Educating boys:
What’s your problem?

A field and discourse analysis of Boys’
Education in Australia from 1996 to 2006

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Thesis submitted for a Doctor of Philosophy

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Statement of Originality

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository**, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Signed:
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Abstract

This Bourdieusian and Strategic Action field analysis and Critical Language Analysis investigated the Australian field of boys’ education in the turbulent period from 1996 to 2006. The study indicated that the focus on boys’ education created shock waves that reverberated through the hierarchical layers or sub-fields of practice, research, policy and politics in the somewhat autonomous field of gender equity in education. The findings of this research suggest that there were two major factors in the field’s vulnerability to incursions. The first was the nature of the field structures, as players in each layer of the field were unable to understand or accommodate the logic and purpose of other layers and players operated from positions of incumbent or challenger, thereby leading to fractures in the purpose of the field. The second major factor in the field’s vulnerability to incursion was logical inconsistencies in the dominant discourses of the doxa of the field. The conclusions reached in the thesis indicate that, although there has been little sustained activity in boys’ or girls’ education since 2007, gender considerations continue to be important in education. Although positioning any group as disadvantaged is dangerous, the field of equity in education could be reinvigorated by renewed focus on the complexities and intersections of differences and identities and a reconsideration of the concept of the disadvantaged subject. A policy, research and practice agenda with a focus on the inter-connection of positive aspects of identities as well as a critical examination of where these interconnections lead to disadvantage would be useful. Envisaging and focusing on these intersections as similar to a magnetic force field of factors rather than as dichotomies or static jigsaws could reinvigorate the field and allow for international cooperation and collaborations to investigate how issues arise, how discourses about them get transferred and how global movements for change occur. This conceptualisation could have application to many fields.
Chapter 1
Introduction

In the mid-1990s the Australian education system underwent a dramatic change: it turned its focus from girls’ education to that of boys. A public discussion which had been gradually brewing about boys’ education erupted and the following catch cries – from all quarters: journalists, academics, politicians, policy makers, practitioners – could be heard:

Gender wars
Battle of the sexes in the HSC
Girls win every time
What about the boys?

Failing boys
Problem boys
Boys falling behind
Which boys? Which girls?

Boy friendly schools
Boys’ learning styles
Boyswork
Working with boys, building fine men

Media driven crisis
Competing victim syndrome
Recuperative masculinity
Backlash pedagogies

Postmodernist claptrap
Essentialist drivel

What these catch cries reflect, from the divisive headlines, to the earnest pleas, to the heart-felt suggestions and the competitive theoretical positioning, is that boys’ education touched deep emotional and ideological nerves and became a
fiercely contested ground – and it would remain so for ten years. From 1996 to 2006 the field of boys’ education underwent media scrutiny, attracted intense political intervention and policy change, and sparked academic and public debates and prolific practice experimentation. There were conflicts over interpretations of what was going on, over established positions in the field, ideologies, theories and practical solutions. The field had been thrown into flux, and a battle arose over what it stood for and indeed its very reason for existence. Why should the simple change of focus from girls to boys result in such a dramatic upheaval?

The change in focus raised questions that were thus far sidelined or downright unthinkable: What about the boys? Are they all doing well in education and in life? What’s different about them and their issues? Should they be educated differently to girls? Is the education system doing all boys or some of them a disservice? What needs to change? These questions challenged not only core assumptions about education but also key concepts of gender and equity. As the focus of research, policy and practice moved towards ways to educate boys, debates over whether and in what ways all boys, or some, or any boys could be legitimately considered within a gender equity framework arose as a key area of contestation. Whether and in what ways schooling could fully accommodate the educational, emotional and social concerns of all boys was a key concern for new players entering the field of boys’ education (Browne & Fletcher, 1995). And a related concern for many was whether girls’ education would survive the shocks that these questions and the interventions around them brought (Ailwood & Lingard, 2001).

The catchcries above served, and continue to serve, as magnets: we’re drawn to ones that speak to our point of view, and ignore, dismiss or exclude others. The study you are about to read interrogates these reading and writing positions and investigates the moves of players in the field of boys’ education during this period. My study is an analysis of the field of boys’ education and the discourses about boys’ education in Australia from 1996 to 2006, and in it I attempt to understand these divisive debates in the contested field in this period of history. In order to achieve this, I conducted a Bourdieusian and strategic field analysis and a critical discourse analysis to address some of the challenging problems that beset educational research about and with boys. This project of examining boys’ education by a field and critical discourse analyses of a corpus
of public, policy, research, practice and journalistic texts sheds light on what was at stake for players in the field, and some of the enduring dichotomies and debates that shaped the nature of the field of boys’ education.

This type of study allowed me to locate the research questions within the historical movements of the larger educational research discourses that are relevant to the turn towards boys’ education in the period of the study. I have located this field analysis in the historical and intellectual context of Australian educational policy, research and practice discourses about: the purpose of education; the role education plays in producing an equitable society; and the nature of policy and practice in education for both girls and boys. I outline the structure of the thesis and the work of each chapter in producing a coherent analysis of the field and a critical analysis of the discourses in boys’ education in Australia from 1996 to 2006 at the end of this chapter.

Significance of the study

While the education of boys as a gender group had received some attention previously, in relation to girls’ education, it was not until the change of focus that the Australian field of boys’ education became extremely active across all spheres from political debate and policy, to research and educational practice. Particularly in the 10 years between 1996 and 2006, many individual schools investigated and refined practices to the extent that they improved the literacy levels, behaviour and school retention of boys they had identified as ‘at risk’ and some transformed their school culture to one where a wide range of gendered identities could be freely expressed by boys without negatively impacting upon girls. By the end of this period, a much clearer picture of nuanced data about boys’ educational and social outcomes had emerged. A more complex analysis of the ways gendered identities, relationships, learning and schooling systems interact to create schooling behaviours, circumstances and outcomes for individual boys had been achieved. The importance of family and community members as partners in the motivation, engagement and successful outcomes for all boys, particularly those most vulnerable, also emerged. The importance of teachers in establishing high quality learning experiences and positive strengths-based relationships with boys was also highlighted in this period. The complex ways that individual boys could be supported to negotiate their individual gendered identities within the social ecology of their families, peers, teachers,
schools and communities to create successful outcomes in school and life was explored and brought to the foreground during this important period.

Nevertheless, in 2014, despite these promising explorations and some positive outcomes, the field of boys’ education appears to be stagnant. Indeed, at a national level, boys are still over-represented in the lowest literacy bands, school detentions and expulsions and in many of the social, emotional and health outcomes that were highlighted at the beginning of this period. In some communities, such as many Indigenous, rural and low-income communities, a high proportion of boys are increasingly at risk of these compounding detrimental outcomes. The field seems to still be stuck in many intractable divisions and oppositional positions arising from this period of intense contestation and government intervention. For example, there has been no change to federal policy since 1996 and little funding currently allocated to boys’ education strategies. Moreover, a productive, generative relationship between the fields of boys’ education and girls’ education is no closer to being achieved.

This current stagnation in the field can be understood historically. The change in focus from girls to boys reached across policy, practice and educational research and the effects were widespread (Kenway, 1997a; Kenway & Willis, 1997; Lingard, Mills, & Weaver-Hightower, 2012; Louden et al., 2005; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Mills, Martino, & Lingard, 2007; Weaver-Hightower, 2003; Yates, 1997). The consensus, alliances and collaborations that had emerged in the field of girls’ education that were largely based on feminist and pro-feminist theoretical positions on girls and women, with a much smaller focus on boys in relation to girls, were disrupted by different kinds of discourses and interventions in boys’ education, largely coming from men’s movement advocacy and writings (Biddulph, 1997; Browne & Fletcher, 1995; Hawkes, 2001; Lillico, 2002; West, 1999). The focus on barriers to girls, such as sex-based harassment and difficulties entering non-traditional subject areas which contributed to life-long poorer economic outcomes for girls in all socio-economic groups, because of a gendered labour market, were replaced by prolific discussion and debate on boys’ literacy and learning outcomes, behaviour, retention to Year 12 and post-school options. When discourses about boys’ and young men’s male identities linked to social and emotional well-being and health outcomes also entered the debate, the simple question of how to educate boys proved to be dynamite. The emerging field of boys’ education exploded from
uneasy alliances into a high degree of contestation over competing discourses (Browne & Fletcher, 1995; Hartman, 2011; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Mills et al., 2007; Rowe, 2000; Rowe & Rowe, 2006b). Despite this contestation, the field of boys’ education was buoyed by significant government-funded research, policy and program interventions. It is estimated that $29,662,300 worth of Australian Commonwealth government funding was allocated to various government initiated activities in boys’ education from 2000 to 2005 alone (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). In 1996, the federal government introduced Gender Equity Policy for Australian Schools (Commonwealth of Australia, 1996), replacing a policy and strategy document directed towards the education of girls, and which only dealt with boys in relation to girls, with one that included boys as a distinct gender group with particular gendered issues (Ailwood, 2003). In 2000 it initiated an Inquiry into the Education of Boys which reported in 2000. Shortly after this, it funded and implemented two schools-based programs allocating funds to individual schools or small clusters of schools in particular locations to undertake boys’ education initiatives (Cuttance, 2006). These significant interventions into local school-based research and activity about teaching boys or enhancing boys’ outcomes of schooling could have been expected to highlight ways that significant boys’ educational issues could be addressed and resolved. They could be expected to provide directions for future research, policy and practice in the field. The final evaluation report on the substantial program Success for Boys has never been published. No further commonwealth government initiatives have been undertaken. After this intense period of intervention into the field, which ended in 2007, there has been a complete dearth of government funded activity, as the state has completely vacated its active role in the field of boys’ education.

The unresolved tensions that arose in the field during these government interventions, and the reliance on government funding for research and practice initiatives in the turn towards boys’ education, has had profound implications for the field. Seven government funded research reports were published during this period by well-known academics taking different positions in the contested field. The first two of these reports focused on both girls and boys, illustrating the confounding complexities and interwoven nature of the field of boys’ education with the field of girls’ education. Each report has a different focus, including: the social construction of gender (Collins, Batten, Ainley, & Getty, 1996); statistical
evidence and explanations about post school outcomes of girls and boys (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000a); the views of boys about factors influencing their outcomes (Slade & Trent, 2000b); boys’ literacy (Alloway, Freebody, Gilbert, & Muspratt, 2002), statistical evidence and approaches to boys’ education and literacy (Cresswell, Rowe, & Withers, 2002) and the motivation and engagement of boys in schools from low socio-economic areas (Munns et al., 2006). Since that time of well-funded research into boys’ education, the majority of current academic writing about boys’ education contributes to a critique of this period and of differing ideological positions that emerged during the significant government policy and program moves (Hartman, 2011; Lingard et al., 2012; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). There is little research, policy or practice activity on the confounding, complex and intersecting issues still to be addressed in the field of boys’ education, nor on how these issues intersect with girls’ education. There is also little very detailed research on how players in fields such as this, in a state of flux, can operate to form strategic alliances and cross ideological and methodological boundaries in research, policy and practice interests to create robust and autonomous fields.

In sum, this period of promise and energy as much as contestation and stagnation has left the field exhausted and moribund. The field envisaged by practitioners and policy makers, described through government documents, and contested in academic research and public debate in the 1990s, has not delivered equitable outcomes for boys and girls, and for all students including the most vulnerable. The achievement of equitable and respectful gender relations in schools is still an ongoing issue. The tensions arising from the dramatic turn away from girls’ education towards boys’ education have not been addressed. The questions of whether or how the range of boys’ educational and social issues can be conceptualised and addressed through gender equity policy largely designed for girls is still very much unfinished business.

