeness is liking, whatever they say about opposites* (Winterson, 2004, p15). As Winterson suggests, difference, by definition, is, more often than not, seen as an anomaly, while similarity suffers less suspicion. Even attempts to acknowledge difference in educational contexts, for example, inclusive education reforms and the resulting pedagogical adjustments, are grounded in the recognition of difference *from* the dominant population. That is, difference is defined as *not like* the 'norm', regardless of whether it is a different, race, sex, gender, sexuality or ability. This creates an 'Othering' effect in which the non-dominant category becomes the repository of the fear and distaste of those in the dominant group (Butler, p1991; Fuss, 1995). More often than not, differences are viewed uncritically through 'common-sense' under-theorizing and, as a result, *definitions of femininity and masculinity […] are implicitly assumed to be ahistorical, unitary, universal, and unchanging categories* (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p8). By uncritically engaging in dominant discourses, students regulate their own behaviour to construct a sense of identity that seems to 'make sense' because of its similarity to other social and gendered performances. This process of replicating dominant discourses and incorporating them into one's individual understanding of the world is what Foucault referred to as 'discourses of the self' (1980). However, in regulating dominant discourses that are tied to 'common-sense' understandings,

students play a role in making the power relations and inequities invisible, and perpetuate difference-based inequities through the institutional structures which they inhabit.

> Discourse in institutional life can be viewed as a means for the naturalization and disguise of power relations that are tied to inequalities in the social production and distribution of symbolic and material resources. This means that dominant discourses in contemporary cultures tend to represent those social formations and power relations that are the products of history, social formation, and culture … aessity. (Luke, 1995, p12)

Thus, the naturalization of inequities is learned, replicated and supported by discourses that are historical products, but are assumed to be 'common-sense' prescriptions for living. *It is precisely such historically long-established positions that inform our phenomenology of gender, our sense of the masculine and feminine. The unconscious mapping of these positions continues to saturate our affective experience of excitement and anxiety about difference* (Benjamin, 1998, p62). Because the discourses of the self are assumed to be 'common sense', it can be difficult to engage critically with inequities that seem 'natural', and it can become uncomfortable when individual experiences of gender do not resemble dominant gender expectations. Thus, because of the assumption of the 'naturalness' of particular expressions of masculinity and femininity, the resistance to critically examining gender is often a reaction to the perceived assumption that such an analysis is unfair or harmful to boys and men because of its feminist critique of power and privilege (Walkerdine, 1989).

Feminists have long argued that gender difference is not a simple difference. Butler insists that '*men' and 'women' are political categories, and not natural facts* (1990, p115). Masculinity and femininity are defined by, and against, one another in a way that promotes inequity among women and men. Yeatman explains that *the very necessity of feminism arises from the material existence of a patriarchal ideological binary and hierarchical ordering of the terms male (masculine, men) and female (feminine, women)* (1994, p49). Understanding gender difference in this way explicitly points to how gender privileges men over women, and in so doing, creates a shift from seeing difference as something that needs to be simply acknowledged, to an obligation to identify how the way we understand differences is responsible for inequity, especially in schools.

By the time they enter secondary school, young women and young men are well aware of gender differences and acutely understand the social rewards and punishments for performing gender in very specific ways (Lesko, 1988). Students have a complex psychic and social investment in gender, and schools assist students in this sorting process by supporting those who conform to the hierarchy of gender ideals (Kenway, 1995). School *microcultures of management, teachers and students are key infrastructural mechanisms through which masculinities and femininities are mediated and lived out* (Mac an Ghaill, 1994, p4). By not employing a critical gender analysis to the daily social and educational interactions, schools assist in the 'normalization' of inequitable gender relations.