For parents, practitioners, educational policy makers and researchers who draw on and participate in debates about boys’ education, sorting out the disparate views and theories and making sense of the complexities of the issues has proved to be an unwieldy task. Currently, there is little agreement in the field yet not much real debate about boys’ education in Australia. It seems that within the field, players taking different positions are reluctant to talk to each other, preferring to stay within their theoretical enclaves where there is general
agreement. The divisions seem to be around whether boys’ issues can only be seen in relation to the difficulties they create for girls, or whether they can be addressed in their own right. The categories of difference we create in our conceptual framings of these issues are major divisions among academics. While I am not suggesting a consensus is possible or even desirable, unless these differences are openly discussed across the field, it is likely that gender policy and theory will be ignored and practitioners will be offered little guidance in the important task of creating stimulating, safe, gender-inclusive learning environments for all students in all schools. Yet, the field of boys’ education has the potential to contribute to this important task.

My study attempts to understand the barriers to effective boys’ education research, policy and practice in Australian schools by looking at the discourses and actions the various players in the field of boys’ education had at their disposal and how these discourses and actions served the players in the field of boys’ education at the time. By conceptualising boys’ education as a field of strategic action, I endeavour to show how various actors knowingly came together around this issue in this period of contention, the moves they made and the forces within, near and further away from the field that influenced what went on in the field. I examine the ruptures in the field and the attempts of the players and of the state to create change and stability (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

My analysis of the field of boys’ education contributes to an understanding of policy, theory and practice about boys’ education and suggests some productive ways the field may be revitalised. It also contributes to knowledge about social change, and how fields and actors operate in times of rupture and turbulence as well as in times of stability. The tools and approaches in this analysis can be applied to any social field and thus the conclusions about the ways this field underwent and/or withstood the upheavals that occurred between 1996 and 2006 have applicability for those in any field wanting to understand how social change can come about.

The research questions

Framed as an analysis of a field and the discourses within that field, my study addresses four major research questions:
• What changes occurred in the field of boys’ education between 1996 and 2006?
• What powerful discourses emerged in government policy documents and commissioned research papers, practitioner journals and the media and other public documents regarding boys’ education in the period between 1996 and 2006?
• What are the inter-relationships among the policy, academic, practice and public discourses within the field of boys’ education during this period?
• What lessons can be learned from the state of the field by 2006?

The questions central to this research already imply the methods used in the study. By analysing changes, examining what was important to various players and how they thought, spoke, wrote and acted about their chosen topics, by teasing out the interrelationships between the players and what they said and drawing conclusions from the events and the state of the field by the end of the study, I shed light on how change occurred in this important arena of social activity. A Bourdieusian and strategic action analysis of the field at the time that includes a critical discourse analysis of a corpus of public, journalistic, policy and practice literature from 1996 to 2006 forms the main body of the research. While the conceptual framings for this study will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, in the next section I set the scene for this discussion by briefly outlining the reasoning behind the shift from the practitioner framing of my previous writings in the field (Hartman, 1999, 2000, 2006) to a Bourdieusian and strategic action field analysis for my doctoral study.

**Choosing a research design**

The major consideration in research design is whether the theories and methodologies utilised can offer enough explanatory power and methodological rigour to enable the researcher to effectively answer the research questions. To conceptualise the upheavals that occurred between 1996 and 2006, to unravel the seemingly intractable differences represented in the dichotomies in the discourses within the field of boys’ education and to do justice to an analysis of these differences and dichotomies, the research methods must have enough explanatory power to address these complexities. In this study, I attempt to make sense of the complexities and tell a deeper story than the slogans and headlines,
or many practice and academic writings written from particular theoretical positions, have done so far. For this project, I needed a methodological framing that could help to unpack the complex and interwoven issues in the vexed and contested field of boys’ education in Australia.

The research design I developed encompasses and utilises the theoretical and methodological approaches of field analysis articulated by Bourdieu and Wacquant (Bourdieu, 1991, 1993; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It includes recent advances in the study of fields that allow for a much greater emphasis on the deliberate knowing and strategic actions of groups of players acting collaboratively towards certain goals, as well as insights about the importance of influences from outside the field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). It also uses critical discourse analysis as expounded by Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995, 2001, 2003). It subjects the researcher choices in categorising the qualitative data analysed through these lenses to the rigorous and transparent methodology of ‘argument catalogue’ (Abrami, Bernard, & Wade, 2006) in order to reach some conclusions about the field of boys’ education and to shed some light on the research questions.

In claiming boys’ education as a field at the outset, I am in no way suggesting that this can be a foregone, taken-for-granted proposition. Indeed, much of my work and the work of my colleagues at the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, has been directed towards establishing boys’ education as a field of scholarship in Australia: developing university courses devoted to it; publishing a practitioner journal; conducting applied research; and conducting regular conferences and publishing the proceedings to facilitate internal debate and exchange in the field (Clay & Hartman, 2006; Fletcher, Hartman, & Browne, 1999; Hartman, 2006). This activity and that of many others involved in the production of a body of policy documents, research and practitioner literature that is devoted to and named as boys’ education serve as some empirical evidence that a field of boys’ education can be said to exist.

Yet a field analysis must delve much deeper than these surface indicators. How fields can be described, what players should be included, how their boundaries can be set, how they form a web of interactions with other fields near to and further away from their immediate sphere of influence are all questions that constitute the very substance, the guts of field analysis (Bourdieu &
To achieve this end, and standing on the shoulders of giants, this study of boys’ education builds on Bourdieu’s momentous study of the French education system in which he argues education is a relatively autonomous field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In Chapter 4, utilising Bourdieusian analytical technologies, I argue that boys’ education can be thought of as a structured space – a relatively autonomous field in the same way as any other intellectual endeavour. I am also much indebted to more recent work on field analysis that conceptualises fields as arenas of dynamic and strategic action, always in a state of flux and always influenced by and interacting with other fields, particularly those in near proximity to them (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). The metaphor of a set of Russian dolls suggested by Fligstein and McAdam (2012) is particularly applicable to boys’ education, sitting as it does, beside girls’ education, inside gender in education, which is inside education, which is overseen by the state, in the form of Australian state departments of education, as well as the national body, which in turn are controlled by state and national governments. Similarly, the practice of boys’ education in schools can be seen in close relation to research and theorising about gender in education, and policy making by systems and governments. The work of practice, theory and policy about gender in education is also related to more general research and theorising about gender and to media commentary and public opinions about boys’ education. These conceptual insights, described fully in Chapter 4, are the basis of my analysis of the field of boys’ education.

This is a study of written texts, investigating published written texts and the themes and meanings contained within them. It is also a study of how these texts have informed actions and practices in the field of boys’ education. For this reason, the theoretical and methodological approaches to this study clearly needed to enable a trans-disciplinary approach, a linguistic as well as a social and historical analysis, which encompassed both a textual and a social analysis with each of these analyses adding strength to the other. In this study I analyse texts coming from very different epistemological and theoretical traditions and texts written by very different types of authors with different audiences in mind.

In undertaking an analysis of a corpus of policy, academic and practice literature, as well as interventions from politics, and the journalistic field, about
boys’ education in Australia from 1996 to 2006, I worked from the premise that it was possible not only to trace the various discourses within these diverse literature forms over time but also to look across them to examine how themes within these discourses became translated between and amongst the various literature forms and impacted on pedagogical decisions over time (Fairclough, 1995, 2003). The social analysis of fields and the discourse analysis of texts emphasise how ideas and discourses are historical yet also get transferred through time, continue in some ways and overlap with new ideas. They offer tools to examine the complexity of both the social spaces of a field and the discourses within them.

In this research I treat the wider discourses about education in the public domain, media and popular literature as well as writings by educational researchers, policy makers and practitioners as all equally worthy of detailed examination, as all contributing to the discourses in the field (Abrami et al., 2006). To map changes in the field and relate these to changes in the discourses on boys’ education evident in key texts and events, I utilised an approach that brings together a Bourdieusian field analysis and a finer grained critical discourse analysis of certain texts. In this trans-disciplinary approach, I developed a model for boys’ education that brought field and discourse analysis together (Albright, 2006). This kind of modelling was developed and applied to the field of literacy education by James Albright (Albright, 2006). I applied this approach to the study of texts produced in the field of boys’ education. This approach was particularly useful for a study of examples of texts from different author types – public, journalistic, policy, academic and practitioner – as it offered an approach to mapping changes in the field that related to themes and changes in the discourses on boys’ education evident from finer grained critical discourse analysis of key texts.

The Bourdieusian analysis of the social field in which texts are situated enabled me to make sense of the commonalities and dissonances between and within texts and map these to the social conditions and events at the times the texts were produced. It offered a method for an analysis of intertextuality across genres, discourses and styles within the corpus to ascertain the ways texts draw upon and re-contextualise what is said in other texts. It enabled me to look at what was made explicit and what was left unsaid, implicit and assumed within and across text types and individual texts. It enabled me to conceptualise the
texts in the social field of boys’ education at a particular time and place – Australia between 1996 and 2006.

The scope of this study, incorporating many texts within a specific policy and practice milieu, was necessarily limited to the Australian context in order to be manageable as a study and to do justice to a full interrogation of that context. A similar upsurge in public interest and in policy, practice and academic writings in the field of boys’ education also occurred in other western countries such as New Zealand (Lashlie, 2004), the UK (Skelton, 2001), Canada (Blair & Sanford, 2002) and the USA (Gurian, Henley, & Trueman, 2001; Weaver-Hightower, 2003) as well as in Malaysia and Japan. It could be argued that this body of work constitutes an international field of boys’ education. The cross-fertilisation of this international body of literature can be clearly seen in the various discourses in Australia in ways that have been described as a globalisation of policy (Lingard, Rawolle, & Taylor, 2005). While this is a compelling analysis, and I recognise the effects of globalisation on the Australian field, it is not within the scope of my study to analyse the international field, I trust my analysis of the Australian field will have implications for other nations and this focus on a local situation will contribute to global discourses of gender in education.

In this field and discourse analysis I discuss Australian boys’ education literature from the period 1996 to 2006, informed by a historical review of the previous era. I am reminded by Bourdieu’s warning that:

We cannot grasp the dynamics of a field...without a historical, that is, a genetic analysis of its constitution and of the tensions that exist between positions in it, as well as between this and other fields and especially the field of power. (Bourdieu, 1992 in Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 90)

The discourses, events, policies and practices in the field can only be made sense of in relation to the historical and intellectual context of the period. A conceptualisation of a field of Australian boys’ education necessarily and historically sits in relation to an intellectual field of policy and practice literature in education in general and girls’ education in particular. I discuss this in detail in Chapter 3.
The researcher stance

As an academic involved in research and practice on boys’ education for more than fifteen years, and as an advocate for close attention to boys’ education as a legitimate educational issue, I have long been concerned at the lack of discussion among academics taking differing positions on boys’ education. I have found this lack of dialogue unhelpful as it has created the appearance of enormous division and has resulted in a hardening of positions which seem too great to bridge.

While I have considered myself a feminist for most of my adult life, it is as a practising educator that I have been involved in many social justice movements and activities, with sympathy and empathy for the struggles of the students I have worked with, particularly in my support of Indigenous education in my work as a primary teacher, teacher educator and curriculum writer in rural Queensland and in the Northern Territory (Hartman & Henderson, 1994). In my previous writings in the field of boys’ education, I have also written from a practitioner stance without taking an explicit feminist theoretical framing (Fletcher et al., 1999; Hartman, 2006). In my work at the Family Action Centre to date, I have found the strengths-based, solution-focused approach to boys and men and their developmental, psychological and social situations adopted by the centre a useful framework. I have worked closely with colleagues adopting positions consistent with some men’s movement conceptualisations of men and masculinities. These practitioner concerns, and the particular stances to them I have taken, represent one perspective from the field of boys’ education; they form part of the discourses in the field and as such are included in one of the corpuses to be examined in this research.

With a professional interest in practice and as a feminist mother of two sons, I aim to produce research that includes practitioner and parent concerns and is relevant and useful to policy makers, to assist the field to find direction towards a vision of positive gender-inclusive education. I have chosen a research methodology that allows me to remain true to my interest in practice and simultaneously do justice to a scrutiny of all positions relating to policy and practice.

Bourdieu (1977) argues that practitioner discourses are often subordinate, or heterodoxic, usually not the most powerful in any field. These Bourdieusian theoretical and methodological notions of heterodoxy, orthodoxy and power in
metaphorical fields are the methodological tools I have chosen to make sense of this complex field in this period (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Moreover, the practitioner stance my writing is associated with comes from an empathy for the diverse struggles of boys to become fine men and successful students, and with support from some sections of the men’s movement. It is one that has been criticised for being at best, under-theorised and popularist and at worst, anti-feminist or recuperatively masculinist, in a field where there is strong contestation over both practice and theoretical positions that could inform practice (Kenway, 1997b; Mills et al., 2007). I am mindful that my interpretations of the textual data I present as empirical evidence in the following chapters must be supported by transparent processes and logical consistencies that allow readers to understand how these conclusions have been reached.

Metaphors in the field

Bourdieu often used sporting or military metaphors when describing a field or the positions of players in a field. When I reflect on the period from 1996 to 2006, it seems to me that the metaphor that best suits practitioners and boys’ education advocates from the men's movement in the field at that time is one of a newly formed garage band. Practitioner advocates for attention to boys’ education were an eclectic bunch of friends and acquaintances with varying degrees of talents, traditions and interests, who all strongly believed that something different to the then-current discourses about education and boys had to be said. We performed our stances in the field, very enthusiastically playing covers of bands we liked from all kinds of musical traditions whether they fitted together or not. We were happily relentlessly touring the country developing a fan base of other players desperate for something new, positive and energetic that they felt they could relate to and achieve. Our publications were like the home-produced two-song CD of a new band, hoping a record company who had real power would pick us up and run with us. And we were never quite sure why those in powerful positions in the field, particularly established feminist and pro-feminist players, didn’t seem to like our music, when we quite liked some of theirs. This may seem overly naïve and it's fair to say that those band members who’ve remained in the field now have a much stronger feel for the game than before, yet the heady days of the 1990s when it seemed that the whole world wanted to play our music are now over. The field is not strong. Our tradition has not developed viable theoretical
framings, yet those are available to us. The men’s movement practice discourses in the field need strengthening by further productive engagement with useful theories.

This research is not just about practitioners or boys’ education advocates. I seek to examine the whole field as well as my position in it – the policy, research, practitioner, public and journalistic contributions to the field of boys’ education. I also seek to make sense of the role of the state and the ways the field was influenced by the actions of the state and how the public concern, debate and action about boys’ education grew and changed in this period. In this task I am greatly supported by recent work by Fligstein and McAdam (2012) whose analysis of strategic action fields I draw on extensively in Chapters 3 and 4 as well as in my conclusion.

Having stated my experience and stance in boys’ education, I embark on this investigation with the deliberate intent of taking a reflexive approach to my own practitioner position and stances, to rigorously interrogate the approach I have previously taken and the critiques of this approach. The personal challenges I face in investigating my own stance as a practitioner/advocate/researcher mirror the challenges and needs within the field as a whole. In the true spirit of reflexive research, I intend to re-examine my own work and words and those of others to seek genuine direction through these complex issues. While acknowledging that researchers are always writing from their current position, in this study, rather than write from a particular theoretical stance within the field of boys’ education, such as a feminist or practitioner stance, I am writing as a Bourdieusian, using the conceptual tools of field and discourse analysis to undertake a forensic analysis of the field of boys’ education as a whole.

Bourdieu describes the social space of an academic discipline as a field of play. He has likened an academic field to a game on a soccer field; where the protagonists are players who have a feel for the game; and, like opposing teams, largely obey the rules because they all believe that the game is worth playing; and where players or teams occupy different positions in the league and have a range of tactical reasons for any moves they make, including the desire to be top of their field (Bourdieu, 1988). The feminist writer Lyn Yates prefers the metaphor of the dance in her description of how feminist scholars in education have played the game with the State or, in Bourdieusian terms, the field of power. In
describing the moves, strategies, tactics and positions open to feminist academics in the field, she describes ‘Feminism’s Fandango’ with the State in trying to maintain a feminist stance to gender in education policy (Yates, 1999).

So what metaphor could describe the field of boys’ education and the relationships within the field? It makes sense in my analysis to choose something recognisably, even stereotypically associated with males. I am tempted to choose Rugby Union as my metaphor – with the fierce pre-match Maori Haka representing the ways the teams have lined up against each other, intimidating the opposition with flamboyant, stylised insults before the game even begins and I think I could make a case for this. But I have never really found the fierce warrior stances protagonists seem to be expected to take in academia very productive. In fact, in this thesis I argue that while a vigorous field is characterised by internal debates, the distrust and dismissal of ideas from other fields and research traditions has been counter-productive to a robust healthy field (Bourdieu, 1988; The Thesis Whisperer, 2012, 2013).

I would consider choosing Australian Football (AFL), my favourite football code, as my metaphor, and I could try to argue that players took spectacular marks that impressed the whole field, and stood up for the many boys whose needs are not being adequately met by the education system, just like Nicky Winmar did in pulling up his jersey and proudly baring his black skin in a defiant positive statement about Aboriginal identity and against racism in AFL and in society more generally in 1993. Or I could say players adopted brave strategies, like Jason Ball’s proud country-boy stance against homophobia in the AFL in 2012, succeeding in bringing the powerful AFL to agree to a Gay Pride round through his social media campaign. However, I think that would be somewhat overstating the case for the achievements of players writing in the field of boys’ education, despite the fact that many have gallantly stood up for boys.

I am concerned with how players operate within the field of boys’ education and how discourses emerged, were reiterated, reinterpreted and reused over time and across spaces within the field. I am concerned with how and why certain discourses and players get established in a field, how different players operate from different positions and how fields move, get stuck, disintegrate and reinvigorate themselves. In that sense this thesis is a case study of a field undergoing change. It has the potential to inform policy, research and practice
within the field of boys’ education. It could also inform those interested in similar social policy fields or fields in general.

The field of boys’ education needs invigorating by different conceptualisations of it. There is an urgent need to reconceptualise gender policy and practice in schools in ways that can adequately address the complexity of gender issues for both boys and girls. The need to systematically bring together individual, social, cultural and gender concerns for boys and girls, to assist in the development of theoretically robust and practically viable and successful programs, underpins this thesis and its research questions (Hattam & Prosser, 2008; Munns et al., 2006). The thematic analysis of the discourses within the field of boys’ education sheds some light on these issues and has enabled me to suggest some useful directions for policy and practitioners.

The findings of this investigation into the events and actions of the players in the field and the discourses within the field suggest the need for a reinvigoration of the field, so that some of the unrealised aims can be met: to create equitable outcomes for all in schooling; to nourish positive individual gender identities in students; and to enable fair, friendly and respectful gender relationships within schools and society for all.

My research highlights the types of reforms that could constitute gender equity as a project in boys’ education. It is my hope that this Bourdieusian, strategic action field and discourse analysis is an example of ‘science with attitude’ (Ladwig, 1996). Indeed, an approach to boys’ education that investigates the dichotomies listed earlier could lead to the development of a science with both attitude and heart. This is a project worth doing.

The thesis outline

This thesis consists of ten chapters. In this opening chapter, I have introduced the research questions and their significance, the methods I will use and myself as the researcher. In the next chapter, I further develop the conceptual framework for this thesis, outlining the major theoretical concepts and tools I use and the major influences on the theoretical and conceptual framing of my study. In Chapter 3, I discuss the period immediately prior to that of the study and the theoretical, policy and practice concerns of this period in Australian education when there was a focus on girls’ education. That chapter serves both to set the
historical context for the study and to review some of the significant literature of the period prior to the study.

In Chapter 4, I outline my model of Australian boys’ education. The model is a Bourdieusian analysis of the field as an autonomous space, containing multiple vertical layers, with specific cultural and commercial capital at stake in each layer. I identify homologies between fields, particularly between the proximal fields of politics, social science and journalism. My model identifies and conceptualises the complexities of the inter-relationships and the positions and moves open to players in the field within these complexities.

I then begin, in Chapter 5, a detailed forensic analysis of the field, working through the identified layers from the outer, most powerful layer of the political field, through the field of policy in Chapter 6, to the academic contributions to policy in Chapter 7, to the inner-most and least powerful field of practice in Chapter 8. I then analyse the interventions in the field of boys’ education by the field of journalism in Chapter 9. In each of these chapters I examine the events in the given layer of the field, and the cultural positions and strategic and moves open to players in this layer. I examine small excerpts of texts from epistemic players in these layers in order to make sense of the discourses at the time.

In Chapter 10, I return to the model of boys’ education I develop in Chapter 4, reaching some conclusions about the state of the field by 2006, drawn from the detailed analyses in Chapters 5 to 9. I then offer some suggestions for a re-invigoration for the field based on my field and discourse analyses. Finally, I point towards useful further research that would assist this reinvigoration. In structuring the thesis in this way, I have constantly moved in and out of a large view of the field to and through a finer-grained, detailed view of a section of the field in order to capture the complexities of the field in all of its layers, density and detail. I have found this approach a useful way to hold the scale of the whole field in focus while doing justice to the intricacies of the moves within each layer.
Chapter 2
Conceptual frameworks

… you must tackle a very concrete empirical case with the goal of building a model (which need not be mathematical to be rigorous), by linking the relevant data in such a manner that they function as a self-propelling program of research capable of generating systematic questions liable to be given systematic answers, in short, to yield a coherent system of relations which can be tested as such (Wacquant, 1989, p. 54).

In the introductory chapter, I suggested that the period in the history of Australian education from 1996 to 2006 was one of significant shifts in policy and practice around gender in education. In this period there was a turn towards boys’ education in Australia and many other developed countries (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). This study about the field in Australia during that turn towards boys – the field of boys’ education – required a conceptual framing that would help to unpack the complex and interwoven discourses in this vexed and contested field at a time of change. Many players were involved in this turn. There were significant debates in the public arena and through the media, as well as in the practice, academic and policy arenas of the field. Much has been written and said in all of these sectors. I have chosen to focus on written texts – investigating the ideas about boys’ education that the various players have put in writing. My study investigates published written texts and the discourses, themes and meanings contained within them. It is also a study of how these texts have influenced and been influenced by actions and practices in the field of education in general and
more specifically in gender and boys’ education. It is a study of inter-relationships and it is a study of social change. The conceptual approaches to this study clearly needed to enable both a social and a textual analysis. Theory that analyses social change as well as the ways textual features of texts create meanings that are integral to that social change is particularly useful in a study of contemporary educational and policy change (Chouliaraki, 1999).