Students who do not, or cannot, conform to the social demands of rigid definitions of masculinity and femininity are often socially terrorized, ostracized, isolated, abused, and alienated, and under such conditions end up dreading their participation in obligatory schooling (Rofes, 1995; Davison, 1996, 2000a). Research on, gender, sexuality, bullying and harassment in schools regularly recounts students' struggles against being identified by others as different (see for example, Frank, 1987, 1990; Larkin, 1994; Hazler, 1996; Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Davison, 2004; Sullivan, *et al*., 2003). Difference only becomes problematic when defined by those within the dominant social group. Most schools support gender ideals through *a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish* (Foucault cited in Rainbow, 1984, p197). When acts of violence, harassment or bullying arise they are usually addressed as individual acts of aggression or discrimination, and not as a product of systematic gender inequity and intolerance of difference. In refusing to address gender harassment as systemic, schools and teachers often collude with students who attempt to police the dominant gender order. Most teachers, educational administrators, and policy makers are products of the same educational system as contemporary students, and, in the journey from student to educator or administrator, they have gainfully navigated schooling in such a way that they, too, have produced discourses of the self that are in line with dominant educational and gender discourses. Without a gender analysis, teachers and administrators, therefore, may be more likely to perpetuate inequities in pedagogy and curriculum design and content that seem to them simply 'naturally' embedded in 'common-sense' differences between women and men.

Feminist critiques do not see the social consequences of gender in school simply as a disruptive side issue, but rather as a symptom of institutionalized education. Educational administrators and policy makers often dismiss or ignore a more complex analysis of gender in favour of an analysis that does not hold the institution accountable (Frank, *et al*., 2003). Furthermore, feminist critical gender analyses are often perceived to be a threat to the privilege of men and boys, and therefore are rejected outright. We would like to use the example of the current 'panics' about boys and schooling to illustrate how the resistance to a gender analysis of schooling has fuelled a bubbling backlash against feminism. In rejecting a gender analysis, this backlash has failed to address many of the critical social and educational concerns in contemporary schools and continues to support and replicate greater inequities.

Backlash/resistance

This chapter is not able to recount in full the long history of feminist educators who have fought for gender-based change over the last century; however, it is necessary to sketch briefly the context that has led to contemporary anti-feminist backlash. The second-wave women's movement, which occurred at the same time that there was a large growth in public education and educational reform in Europe, North

America, and Australia, set the stage for addressing issues of educational inequities of girls and women. Since the 1960s, feminists have attempted to raise awareness of how gendered expectations were disadvantaging young women in sciences and maths, which were traditionally regarded as more 'masculine' subjects.[2]

Feminists struggled for many years to convince educators of how young women were being short-changed by sexist assumptions about the abilities of women and girls. It was often difficult to convince young women that succeeding in science and maths need not be a social stigma in the face of 'common-sense' discourses about women, femininity, and education. Arguments that fewer girls and women in science and maths fuelled educational and employment inequities were continually resisted or mocked in favour of a gender order that advantaged men and boys. Yet, over several decades, against great resistance, more 'traditional' beliefs regarding femininity were renegotiated to the extent that the gap between girls and boys in science and maths was reduced. Achieving this goal did not radically turn the tables on gender to favour women and girls, but it did provide opportunities for more women and girls where previously little opportunity existed.

Those who resisted this reform felt that such gains for women implied a zero-sum game that would result in disadvantages to men and boys, and a seed was planted for future backlash. If it is assumed that attention to gender inequities implies working within a fixed zero-sum game, the best strategy for either gender would be to make the best of the inequities that have befallen you while ensuring that the other binary does not obtain any advantages at your expense. Therefore, the assumption that gender can allocate only a limited amount of privileges reduces the strategies within a fixed system. But if the zero-sum game is demystified and we are able to rearticulate gender as not a binary, but as a plurality of performances with the potential for equity and equi-valued consequences, the inequities embedded in the differences become more apparent and a gender analysis becomes less threatening. The resistance to a critical gender analysis, and anti-feminist backlash politics, arise not only from the history of educational reform addressing inequities for young women, but also from a contemporary and popular shift in educational priorities to address young men and underachievement in schools.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, there was a growth in critical masculinity and schooling scholarship. This work was influenced by the feminist tradition of addressing gendered power and privilege, and accounting for those on the margins, both men and women. Research by such scholars as Connell (1987; 1995), Mac an Ghaill (1994), Martino (1994; 2000), Kenway and Willis (1998), Frank (1987; 1990; 1993), Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), and Davison (1996; 2000a; b) added to the feminist critique and critically examined the lives of boys and young men in schools. Whether examining bullying, sport, homophobia or academic achievement, much of this literature aimed to investigate the everyday gendered practices of boys and young men in schools, while at the same time acknowledging that young men and masculinities are not unified categories.