The Study

This study is a Bourdieusian analysis of the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. I investigate this period in relation to the previous period when there was a policy focus on girls’ education. In an empirical investigation of the field, I forensically examine a corpus of texts produced between 1996 and 2006 including:

- The terms of and government responses to the politically instigated government inquiry into boys’ education and public texts produced for this inquiry;
- Policy documents about equity in education
- Research and program reports commissioned by the government to inform policy;
- Practice texts in two practitioner journals on boys’ education; and
- Journalistic texts produced on boys’ education in one state newspaper with a wide readership.

In the introductory chapter, I suggested that boys’ education could be regarded as an autonomous field of endeavour. Now I’d like to expand upon this thinking to describe the conceptual tool of field and how I will use it in this study as a framing that enables me to make sense of the events, actions, actors and discourses at the time under investigation. I describe the ways concepts of field and discourse are used in my study to address the four research questions:

- What changes occurred in boys’ education between 1996 and 2006?
- What powerful discourses emerged in government policy documents and commissioned research papers, practitioner journals and the media and
other public documents regarding boys’ education in the period between 1996 and 2006?

- What are the inter-relationships among the policy, academic, practice and public discourses within the field of boys’ education during this period?
- What lessons can be learned from the state of the field by 2006?

The study is built upon the theoretical tools of field analysis as conceptualised by the eminent French philosopher, sociologist and public intellectual Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 2000, 2001, 2005; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu, Passeron, & de Saint Martin, 1994; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) whose huge corpus of work spanning 35 years has also influenced many other field theorists (Couldry, 2004; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Grenfell & James, 2004; Maton, 2009; Nash, 1999; Reay, 2004; Swartz, 1997; Swartz & Zolberg, 2004a, 2004b; Webb et al., 2002). As well as a Bourdieusian concept of field, I particularly utilise more recent theoretical work on strategic action fields by American sociologists Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012), which builds vertically on Bourdieu and other social analyses such as organisational theory and social movement theory.

This chapter also describes the other major theoretical and methodological framings for the study, Critical Language Analysis as conceptualised by British social and language analyst Norman Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995, 2001, 2003, 1992) and others using Critical Language Awareness (CLA) methods in specific ways (Cazden, Cope, Fairclough, & Gee, 1996; Gee & Green, 1998; van Dijk, 2009; van Leeuwen, 2008; Wallace, 1992). In developing the specific approach I take in this study, I also draw on the work of Albright (2006) whose own field and discourse analysis offers innovative approaches useful to my study. Finally, I explain ‘argument catalogue’ a particular methodology I take to text selection and categorisation of the various categories of texts in the study (Abrami et al., 2006).

Utilising these framings together enables multiple understandings of the field and the moves of players in the field, operating for political, cultural and strategic purposes, either alone or together. The ways skilled players in the field use text to make these moves are illustrated by an in-depth analysis of the textual features of selected texts by certain epistemic players in the field (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Wallace, 1992).

These framings underpin the methods and methodologies of my research into the field of boys’ education in Australia from 1996 to 2006 as they enable a
conceptualisation of the field of boys’ education as both autonomous – having its own logic, with players operating somewhat strategically and knowingly yet according to the ‘rules of the game’ and their positions within the field; and as subject to forces from outside the field, particularly the state and the journalistic field.

The following matrix summarises the work each conceptual tool will do when used in conjunction with each other, to delve into the questions framing the thesis, and to support and manage the complexities of the analysis.

**Table 1: Matrix of questions and methods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Field analysis</th>
<th>Albright’s model</th>
<th>Critical Language Awareness</th>
<th>Argument catalogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What changes occurred in the field of boys’ education between 1996 and 2006?</td>
<td>Historically map the events, the players and their habitus and conceptualize the field. (All chapters)</td>
<td>Analyse the trajectories of the texts and discourses in the field, by describing each text within the field of power, explaining its significance, and explaining its multiple meanings and purposes to the epistemic individual author. (Conceptualised in Ch. 4 and utilised in Chs 5,6,7, 8 and 9)</td>
<td>Illustrate the impact of epistemic individuals on the discourses in the field by a close analysis of the work of certain individual texts. (Chs. 5,6,7, 8 and 9)</td>
<td>Generate a detailed transparent catalogue and categorisation of the various corpuses of texts: policy documents, commissioned research, submissions to the government inquiry, articles in the Sydney Morning Herald and articles in two practitioner journals, <em>Teacher</em> and the <em>Boys in Schools Bulletin</em>. (Chs. 5,6,7, 8 and 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What powerful discourses emerged in government policy and commissioned research, practitioner journals, the media and other public documents about boys’ education between 1996 and 2006?</td>
<td>Analyse how the discourses and actions of players in the various sub-fields and proximate fields impacted on the field. (Utilised in Chs 5,6, 7, 8 and 9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the inter-relationships between the</td>
<td>Analyse the impact of interventions and actions by</td>
<td>Illustrate how, why and to what purposes epistemic</td>
<td>Illustrate how and why borrowings,</td>
<td>Generate a systematic transparent method for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
policy, academic, practice and public discourses within the field of boys' education in this period.

players within the field and from proximal fields including those of the state. (Chs 3, 4 and 9 and Conclusions of Chs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

individuals were able to influence the field through strategic use of text. (Chs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

silences and gaps in discourses occurred in certain texts of epistemic players in the field. (Chs. 5, 6, 7 8 and 9 and 10)

conducting a thematic analysis on the various corpuses of texts. (Chs. 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9)

| What was the state of the field of boys' education by 2006? What lessons can be learned from this? | Utilise final analysis of the state of the field and impact of actions of players to make considered speculations about revitalising or reconceptualising the field. Ch. 10 | Analyse effects of texts and actions of epistemic players to make considered speculations about how players might act in a reinvigorated field. Ch. 10 | Analyse the ways discourses and texts were utilised by players in the field |

Through these multiple intersecting methods, I address different aspects of the operations of the field, and the positions and dispositions of the players as revealed in texts, by an empirical examination of a corpus of texts in relation to the structures of the field.

**A Bourdieusian approach to field analysis**

Over more than 35 years addressing diverse social and cultural situations and issues, Bourdieu developed his oeuvre of work and influenced social research to such an extent that a recognised Bourdieusian school of sociology is now evident (Swartz & Zolberg, 2004a). His anthropological field work among Algerian tribespeople (Bourdieu, 1962), among rural men in his home region of Bearn (Bourdieu, 1998a), and his important work on the French higher education system (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), have led to a series of insights that have overtime built a body of theoretical and methodological concepts of great influence and applicability in the social sciences. Since his death in 2002, more important works based on the thinking of Bourdieu, as well as previously unpublished manuscripts by Bourdieu himself have further built
Bourdieu's theoretical and conceptual work has always been grounded in empirical studies, so for him there is no real separation between theory and practice, no such thing as 'disinterested' study. He has always been clear about the extent to which his work is 'interested', in that he sees it as a political engagement with major social issues of the time. Yet at the same time he warns against research predominantly driven by politics. He suggests “‘Good causes’ are no substitute for epistemological justifications” (Webb et al., 2002, p. 70).

He distinguishes between academic theory, which he suggests is a kind of language game, evident in what he terms ‘the scholastic point of view’, and theorising as a tool for solving practical problems in the world. For him, theory is a set of thinking tools that can be judged by their applicability to particular problems. He sees that sociology can be used to explore a practice and expose a social problem. It is therefore both an art and a craft, bringing unseen things in society to light and skilfully crafting a product of a research activity and its outcomes.

Bourdieu's fundamental intellectual concern with dismembering the subject/object binary and the structure/agency binary besetting much social science drove his development of the important theoretical tools of field, social and cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, 1993, 1998a). He developed these theoretical tools in response to the inadequacies of contemporary theories when applied to particular problems in his research. These theoretical technologies are attempts to bridge the gaps between apparent binaries, such as an apparent divide between academic theories and everyday practices, or the gap between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These substantial conceptual tools form a theory of practice or a meta-theory systematically relating agents and structures within broader contexts of power relations. He calls for a reflexive application of this approach to every empirical investigation (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This approach and these concerns underpin my choice to adopt the methodological and theoretical technologies of Bourdieu for my investigation into the many apparent binary oppositions that seem to be stultifying the field of boys’ education.

This study is an attempt to understand the inter-relationships between different positions in the field, different discourses in the field and the actions of
players in the field, including my own. My application of Bourdieusian field analysis to Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006 will allow me to investigate the field as a whole and interrogate multiple positions within the field.

Field

I turn now to a brief description of field as described by Bourdieu before addressing some gaps in his conceptualisations and how these will be addressed in my study. Bourdieu characterises field as a metaphor for social space. Bourdieu’s concept of field grew out of his work on French intellectual and artistic worlds as a way of drawing attention to specific interests governing those cultural worlds (Bourdieu, 1984; Swartz, 1997; Webb et al., 2002). In two of his most important works, he also applied the concept to the French education and higher education systems which he analysed as autonomous fields (Bourdieu, 1988, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Bourdieu’s concept of a field is a meta-theoretical, open concept that defines the structure of the social setting in which agents operate. A field may be defined as:

a network or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.). (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97)

In Bourdieusian theorising, fields are structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital. They are determined by the unequal distribution of relevant capital rather than by the personal attributes of their occupants. His concern is the ways fields are structured to shape what we know and how we come to know it – the limits of knowledge produced and what can be recognised or goes misrecognised. He argues that it is the structures operating in the field that largely determine what is thinkable and unthinkable or expressible or inexpressible (Grenfell & James, 2004).

Bourdieu (2005) has described fields as relational spaces defined by oppositions between two forms of capital or power – cultural capital and
economic capital, with economic capital generally being more powerful. The second dimension along which fields are structured is the opposition between old and new. Bourdieu argues that influxes of new players or agents in a field can be forces for transformation or conservation, depending on the situation in the field and the forces within and external to the field. While fields have their own forms of valued cultural capital, Bourdieu argues that all fields are structured largely in the same ways. Recent Bourdiesian sociologists of education emphasise that the concept of field should not lead to an objectification of social situations and social problems. They warn that merely identifying the positions, values and discourses in a field does not mean that everything is known about a social problem in that field. Indeed, they re-emphasise Bourdieu’s original concept of field as metaphor for a social site, existing only relationally, as a set of possibilities or a series of moves that could be made by people or institutions engaged in a particular activity (Grenfell & James, 2004; Nash, 1999).

How social relations are reproduced within institutions such as schools, universities or government or departments, how practices within institutions can change, how certain dispositions are developed in particular field situations, how individuals and groups may act to change their situations and what circumstances might motivate them to do this are the questions taken up by researchers utilising Bourdieu’s concepts of field in sophisticated ways (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Kenway & McLeod, 2004; Mills, 2008; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003).

Bourdieu’s concept of education as a social field brings a materialist perspective to an analysis of the discussion about boys’ education. The notion of a social field offers the possibility of change both in reality and in discourses (Maton, 2009). It allows for discussions of: how the field of boys’ education has changed over time; which players have influenced the field; which ideas, ideologies and concepts have been transferred from one set of discourses to another and how the discourses within different genres have influenced each other and, importantly, how particular discourses can influence the actions of people in the field (Bourdieu, 1993).

Notions of positions within the field and relations to other fields as conceived by Bourdieu and others with Bourdieu (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Reay, 2010; Swartz & Zolberg, 2004b) are the conceptual tools of my field analysis. I am applying these concepts to the intellectual field of boys’ education by
analysing the events that occurred from 1996 to 2006 including the textual production of players in the intellectual field during this period of change and contestation, when there were numerous interventions by the political field and the field of power in the form of the state.

This framing of the positions of various players in the field of education informs my analysis of the public, journalistic, policy and practitioner discourses of the field of boys’ education. I also point to the relational aspects across fields that are surprising and highlight that the structures of fields and actions of players within fields are not inevitable. Change can occur within and across fields in surprising ways.

Fields can be mapped as relational spaces defined by moves and positions of established and new players with dominant and dominated discourses. Bourdieu suggested that fields can be diagrammatically represented as positions on horizontal and vertical axes. As the diagram below illustrates, in Bourdieusian representations of fields, positions in fields are usually represented in a cross formation with the cultural pole traditionally on the left side and economic capital on the right. The vertical axis represents the total volume of capital and the horizontal represents positions or forces either towards the autonomous pole (from within the field) or the heteronomous pole (or external to the field).
In Chapter 4, I use these tools to map possible positions in the field of Australian boys’ education and to develop a series of heuristics of the inter-relationships within the field and with other fields.

**Autonomy and fields**

Bourdieu and Wacquant (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) argue that a field is autonomous to the extent to which it has power to set its own agenda and to validate its own cultural capital. They suggested that education as a field has relative autonomy from economic and political power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). It is a social field with its own culture and practices, not just a reflection of industrial or political needs. Yet, like many applied fields, it is strongly influenced by the power of the state.

The internal mechanisms operating within autonomous fields shape what is possible within any given field. In any intellectual or social field there are struggles for legitimisation – the right to exercise the ‘symbolic violence’ of the domination of one set of ideas over others. This legitimisation produces an orthodoxy, or *doxa* in a field. While there are always struggles within fields, strongly autonomous intellectual fields, such as physics, for example, have internal mechanisms and structures that define the boundaries of these struggles and determine the nature of the field by defining: (1) the agreements about what is at stake; (2) who the players are and what positions they occupy; (3) a consensus regarding the rules by which the field works; and (4) a shared interpretive frame that allows those in the field to make sense of what other actors are doing in the field in a particular situation (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

My research discusses the nature of boys’ education and the extent to which it can be described as an autonomous field by mapping positions in a field undergoing change and contestation over all of these crucial internal field issues. However, according to Bourdieu, the connections between fields, like the oppositions within fields, stem from structural factors, not the intention of the actors. Bourdieu’s field theory seeks to explain factors external to education, such as economic and political structures, while retaining the insights of internal accounts of activities such as classroom practices or research. It is both a relational and structural approach (Albright, 2006).
Homologies between fields

The similarities of structure, along the opposition between field specific cultural capital and economic capital, and between old and new, are what Bourdieu calls homologies between fields. Bourdieu suggests that although fields may be relatively autonomous, there are homologies within and across fields. This means that all fields develop positions of dominance and subordination, and mechanisms of reproduction and change and actors within the fields have strategies of exclusion and usurpation. However the notion of homologies suggests that, through the distribution of various types of capital, those who find themselves in a dominated position in the struggle in one field also tend to find themselves in subordinate positions in other fields. So, Bourdieu argues, struggles in the cultural field tend to produce cultural distinctions, such as gender or class for example, that are also social distinctions.

Bourdieu (2005) writes that there are even more significant homologies between the political field, the journalistic field and the field of social science, where a great deal of research in boys’ education sits. These homologies offer a strong explanatory lens for understanding the cultural struggles within and across these fields during the period of this study. He suggests that the amount that can be explained about fields by the logic of the field varies according to the autonomy of the field. He further argues that contrary to what appears to be the case, the political field is increasingly autonomous and governed by its own logic. In contrast the journalistic field and the social science field are relatively lacking in autonomy and subject to external power, particularly from the state. He also suggests the journalistic field is increasingly important to other fields as it has a strong tendency towards its heteronomous or commercial pole, and this tendency is influencing other fields in the same direction (Bourdieu, 2005).

Furthermore, each of these fields, political, journalistic and social science, has a similar aim. Bourdieu suggests that each lays claim to the imposition of the legitimate vision and division of the social world. Those who deal professionally in making things explicit have two things in common. First they strive to set out explicitly practical principles of vision and division. Second they struggle, each within their own field, to impose these principles and have them recognised as legitimate categories of construction of the social world. Yet, in every field, the implicit pre-suppositions of players in each field, that make up the doxa of the field, are not completely known or explicit to the players. The dispositions of the
players, shaped in some ways by the *doxa* of the field, ensure that all players see the game as important and worth playing.

This conceptualisation of similar aims across the three fields, and the different *doxas* of each field, offers a useful tool for an analysis of academic, practitioner and journalistic discourses on boys’ education and as an approach to analysing the relational moves of players in the intellectual and political field. The struggles to impose a particular vision and way of categorising gender in education issues and portray this vision as legitimate are deeply rooted within the field and also cut across the political, journalistic and social science fields. In this field analysis of boys’ education, the homologies between the journalistic, political and social science research fields in their approach to boys’ education will be explored.

**Habitus**

For Bourdieu, the point of research is to make sense of why things happen and the bases for the presence of social distinctions. As well as the concept of the educational, social science, political, and journalistic fields as relatively autonomous social fields, two other concepts, *habitus* and *cultural capital*, are needed to fully explain why and how social distinctions operate. It is the relationship between an individual’s *habitus* dispositions and the structure of the social field which together shape his or her practices (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

*Habitus*, according to Bourdieu, is the system whereby our experiences as individuals growing up, shape our ways of thinking, acting, and feeling to the extent that they become dispositions or tendencies that we can enact in a wide variety of social situations. As actors faced with an array of choices in a field – such as education – our *habitus* means that we have inclinations to behave in some ways rather than others. Schooling in particular acts to create a general disposition towards a cultured *habitus*, thereby enabling new creative responses capable of transcending the social conditions in which it was produced.

While Bourdieu largely used *habitus* to describe and explain class relations, it has and can be used in an analysis of differences across gender and race or rural location or any other arbitrary category chosen, such as the intellectual *habitus* of the education researcher or practitioner. The concept of *habitus* is multi-layered, with both individual and collective aspects that include a complex
interplay between the past and the present. While a person’s individual history has formed their *habitus*, so too has the collective history of their family, class and gender. The *habitus* within social groups (such as groups of boys or academics in a particular field) differs to the extent to which individuals’ social trajectories diverge from one another. Similarly, current social situations are not just acted upon, they are internalised to become another layer of the *habitus*.

*Habitus* can be expressed bodily through durable ways of standing, speaking, walking and thereby thinking and feeling. It can also be expressed through agency, allowing a person to draw on a wide repertoire of possible actions in any situation, that can either be transformative or constraining, depending on the situation.

While *habitus* allows for individual agency, it also predisposes us towards excluding certain practices unfamiliar in our cultural situations (Bourdieu, 1993; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Reay, 2004). It shapes our dispositions towards or away from certain practices. For Bourdieu, this means that practices or actions cannot be understood simply in such objective terms as the rules, values and discourses of a field. Nor can they be understood purely subjectively in terms of individual un-contextualised choices or decisions. People do think and act in strategic ways and try to use the rules of the game to their own advantage. Yet at the same time, he argues, they act unconsciously, unaware that their goals, motives and aspirations are not spontaneous or natural, but shaped by their *habitus*.

Bourdieu argues that the *habitus* of a player combines with the structure of any field to render some thoughts and actions unthinkable. It is this concept, of what is thinkable and unthinkable within various discourses, that is the subject of the thematic analyses of the texts in this study.

Bourdieu’s concept of *field* is inextricably linked with and came later than his other key theoretical and methodological tools and concepts of *habitus* and *capital*. He argues that any change or new entry into a field shifts the boundaries among all other positions in the field. For fields to operate there must be agents with the appropriate *habitus* to be capable and willing to invest in the field. New arrivals to fields must be willing to pay the price of entry, involving recognition of the importance of the game and the practical knowledge of how to play it. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) argue that the competitive logic of fields helps create the conditions for the misrecognition of power relations in ways that
contribute to the maintenance of the existing social order. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, established agents in a field tend to pursue conservation strategies and challengers are likely to opt for subversive strategies. Challengers oblige the old guard to mount a defence of its privileges. All actors in a field share a tacit acceptance that the struggle is worth pursuing and the deep structure of the field imposes and legitimises specific forms of struggle. For example, in academia personal insults and physical violence are considered unprofessional but challenging the degree of objectivity in an opposing viewpoint is considered fair play (Bourdieu, 1991; Swartz, 1997).

Of particular relevance to this study is Bourdieu’s critique of the scholastic disposition, which he argues renders the freedom and privilege to indulge in scholarly language games and contempt for ordinary language, largely invisible to scholars, to the extent that the gulf between the logic of practice and the logic of scholarly fields is justified and perpetuated in intellectual fields that purport to neutrally and scientifically analyse practice (Bourdieu, 2000).

However, the notion that the habitus and field largely determine the possible actions of players has been criticised by some researchers as being overly deterministic, offering little possibility that agents in a field may bring about social change. De Certeau (1984), for example, disputes Bourdieu’s assertions about the extent to which players can move outside of their habitus, citing Bourdieu’s own statement that “resistance takes the most unexpected forms, to the point of remaining more or less invisible to the cultivated eye” (Bourdieu, 1990).

Reay (2004) argues that the range of possibilities in a habitus can be envisaged as a continuum where, at one end, habitus can be replicated and, at the other end, habitus can be transformed. Implicit in this view is the possibility of a social trajectory that enables conditions of living very different from the initial ones.

While using the concept in her own research as both a theoretical and methodological technology, Reay (2004) argues that it is ironic that habitus has been subject to such widespread criticism as being determinist given that the concept is central to Bourdieu’s methodology of structuralist constructivism and as such is a major conceptual tool for transcending the dualisms of agency-structure, objective-subjective and micro-macro. Bourdieu challenged the notion of habitus as being deterministic, arguing that habitus becomes active in relation
to a field. This is an important point in the analysis of boys’ education as a field. The intellectuals involved in this field have taken up positions and built intellectual reputations and careers defending these positions. As people they are all genuinely concerned with improvement in the field and are intellectually committed to certain overarching goals of equity in the school system.

In Bourdieusian work (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), there is an increasing emphasis on moments of misalignment and tension between habitus and fields which may give rise to social change. He suggests that the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field. This interplay between habitus and field is pertinent to the time of great change that produced the turn towards the education of boys.

Another criticism of the concept of habitus, as Bourdieu conceived of it, is Bourdieu’s emphasis on the unconscious and the neglect of a person’s ability to consciously reflect and thereby to change. An expansion of the concept to include the conscious dimensions of reflection allows for a conceptualisation of habitus that includes and makes space for an ethical dimension including concerns and commitments. Recent theorising about strategic actions by skilled actors within fields allows for a broadening of Bourdieu’s concepts to include the personal and political dimensions of identity currently not strong in Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

**Strategic Action Fields**

In a recent synthesis of insights from scholars interested in field analysis, Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam (2012) construct a general theory of social organisation and action they describe as fields of strategic action. Building on the work of Bourdieu and other field theorists, Fligstein and McAdam define strategic action fields as mesolevel social orders which are the basic structural building block of modern political/organisational life in the economy, civil society and the state (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012).