The application of feminist theory to the lives of young men and the critical analysis of masculinity called into question some of the 'common-sense' discourses that

inform masculinity, and in so doing opened up a place for some young men to challenge the ways masculinity can be harmful to both young men and young women in school (Skelton, 1998; Kehler *et al*., 2005). In our own research (Frank 1990, 1994; Davison, 1996, 2003), we have found that young men in secondary schools have welcomed the opportunity to examine critically their gendered practices, and they often remark upon the paucity of opportunities to engage with feminist critiques of masculinity.

By the mid- to late-1990s, there was a rise of scholarship which pointed to a concern for boys' emotional needs in schools and attempted to address the perceived academic underachievement of boys as a group (see, for example Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Pollock, 1999; Chapter 26 in this volume). This research did not rely on feminist scholarship or theory and offered no critique of gender, difference, sexuality, power, or privilege. Because of the lack of complexity and the reliance on a 'common-sense' approach, and because it catered to those who resisted feminist critiques of masculinities, this scholarship had wide appeal and added to a growing 'panic' about 'the boys' and schooling (Frank *et al*., 2003).

Unfortunately, however, as this scholarship avoided or resisted an analysis catering to the complexity of gender and schooling, the 'panic' that was created to address boys' needs in schools offered only 'quick-fix' solutions that encouraged a greater privileging of *some* boys at the expense of the majority of other boys and girls. For example, to encourage more boys to read, it is often suggested that the curriculum, assumed to favour girls' reading interests and styles, be changed so that boys' interests and alternative literacies are addressed (Simpson, 1996; see also Chapter 26 in this volume). But in such a solution there is rarely an acknowledgement of how more 'masculine[3] books and alternative literacy practices, such as video games, are able both to measure comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, and to prepare boys for a workplace that is likely to involve diverse literacy practices not limited to 'masculine' interests alone (Hall & Coles, 2001). Some of this research came out of a sociology of education perspective, some research examined peer group cultures, such as the classic ethnography on masculinities and schooling by Willis (1977), while other research focused on personal narratives, discourse analysis, and psychoanalytic examinations of gender in school (see Frosh Walkerdine, 1989; Redman, 1996; *et al*., 2003; Pattman, *et al*., 2005). When facing the demands of the need for a mobile labour market and the economic realities of globalization:

> The 21st-century citizen will work in media-, text-, and symbol-saturated environments. For the unemployed, underemployed, and employed alike, a great deal of service and information-based work, consumption, and leisure depends on their capacities to construct, control, and manipulate texts and symbols. It should not be surprising, then, that many of the new social conflicts are about representation and subjectivity. (Luke, 1995, p6)

Despite the shift in global economies and shifting subjectivities, the suggestion to cater to boys' interests to counter low academic achievement in literacy and language arts fails boys even as it attempts to privilege them.

Contemporary concerns for boys and schooling seldom consider the plurality of differences among boys. The fear is always that 'boys', as a unified group, are suffering academically. The lack of attention to the specific boys who are not doing well in school, in favour of a blanket concern for boys as a whole, reflects a desire arising from an anti-feminist backlash to ensure that the academic and educational gaze is shifted from the girls to the boys without engaging in the very specific ways that some boys retain privilege while other boys and young women continue to be marginalized (Epstein, 1998; Skelton, 1998; Frank & Davison, 2001) Chapter 26 in this volume).

When the critical masculinities scholarship is taken into account and the differences among boys are considered, the advantages and privileges of masculinities, as well as the resistance to feminist analyses, become more apparent. While there are indeed *some* boys and young men who struggle with literacy, there does not appear to be any evidence that boys *as a group* are being disadvantaged, and that these struggles with literacy issues in school have serious effects for their employment opportunities. The advantages and disadvantages for future employment and social 'success' often lie in the degree to which one is able to invoke hegemonic masculinity over others. Even marginalized boys struggle to obtain the gender privileges that they are denied when alienated from the gender ideal (Frank, *et al*., 2003).

We acknowledge that claims of an anti-feminist backlash is a political assessment of how some scholars have chosen to examine the lives young women and young men in school. Yet this position is more than personal ideological bias.[4] Rather, it arises out of a concern to identify how secondary school students navigate the multiple contradictions and inequities they encounter in school that are difficult to account for without critically examining gender. Instead of ignoring gender as a pre-destined and unproblematic reality, we believe that when a *contradiction is impossible to resolve except by a lie, then we know that it is really a door* (Weil, 1970).

Therefore, in addressing masculinities and femininities in secondary schools, we feel it is necessary to take into account the postmodern condition in order to point to the importance of acknowledging the complexities of gender in the lives of students. We believe that folding the postmodern across a feminist gender analysis of schooling will point to the flaws of modernist conceptions of gender and create spaces for new theories that can better accommodate the many ways gender shapes those in school.

GENDER AND THE POSTMODERN

> … fragmentation is a way of living with differences without turning them into opposites, not trying to assimilate them out of insecurity. (Trinh, 1992, p156)

Fragmentation, as Trinh explains, is a critical element to postmodern theory. Since the Enlightenment, scholars and scientists have struggled to produce theories that explain phenomena and help to sort meaning in tidy, contained, categories. The reduction of complex concepts into simple binary opposites is one way that categories can be contained. Yet, as Halberstam notes: *The human potential*

for precise classifications has been demonstrated in multiple arenas; *why then do we settle for a paucity of classifications when it comes to gender?* (1998, p27). To understand masculine as 'not feminine' not only positions two social constructions as opposites, but also serves to narrow the definition to that of clear-cut difference. For example, *psychological research, from its early animal psychology formulations to cognitivist computer-simulated models, has tended to emphasize individual difference rather than cultural heterogeneity and hybridity* (Luke, 1995, p6). Our history of ignoring the complexity of gender differences has led us to rely on simplified theories of gender categories that we have, over time, come to believe are 'natural' and therefore unavailable for critique. *Indeed, theory is no longer theoretical when it loses sight of its own conditional nature, takes no risk in speculation, and circulates as a form of administrative inquisition* (Trinh, 1989, p42).

Postmodernism is not the opposite of modernism, nor does it assume that modernist ways of knowing are historically irrelevant. Rather, postmodernism builds on, and grows out of, the imperfections and slippages of modernist thought. *Despite our desperate, eternal attempt to separate, contain and mend, categories always leak* (Trinh, 1989, p94). Postmodernism is curious about such leakages and attempts to begin enquiry where previous theories can no longer hold. By pointing to the limits of particular theory, postmodernism undercuts and fractures the foundations of our knowing and encourages new theories that do not rely on our habitual ways of understanding the world.

Postmodernism is sceptical of *the assumption that people have singular, essential social identities or fixed cultural, social class, or gendered characteristics. It assumes that subjectivities are strategically constructed and contested through textual practices and that they are crafted in the dynamics of everyday life* (Luke, 1995, p14). This approach allows both individual human agency, as well as hope that social change is possible. Acknowledging that change is both possible and an ordinary component of all living organisms, compels us to interrogate identities with a more sophisticated academic gaze. As Hall explains:

> identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (1996, p4)