A strategic action field is a constructed mesolevel social order in which actors (who can be individual or collective) are attuned to and interact with one another on the basis of shared (which is not to say consensual) understandings about the purposes of the field, relationships to others in the field (including who has power and why) and the rules governing legitimate action in the field. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 9)
While this definition is compatible with Bourdieu’s conceptualising of autonomous fields, Fligstein and McAdam (2012) suggest that the boundaries of fields are not easy to define as they are fluid and shift depending on the issues at stake and the situation at hand. While they distinguish three types of inter-field relations: unconnected, dependent and interdependent, they place a great deal of emphasis on the interdependence of fields, arguing that fields are often embedded within other fields in a vertical system, like a set of Russian dolls. This conceptualisation is particularly useful in analysing the field of boys’ education that clearly sits within the broader field of education. I will use this metaphor of social space in Chapter 4 in a detailed and systematic conceptualisation of the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006.

With Bourdieu, Fligstein and McAdam theorise change and contestation as continuous in all fields, with skilled social players always jockeying for improvement in their positions or defending their privileges, depending on their positions as incumbents or challengers. They argue that fields can be emerging, stable, or subject to great shocks. In a somewhat different emphasis to Bourdieu, they argue that field-changing shocks most often come from outside rather than from within fields. With Bourdieu, they give the role of the state specific importance in either creating or mediating external shocks to any field. They suggest that stable fields often have internal governance units that usually act to protect the privileges of the incumbents.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) bring together insights from social movement studies, organisational theory, and economic sociology in this far ranging theoretical work that overcomes some of the gaps, silences and underdeveloped areas in Bourdieu’s field analysis in ways that are very useful to an investigation of Australian boys’ education. In particular, their work adds important conceptualisations of the ways socially skilful actors within fields use their abilities to collectively act within the constraints of any given field. They rethink the problems of the structure/agency dichotomy that bests much social science to create an integrated systematic theory of collective action, social space, culture, organisation, the state and mobilisation.

In contrast to Bourdieu, they suggest that it is rare for fields to be organised around a truly consensual and taken-for-granted reality that is not able to be seen by the players in the field. Drawing on the symbolic interactionist tradition, they see the social skills of skilled actors in a field as the micro foundation of field
theory (Hess, 2012). Their concern is in analysing the conditions of the field and the actions of the players to determine the conditions for change, the possibilities to create alternative structures and to determine when players are direct beneficiaries or victims of the structures. Similar to Reay’s critique of habitus, they suggest that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus concentrates on an individual’s unconscious interaction with a field’s unknown structures rather than an analysis of how an individual’s actions can be a knowing conscious decision to engage with others.

The theoretical tool of strategic action is an important addition to Bourdieu’s concept of individual habitus in describing how players operate within fields. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) say:

Following Fligstein (2001a) we define strategic action as the attempt by social actors to create and sustain social worlds by securing the cooperation of others. …Put another way, the concept of social skill highlights the way in which individuals or collective actors possess a highly developed cognitive capacity for reading people and environments, framing lines of action, and mobilising people in the service of broader conceptions of the world and of themselves (Fligstein 2001a; Jasper 2004, 2006; Snow and Benford 1988; Snow et al 1986). To discover, articulate or appropriate and propagate these ‘existential packages’ is inherently a social skill, one that underscores the ‘cultural’ or ‘constructed’ dimension of social action. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p.17)

This important concept allows field theory to move beyond the usual perspectives on strategic action that focuses primarily on disparities of power and preferences.

However, we see strategic action as inextricably linked to the distinctive human capacity and need to fashion shared meanings and identities to ensure a viable existential ground for existence. This is not to say that power and preferences do not matter but that our attempts to exercise the former and achieve the latter are always bound up with larger issues of meaning and identity. What is more, our preferences themselves are generally rooted in the central sources of meaning and identity in our lives. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012p. 18)

Fligstein and Mcadam’s (2012) concept of social skills and the existential functions of the social in strategic action fields explores conscious collective and individual action in ways that allow for a deeper consideration of the motivation
behind and the cultural and strategic purposes of the moves players in different positions in a field might make.

However, it is worth noting as a limitation of the study that my study is an analysis of written texts only, not interview material. So the extent to which I will be able to work with the concept of *habitus* or delve into the unconscious or the knowing actions of the players will be limited to what can be gleaned from the texts produced by the various players in the field and the analysis of how the interplay between the *habitus* of the players and the context of the field at the time can be shown in the texts. A critical discourse analysis of the ways texts are structured offers glimpses of the positions and claims to which the authors are prepared to commit and for which they attempt to convince others, in knowing, strategic ways.

**Epistemic individuals**

In *Homo Academicus* (Bourdieu, 1988) Bourdieu distinguishes between empirical individuals and epistemic individuals. He distinguishes between the ways terms, such as names of people, are used in ordinary language and how they are used in sociological analysis. In ordinary language, when a particular individual is named, the name is merely a label, identifying or indicating a person recognisable as a real person, different to others. The label or name identifies the person but does not describe or analyse the differences.

On the other hand, epistemic individuals are constructed through sociological analysis by reference to the terms in the analysis. Bourdieu argues sociologists construct epistemic individuals by reference to the particular characteristics important in the analysis, such as their position as an established incumbent or newer challenger, or because of their stance on a cultural position such as a pro-feminist male academic. These characteristics are of course different from those used in ordinary description of an individual or in other scientific analyses of individuals, such as psychoanalysis. For the purposes of this research, I construct epistemic individuals through my analysis of their position and involvement in the field of boys’ education. A Bourdieusian field analysis indicates that certain players in the field take on or represent epistemic positions in both the discourses of the field and in the social field where they operate. While all players in a field seek to influence the field by the texts they produce, the texts of epistemic players are highly significant in that they show
how the field as a whole is constructed by the various moves players make through texts.

While it is obvious that the players in the field are real people, acting in somewhat knowing ways, albeit constrained in what can be known by the structure of the field, I want to be clear that when I examine the writing of individuals or research teams, I am not evaluating any personal, individual characteristics. I am constructing epistemic individuals, with certain defined positions and characteristics, such as academic standing in a particular area of research, or high standing in the field of practice because of their experience within the constructed social space of boys’ education at the time. In the highly contested small field of Australian boys’ education this is an important distinction.

This kind of analysis is fraught with difficulties. It is almost impossible for a reader not to interpret utterances of a proper name as taking on a polemic value. The difficulties of attempting to define epistemic individuals in a contested field and the dangers of readers conflating the ordinary characteristics of that person with the epistemic characteristics assigned to them in an analysis have led to a phenomenon in academia well described by Bourdieu:

And it is probable that all the effort of the enquiring subject to negate himself as an empirical subject, to disappear behind the anonymous record of his operations and his results, is doomed in advance to failure: thus the use of circumlocution which would substitute for the proper name the (partial) enumeration of pertinent properties, apart from guaranteeing only an appearance of anonymity, resembles one of the classic procedures in university polemics, which is to designate opponents only by allusions, insinuations or undertones understood solely by those initiated in the code, that is to say, more often than not solely by the opponents attacked (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 25).

Throughout the following chapters of this research, in a forensic dissection of the field, I analyse the work of certain epistemic individuals and others I have chosen as representative of positions in the field, to illustrate how fields are affected by the moves of the players in the field. These moves always serve more than one purpose of the players.

In Chapter 4, I attempt to define, describe and analyse the field of boys’ education by outlining the events and actions of relevant players both inside and outside of the field. In the subsequent chapters, I provide detailed analyses of the discourses and of certain texts produced within the policy, academic and
practitioner fields of boys’ education as well as an analysis of the ways the journalistic field approached boys’ education in the period.

This field analysis requires a deep and detailed examination of a particular historical moment and of the moves of the various players in that moment. My study uses an examination of texts produced by the players as the unit of investigation that enables insight into the field. I turn now to the method chosen for examining texts produced by players in the field.

**Texts in the field – Critical Language Analysis**

Critical Language Analysis espoused by Norman Fairclough (1995, 2000, 2001, 2003) is the most useful approach to discourse analysis for this study, because it is an approach that utilises textual analysis specifically for social research. This form of critical discourse analysis offers the possibility for a trans-disciplinary approach (a linguistic as well as a social and historical analysis) and an analysis of different text types across disciplines and genres. Combining Critical Language Analysis with field analysis enables me to explore the discourses, themes and language features of texts in relation to the field. Fairclough’s approach to grammatical and semantic analysis of texts, based on Halliday’s (1989) linguistic theory of systemic functional linguistics, is very productive in social research as a way to draw out the themes contained in the research material. Fairclough argues that this approach “enhances our capacity to ‘see’ things in texts through ‘operationalising’ (putting to work) social theoretical perspectives and insights in textual analysis.” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 14) The simultaneous focus on genres, discourses and styles afforded by a systematic investigation of text features offers an appropriate framing for the forensic analysis of the large corpus of different types of texts I undertake in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Through this approach I am able to analyse common and dissonant themes within the texts finding common meanings and discourses in different genres of texts produced for different purposes and audiences (Fairclough, 2003).

We can examine the ways authors intervene in the field and discourses of the time by the ways they construct texts. In a field, texts always exist in relation to each other. This intertextuality means that writers assume readers have access to other texts. Texts borrow from, assume or colonise other genres depending on the choices of the writer. Any one text is always written and read in relation to others (Fairclough, 1992; Wallace, 1992). Any text is also always an
interaction with a reader. Both the author and the reader make certain choices in constructing and reading a text. Wallace (1992) asserts that in interactions between texts and readers, readers usually give the text more power. They/we tend to be submissive to the text, reading in a passive way, rather than deeply exploring the text. She cites evidence that this is the case even in academic discourses where readers are encouraged to read critically.

One of the difficulties for practitioners and parents seeking clarity in the field of boys’ education was the ways differing views were presented, ignored or dismissed in the cultural struggles in the field, making it hard to interpret texts to form stances on boys’ education. A deep analysis of texts allows an examination of the ways authors interact with readers in order to lead them to an acceptance of certain propositions. The purpose of CLA is to examine how the textual features work to make meaning and to allow readers to interpret texts from an assertive stance. CLA offers a reader tools to examine, challenge and resist certain ways texts position readers and talk about people, places, events and phenomena. It is this possibility that makes CLA such a useful tool in a field analysis.

Critical Language Analysis and Epistemic Individuals

The form of CLA used by Wallace (1992) in her description of textual analysis with British adult students who were studying English as a Second Language, focuses on the textual features that make up the field, tenor and mode of the text. This finer-grained analysis of individual texts reveals the ways these linguistic features of the text simultaneously serve the different purposes of the writer (Fairclough, 1992). As this methodology is labour intensive it is best applied to small samples of text. I have used it to examine small sections of texts produced by epistemic players in the field.

In examining these texts using CLA in conjunction with field analysis, I am interested in what a particular text did for a particular author in an historical moment in the field, the effect this had on the field, and on the writer’s position in the field. The detailed analysis of sections of text written by certain epistemic individuals in the field serve as illustrative of the struggles in the field at the time. A forensic examination of certain texts by epistemic individuals in the field of boys’ education sheds light on how these individuals shaped the field from the
positions they occupied and attempted to position readers through the language features in these texts.

A systematic investigation of selected key texts reveals the meaning relations between sentences and clauses and focuses on grammatical and semantic analyses that shed light on the social function of the text in the situation where meanings are made (Chouliaraki, 1999). An analysis of the features in the field, (used here in the linguistic sense of experiential meanings or how the writer describes what is going on, not the Bourdieusian social and metaphorical space sense), tenor and mode of texts reveals the relationship between the text and the social discourse the author is engaging in as well as the position the author is taking. An analysis of modality can reveal social identities through analysing what ‘truths’ and values people are willing to commit to in texts. Speech function choices, such as the use of statements, offers or demands, as well as decisions about grammatical mood – declarative, interrogative or imperative – as well as choices about nominalisation, all contribute to specific meanings and lead readers to particular interpretations of texts.

A CDA analysis investigates whom or what is talked about, how is the topic talked about, and who has agency, or is responsible for the doing of actions in the text. It examines the co-location of adjectives and nouns, co-occurrence of verbs and adverbs and features such as nouns or nominalisations that denote who initiates the action are the textual features examined in a linguistic analysis of field.

Tenor denotes the interpersonal meanings chosen by the writer. Mood (affirmative, imperative or interrogative), modality (the type of verb selected), and person (personal pronouns) help the writer create the tenor in a piece of writing.

Mode reveals how the content of the text is organised. Mode is analysed by examining theme (information selected for first and subsequent positions), voice (passive or active) and cohesive relations (connectors, like and, but, or because)

These elements show choices the writer has made and create certain effects that lead readers towards particular interpretations of the text and of the events it is describing. A critical reading shows these effects, and enables deeper understandings of the text, allowing the critical reader to make inferences and interpretations of the intentions of the writer and re-interpretations of the text itself (Fairclough, 2003, 1992; Wallace, 1992).
Combining field and discourse analysis

In undertaking a Bourdieusian analysis of the field, and recognising the limits of this study, I also draw on another Bourdieusian study of fields and discourses within education by Albright (2006). Albright’s (2006) paper, *Literacy Education after Bourdieu*, outlines his field analysis of the intellectual field of Literacy Education. His contribution to social analysis in this paper is to draw together two important theoretical and methodological approaches. He develops a Bourdieusian framework of field analysis that conceptualises fields as structures of provisional balances where various forms of power and capital circulate. His main argument is that positions, distinctions and contests within fields structure social space and enable reproduction and change. He brings this conceptual framework together with a discourse analysis that looks in detail at the production and consumption of texts.

This innovative approach overcomes certain methodological and theoretical difficulties when using textual analysis with bigger picture sociological analyses. Bourdieu’s critique of textual analysis is that certain forms of discourse analysis cannot account for the sociological conditions in which these texts are produced and consumed. Furthermore, he argues, Fairclough’s theorising is not discursive enough to include an analysis of his own position in the social space. Albright (2006) works with these two notions of field as social space and finer-grained discourse analysis of texts to produce a fuller model of how texts operate in the social space of a field. His intention is to bring together a “textual science with attitude” (Albright, 2006p. 5) that addresses inequitable power relations.

The heuristic device he develops to draw attention to the work of text within social fields enables a focus on positions and moves within fields, together with a detailed analysis of the texts.

This model attempts to tie an explicit analysis of language use with Bourdieusian field analysis, connecting text description, interpretation and explanation (criticism) with reflexive sociology to overcome inhibiting binarisms of objectivity and subjectivity, resistance and agency, structuralism and phenomenology (Albright, 2006, p. 121).

It offers the conceptual and methodological tools that enable me to frame the interplay between different discourses within the field and the influences from outside the field; the policy, public and practitioner texts produced at a particular time; and how these discourses within and outside the field interact with the field.
of power. They offer me a way to simultaneously frame the people or players in boys’ education, the historical context, and the documents produced.

The following heuristic by Albright (2006) illustrates the device that enables me to ground this research in a discourse analysis as well as a Bourdieusian field analysis. It shows how texts produced in the field by authors with certain positions and dispositions provide certain explanations for social events that are received and interpreted by readers in relation to the logic of the field. The production and consumption of texts depends on the situation in the field at the time. The interaction of text and context both shape and are shaped by what is possible, thinkable or unthinkable in the field at the time.
This analysis of the ways texts can be forces for and moves towards reproduction or change informs my thesis on the education of boys. In particular, Albright’s (2006) focus on the ways players in an education field interact with the field of power is informative. His warning that interventions by the field of power may lead to a much diminished field where practitioners and researchers lack autonomy to productively shape its future is salient to my study of the field of boys’ education.

Adopting a reflexive approach to boys’ education enables me to describe texts produced for policy, practice and research in the field in relation to public and journalistic discourses about the field, seeing how agents and agencies are situated in a dynamic field of provisional balances, always subject to influence from the field of power and to change from within and without. It enables me to see my own practitioner position and disposition in relation to others in the field and to analyse the field as a whole examining how players take up positions and how discourses construct distinctions.

Albright’s conceptual model is a particularly useful heuristic for a study of examples of texts from different author types: public, journalistic, policy, practitioner and academic, because it offers an approach to mapping the changes in the field that relate to themes and changes in the discourses on boys’ education evident from finer grained Critical Discourse Analysis of key texts.

In the vein of Albright’s analysis, I attempt to unpack the forces for reproduction and change in the tumultuous period of boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. I build on Wallace’s (1992) use of CLA and Albright’s (2008) field and discourse analysis in my research: conceptualising boys’ education as a field; analysing the discourses in the field and the struggles over a normative doxa within those discourses; identifying certain epistemic individuals in the field who are illustrative of certain positions in the field; and analysing some texts produced by them as examples of the multi-layered work of text in the cultural, political and strategic struggles in the field. Making these distinctions clear may assist in reinvigorating and reimagining the field in productive ways.
Extending the Model –
propositional, cultural and strategic work of texts

Bourdieu (1991) and Fairclough (2001) agree that in writing any text, a writer in a field has multiple purposes. The Albright model (2006) shows the interrelationships between social space, discourse practices within the field, and ways texts are produced, consumed and interpreted in the field. Texts of any genre always do propositional, cultural or ideological, as well as strategic work for the author (Wallace, 1992). Through the language features, authors make choices that present certain propositions or knowledge claims, they make certain assumptions about what can be taken for granted and need not even be mentioned, and they position the author within the discourses in the field in certain ways.

Extending these concepts, I devised the following framework, based on Wallace’s textual analysis (Wallace, 1992) to illustrate how certain features of texts enable the propositional, cultural and strategic work to be done in any text in relation to the discourses in the field at the time.

Table 2: The work of texts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositional - within the text</th>
<th>Cultural/Ideological – in relation to discourses</th>
<th>Strategic/political within the social/specialist field (can only really be gleaned from field analysis, but some clues in the text)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Does the author assert the primacy of his or her own conceptual patterns? How do the language features enable this? | Intertextuality –
What is assumed about what the reader knows, agrees to, has heard or read elsewhere?
Who is the idealised reader?
Who is quoted or referenced?
Who/what is not quoted or referenced?
Who is named or implied as on their side/with them?
Evaluation – what truth claims and actions is the author willing to commit to?
What genres or discourses | Why was this text written when it was?
How does the author position him/herself in the field?
Authoritative
Deferential (who/what to)
How do they invite the reader to interpret their text – do they invite the dominance of the author or allow other views and questioning?
Who/what do they position as their ideal reader? How |
Chapter 2: Conceptual frameworks

| are named or implied as colonised or marginalised or colonising or marginalising? | do they position others who are not their ideal reader? |
| What ideas are regarded as obvious and unexceptional? | What/who do they emphasise? |
| | Why are they raising certain issues and not others, quoting certain people and not others, referring to certain themes and not others? |

An interpretation of these three aspects of the text can illustrate the different purposes of the writers. A close reading of the texts in relation to activities in the field at the time can show the multiple intentions of the authors as they make propositional claims in ways that also enhance their own cultural and social capital in the field.

In this research, I further operationalize and extend upon this model, in my forensic analysis of the field. I simultaneously examined the propositional, cultural and strategic moves by players in the field that can be seen by the textual choices within the field, tenor and mode in the texts I have selected. This deep analysis of individual texts provides an empirical basis for a Bourdieusian field analysis by illustrating how the authors of these texts sought to influence the cultural struggles in the field and increase their own cultural and social capital in the social space that is the field. This kind of critical reading, interpretation and processing of texts enables readers to make a deeper social analysis of the field. It allows an understanding of the operations or moves of power within the field and a mapping of the trajectory of cultural and economic capital through the intellectual, political and social fields.

To investigate how a writer uses textual features in order to operate within the field, I examine why this text was written when it was and how the author positions himself or herself in the field. Through the textual features, I attempt to ascertain why an author was raising or foregrounding certain issues and not others, quoting certain people and not others, referring to certain themes and not others.

Textual features that indicate who the idealised reader might be, by who is quoted, referenced or named, do the strategic work of the text for the author. Textual features help to position the stance of the ideal reader and to position
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others who are not their ideal readers. An important consideration is whether, and in what ways, the author asserts the primacy of his or her own conceptual patterns. How does an author invite the reader to interpret the text – does the text invite the dominance of the author or allow other views and a questioning stance?

The strategic or political purposes of the writers within the social field can only really be gleaned from field analysis, but there are some clues within the text so that certain readings of the reasons behind silences, gaps, inclusions and assumptions can be sustained by an examination of textual features in relation to the field analysis. An examination of the author’s textual choices reveals the ways an author positions himself or herself, as well as the ideal reader an author has in mind, in relation to discourses and in the social field at the time. These insights will be very useful when examining the field of boys’ education that followed on from a period of intense scrutiny of the education of girls by educational sociologists. It will also serve as an important lens for viewing and making explicit my own assumptions and analytical processes taking a clearly interested practitioner position, as a practitioner/researcher in the field.

Logic of practice and reflexivity

For Bourdieu, agents in any field employ two types of knowledge of the field: the first is a logic of practice, or a practical feel for the game – an ability to understand and negotiate the cultural field (such as boys’ education), that an agent is involved in. The second is a reflexive relation to that field and one’s own practices within it. For Bourdieu, the logic of practice, although allowing people to be quite successful in a field, can also be quite limiting, as it is formed largely by the constraints of the field itself. While a player may have a good feel for what is happening in his or her field, and know the written and unwritten rules governing their field, and what is appropriate in certain circumstances, what is possible for the players to do and say is largely determined by these constraints of the field itself. The field is also, however, constantly being transformed by the actions of the players. In order to overcome the constraints, Bourdieu suggests, a more reflexive understanding is necessary. An examination of our own social and cultural origins and categories, our position in the field in which we are located, and a move away from an ‘intellectual bias’ or tendency to see practices as ideas to be contemplated rather than as problems to be solved, are necessary to a
reflexive stance. For Bourdieu, reflexivity is “the systematic exploration of the unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and pre-determine the thought” (Webb et al., 2002, p.75).