Inevitably, those who resist the messiness of postmodern analyses tend to do so because the fracturing, equi-valued meanings, and multiple subjectivities do not allow for an obvious place to begin enquiry or theory – and that is precisely the point. *Postmodernism* […] *is willing to live with the pain of unrepresentability* (Jay, 1994, p583). It is the very act of refusing categorization that enables a shift in thinking about gender. *If identity is ambivalent and fluid, then those solid categories that constitute identity will be destabilized as well. Therefore gone is the neatness of the distinctions between man/woman, Black/White, homosexual/heterosexual, and so on* (Khayatt, 1997, p132). It is this messiness that we find most useful in our own work on masculinities and schooling, and believe is critical to

consider when examining gendered identities at the secondary school level. If we begin an analysis with the belief that gender is performative (Butler, 1990), gender *becomes a verb, not a noun, a position to occupy rather than a fixed role* (McRae, 2005). If we see gender as something that you *do*, we can examine the different ways individual students actively occupy and take up particular gender performances that have social and educational consequences.

Since the 1960s, transgender people, drag queens, and, more recently drag kings, have demonstrated that gender need not be a rigidly defined or performed concept. As Halberstam has pointed out: *imitation makes even the most stable of distinctions* (*i.e. gender*) *unstable* (1991, p443). The performativity of gender allows for the parodying of how so many people take gender so seriously. Zizek believes that it is the act of mimicking that gives the socially constructed and psychic understanding of gender 'legitimacy' or a sense of 'realness'. *The only authenticity at our disposal is that of impersonation, of* '*taking our act* (*posture*) *seriously*' (Zizek, 2001, p34). Gender can feel more authentic because the rigidity of hegemonic 'common-sense' gender discourses is stripped away. Thus, *what is lost in a loss of what we never possessed is the* '*essential appearance*' *which ruled our lives* (Zizek, 2001, p41). What has been 'lost' is the illusion of gender coherence that was our own creation.

Secondary students are usually quite adept at reading the postmodern around them and have developed a very different understanding of gender, sexuality and their bodies than have previous generations. Over the last decade, the issue of young women and eating disorders has become a more publicly visible socio-psychological disorder that has occupied educators and parents/guardians (Bordo, 1993; West, 1994;Abraham,1997). Recently, it has been documented that young men have also developed a kind of reverse anorexia where their distorted body image has to do with an unhappiness with the perceived muscularity of their body (Schneider & Agras, 1987; Pope, *et al.*, 2000) Tattooing, body piercing, and other body modifications have become popular with youth over the last decade, and such markings have acquired a high degree of cultural capital to young men and women today.

> Many people who regard modernization and postmodernization as a fall rather than an advance attempt to resist the march of history by recovering the body. When the body appears to be endangered, it becomes an obsession. This is one of the primary reasons that tattooing (as well as piercing and scarification) has become so widespread during this particular historical and cultural period. *Tattooing represents the attempt to mark the body at the very moment it is disappearing*. (Taylor, 1997,pp 127–9)

In refusing to engage in the way postmodernism shapes students as consumers, as gendered bodies with desires, and as citizens, we shut down an opportunity to take into account the way the social affects their regulated routine at school. McLaren believes that *it is imperative that as educators for the postmodern age we begin to examine issues such as the feminization and masculinization of the body and the reification of the body politic* (1991, p165). As socially aware educators, we have to become more accountable to the gendered bodies in schools. As Yeatman explains:

> if there is to be a vision of freedom which contests phallocentrism, it must admit the existence and significance of the particularity of embodied subjects. This means admitting the differences between differently embodied subjects. These differences are not reducible to a simple dimorphic sex difference, nor are they without socio-cultural mediation. […] Such admission depends on providing the discursive space in which differently embodied subjects themselves can find their own voices regarding their differences as embodied subjects. (1994, p24)

This accountability, as Yeatman acknowledges, necessitates the creation of spaces in schools where various discourses can be examined and supported instead of resisted and actively repressed.

In breaking down the way gender has been traditionally understood as connected to biological sex, we are able to slip from the knot of what we assumed was the 'truth' of gender, to begin to see gender as a simulacrum – an endless repetition of a copy of a copy of a copy that has no original or 'natural' form. This is not so different from the philosopher who mistakes the philosophical frame for the truth – *One thinks that one is tracing the outline of a thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it* (Wittgenstein, 2002/1953, p41). Therefore, educators considering masculinities and femininities in secondary schools may do well to examine critically the institutional frame that has shaped our understanding of gender. By disrupting modernist notions of gender, and the anti-feminist backlash response, educators will be in a better position to support students in their learning and as they negotiate the social and intellectual world around them.

CONCLUSION

> Every conclusion is but a new beginning, a fresh set of problems, frustrations and dilemmas. Hope allows us to deceive ourselves into thinking that life is parceled into discrete chunks – that our lives are stories with beginnings, middles and ends. That there IS narrative, linearity, and not chaos, chance and luck. (Byrne, 2002, p39)

Trinh argues that *difference need not be suppressed in the name of theory* (1989, p43). Postmodernism may offer the tools for better understanding how gender differences shape the way students are able to access knowledge. For example, if a transgender student is displaced by binary-sexed changing rooms for physical education class, more modernist understandings of gender would not be able to accommodate the student's needs in a way that allows that student to participate fully in the learning environment. To refuse to consider the ways gender is multiple and not a simple rigid binary is *symptomatic of an advanced case of hardening of the categories* (Haraway, 1997, p161). Fortunately, this prognosis is avoidable by considering that the categories we ourselves have constructed to make sense of our world are not static; they are continually changing, and that need not be a threat to educators or the education system if we take steps to create policy and curriculum better able to account for the way dominant performances of femininity and masculinity can place limits on how students

can participate in their education. To offer a further example, if a young woman is continually bullied and harassed because she does not conform to the demands of 'acceptable' femininity, she will be less able to take up her studies than a non-harassed young woman. As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that students feel safe and supported in schools, yet the refusal of schools and educators to acknowledge how hegemonic femininity and masculinity are implicated in social exclusion, bullying, harassment, violence, and low academic performance is tantamount to an act of abandoning students that are marginalized by the everyday inequity of gender discourses.

This chapter has attempted to illustrate how resistance to a critical examination of gender can work to perpetuate harm and hinder learning for all students. Taking up the various ways masculinities and femininities are multiple and ever-shifting, and troubling to our own performances, understandings, and comfortability regarding the plurality of gender in the postmodern, can demystify what we have come to believe are the 'truths' of gender. As Zizek explains: *Contemporary experience again and again confronts us with situations in which we are compelled to take note of how our sense of reality and normal attitude toward it is grounded in a symbolic fiction* (2001, p219). Acknowledging that what we thought was stable is but a fiction can be disorienting for some, and can produce a longing for tidier modernist categories. Lyotard has written of the *mourning and melancholy for the lost illusions of modernism* (1985, p33). However, as Haraway notes: *Breakdown provokes a space of possibility precisely because things don't work smoothly anymore* (1999, p115). The moments and instances where gender seems to create friction in educational institutions may be the precise locations where enquiry is necessary. If, as Spivak suggests, *Our lesson is to act in the fractures of identities in struggle* (1992: p803), then seeking cracks and fissures in our understanding and theorizing about gender and education may offer us an entry point to re-examine assumptions about gender and come closer to understanding the discourses that shape secondary students' lives. A step toward embracing gender plurality and resisting what appear to be 'common-sense' beliefs about gender can create an educational climate that is welcoming of difference and is better able to address some of the social and educational concerns in schools, from violence and bullying to homophobia and academic underachievement.

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NOTES

1. Of course, raced, classed and sexual subject positions are also learned and navigated in schools, but this chapter will focus on masculinities and femininities.

2. Note how the subject areas absorb the gender bias. That is, subjects and disciplines cannot be gendered, but assumptions about how the people who succeed in such areas are gendered are transferred to the subject.

3. Again, note how objects become gendered almost by the contagious human touch alone.

4. We would like to acknowledge our understanding that bias is inevitable, and our solidarity with feminists in the belief that the personal is political. To examine individual lives of students in school is to engage in unavoidable political struggles.