Reflexivity suggests researchers need to examine the values, questions and approaches within the field. We should question the ‘common sense’ of the field, the notions and representations shared by all and tested by none. Instead of taking a common sense approach, he suggests that an appropriate researcher stance is one of ‘radical doubt’ when approaching any research − to question whether the problem is worthy of study or whether it is merely an abstraction serving the interests of the field and the agents within the field rather than of importance in the world. A clear understanding of the principles of empirical method and conscious attention to the presuppositions of each research method or technique to be used in a study is required for reflexivity.

As my previous writing in the field has been from the stance of a practitioner advocate for attention to boys’ education, I am particularly cognisant of the realist ontological position of Bourdieu’s social field analysis and critical discourse analysis (Maton, 2009). This social realist position acknowledges that concrete social events and social practices and abstract social structures make up reality. These can be distinguished from the empirical, as one’s empirical knowledge is never all that can be known about reality. This position also acknowledges that there are always particular motivations for choosing to ask certain questions about texts and not others. Therefore there is no such thing as a purely objective analysis of a text (Fairclough, 2001; Maton, 2009). It is well to note:

> What we are able see of the actuality of a text depends on the perspective from which we approach it, including the particular social issues in focus, and the social theory and discourse theory we draw upon. (Fairclough, 2003p. 16)

Bourdieu (1990) works with Neitzsche’s notion of genealogy as a way of overcoming researchers’ tendencies to unquestioningly reproduce the common sense of the field, as if the values, discourses, traditions and rituals that characterise a given field have always been there. In this regard, Bourdieu suggests that the division between sociology and history is not justified and that all sociology should be historical.
For Bourdieu (1993), a scientific method of sociology is created when researchers combine radical doubt with genealogical analysis. Unless sociologists employ these tools, then sociology remains highly abstracted and contributes nothing to deep knowledge of the world. Through self-reflexivity and genealogy, researchers can uncover the hidden properties of fields, how they came about and who benefits and loses from such processes. Yet, in order to practice this kind of methodology, researchers walk a fine line between the logic of discovery and the logic of validation. Often discovery is seen as a matter of chance, based on intuition, while validation is considered scientific, distinct from interest and intuition. Yet for Bourdieu, the discovery moment is every bit as scientific as the validation processes. Discovery comes out of social philosophy – it is the basis of speculation which leads to the hypothesis and therefore the research project or program. Furthermore, empiricism is not necessarily scientific, unless the social philosophy that surrounds the work is sound. Researchers can easily forget the importance of different contexts and rely on untested assumptions. Bourdieu’s relational approach to social research takes pains to show how invention and validation, collectivities and individuals, and systems and individual agents are related to and dependent upon each other, rather than privileging one over the other (Webb et al., 2002).

**Argument Catalogue – An explicitly empirical approach**

In my study I bring this reflexive approach to the large corpus of texts investigated in this study that constitute the empirical evidence for my Bourdieusian analysis of the field of boys’ education. In Chapters 5 to 9 analysing specific categories of texts, I utilise argument catalogue (Abrami et al., 2006) as an analytical tool for dealing with the complexities facing research on large bodies of texts. An argument catalogue is a specific type of literature review. It “is a systematic compilation of views on a topic from various documented sources” (Abrami et al., 2006, p.418). The purpose of an argument catalogue is to identify consistencies and inconsistencies between research evidence, public policy, practitioner experience and public perception. The processes of developing an argument catalogue can highlight similarities and differences and bring to light multiple and discrepant views. It has the potential to illuminate what exists in particular bodies of literature as well as what may be missing.
an argument catalogue attempts to provide a comprehensive and inclusive framework for understanding by giving voice to all the key constituencies who generate and apply what has been learned (Abrami et al., 2006, p. 420)

This relatively new methodology was designed for reviewing and synthesising literature in ways that has the potential to provide more useful information to social policy makers about ‘what works’ than traditional methods. The developers of argument catalogue suggest it can provide a framework for analysing documents of very different types and from a variety of author sources. It offers a way of making clear how categories and data are used in analysing a corpus of texts (Abrami et al., 2006).

In this study I applied the methodology for developing an argument catalogue to a synthesis and coding of the arguments contained in recent Australian literature on educating boys, including views from parents, parent and teacher organisations, practitioners, the media, government departments, and research and theoretical perspectives on gender in schools. I used this rigorous, detailed empirical methodological approach to reviewing literature to make explicit my decisions for including and excluding texts (Abrami et al., 2006). I also developed explicit criteria for the emerging thematic content categories in the texts analysed (Hartman, 2008b).

In this research, I found the argument catalogue approach to the corpus of texts compatible with an overarching theoretical framing of boys’ education as a social field as it could also encapsulate a deeper critical discourse analysis of a number of texts within each category. An argument catalogue approach provided me with a way to treat public opinion on boys’ education as evidence and subject it to the same rigorous discourse analysis as more theoretical literature. It treats the wide range of public and research literature as important texts that have and can inform and influence policy and practice in the field of boys’ education. As such, it was a useful research methodology that could bridge the gap between disparate types of writings on an educational issue. The approach has previously been used to examine a number of educational issues including views on the benefits and dangers of the introduction of e-learning into schools (Abrami et al., 2006). In a previous publication, I have used this approach to investigate a sample of the submissions to the federal government inquiry into boys’ education (Hartman, 2008b). Findings from that study were built upon in this thesis to form
a chapter on that inquiry and to investigate other bodies of literature produced by practitioners and journalists.

**Conclusion**

Through these multiple methods of analysis, Bourdieusian and strategic field analysis, Critical Language Analysis, and Argument Catalogue I have been able to construct a concrete empirical case and develop a model for the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006.

When Bourdieu used the concept of *field*, he undertook three specific research processes. He analysed the relation of the field in question to the field of power; he mapped out the positions available in the field, especially those positions that are in competition for field specific capital; and he analysed the *habitus* of individuals who occupy the field to determine how their dispositions have come into being and have been internalised, what sort of tendencies they generate (Swartz, 1997). This empirical and forensic analysis is applied in this study, informed by a detailed investigation of key illustrative texts and social events.

A Bourdieusian analysis of the social fields in which texts are situated enables me to make sense of the commonalities and dissonances between and within texts and map these to the social realities occurring in the social spaces at the times the texts were produced. It offers a method for an analysis of intertextuality across genres, discourses and styles within the corpus of texts to ascertain the ways texts draw upon and recontextualise what is said in other texts. It enables me to look at what is made explicit and what is left unsaid, implicit and assumed within and across text types and individual texts in the social field of boys’ education at a particular moment in time and place – Australia between 1996 and 2006.

In this chapter I have outlined the study and its conceptual framings of field and discourse analysis and shown how these will be underpinned by models and approaches that allow for these two overarching concepts to be brought together in a rigorous transparent study of the field. In the next chapter I return to the period prior to 1996. I do this to provide some historical and relational contextual analysis to the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006 and also as a way of providing an overview of the theoretical and policy discussions prior to
1996 that shaped the discourses within the field of boys’ education from 1996 onwards.
Chapter 3
Girls’ education prior to 1996 – a proximal field

We cannot grasp the dynamics of a field...without a historical, that is, a genetic analysis of its constitution and of the tensions that exist between positions in it, as well as between this and other fields and especially the field of power. (Bourdieu 1992 in Webb et al, 2002, p. 90)

In Chapter 1, I outlined the research questions, their significance to the field of boys’ education, the methods I have used to address them and the structure of this thesis. In the second chapter I discussed the theoretical framings of the research in some detail. In this chapter, an historical review of policies and discourses in the period immediately prior to 1996, I review the events and analyse the state of play in in the field of gender in education when the focus was on girls’ education. I discuss the policy activities and discourses that shaped girls’ education. In setting the historical context for the period of my study on boys’ education, this chapter also serves as a literature review for the field and discourse analysis in the following chapters.

I begin with a discussion of Australian education and the ways girls’ education is situated within it. Education is an endeavour that is of enormous public and policy interest. As an applied field, it is extremely subject to the field of power via the various state apparatuses that fund and regulate it (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Maton, 2009). In addition to the state, various church and other educational institutions and systems, groups of parents, employers, journalists and particular interest groups all have an interest in the practice, structures and outcomes of education and in
the implications of education policy for particular groups and for society as a whole. This research therefore warrants a careful interrogation of the interplay between the public, academic, practice and policy discourses that influence educational practice.

In discussing education as a field, it is clear that researchers, policy makers and practitioners in this applied field and its sub-fields are informed and influenced by theories and approaches from many different disciplines. In particular, the disciplines of psychology and sociology have strongly influenced and struggled for dominance in the field. The struggles between and within these academic disciplines are often played out within the intellectual and social fields of girls’ and boys’ education. Contentious issues within the fields cut across many boundaries: the policy/practice divide; the parent/teacher divide; the public/professional divide; the academic/social divide. Critical theories, feminist theories, structural and post-structural theories of the significance of gender, race, class and geographic location in education meet research and practice discussions of educational issues such as curriculum, pedagogy, student health and well-being, and welfare structures and systems, in this field that is very subject to the interests and requirements of the state.

These complexities are intrinsically embedded in the nature of education as an applied field of research, scholarship and practice (Albright, 2008; Nash, 2003). Australian education systems also have particular characteristics, interests and historical traditions: of both federal and state jurisdictions; of public, systemic church and private schooling systems running in parallel; of both state and private selective and single-sex schools.

In the Australian policy context in recent times, discussions about girls’ and boys’ education have always sat within the varied and differing concerns of these institutional structures. In addition, at a policy level they have almost always been framed within discussions of equity, with gender being one of the equity factors to be considered. In this chapter, I canvass the relevant policy documents in their historical context and I discuss approaches to equity in education.

First, I turn to the relevant policy events and academic and practice discourses about gender in the Australian education context immediately preceding the turn towards boys’ education that occurred during the 1990s. This recent history sets the scene for the state of play in the field during the period of the study. Many of the discourses evident in the field of boys’ education are
educates and continuations of the discourses relating to the previous period where the focus of policy was on girls’ education.

Feminist and pro-feminist theories were the dominant research and policy discourses in the period where gender policy in education was focused on girls. This is not to say that these policies were easy to instigate or the discourses met with universal approval. In fact, it is clear that it took concerted effort and strategic intervention from feminist and pro-feminist players active in the bureaucracy and the academy over a long time span to instigate the curriculum reforms and policy changes with a focus on girls’ education (Daws, 1997; Yates, 1999). These players also drew support from an active social movement for women’s emancipation and from feminist theorising in the fields of social science and women’s health outside of the field of education. During this period, the field of girls’ education was very active and characterised by robust debate among players who held a variety of different feminist perspectives and a focus on a range of identity, learning, relationship and systemic issues in relation to the education of girls. The following discussion of the policy context illustrates this diversity and complexity.

Girls’ Education

From a policy perspective, from 1975, when the first federal government report on girls and schooling was commissioned, until 1993, when the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993 to 1997 was published, the focus of government-commissioned research and policy about gender in education was clearly directed towards girls (Australian Education Council, 1994; Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1978, 1984; Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1975). The report Girls, School and Society (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1975) argued the case for equity for girls and women in schooling and society that was subsequently embedded in policy. A further report, Girls and Tomorrow: The Challenge for Schools (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1984) outlined major areas of concern in the education of girls leading to inequality in post-school outcomes. This focus on girls’ education in federal education policy spanned five successive governments, from the Whitlam Labor government, through Fraser Liberal, Hawke and Keating Labor and into the early years of the Howard Liberal government. No less than ten education ministers presided over the activities and policies, with Kim Beasley being
represented twice, in the Whitlam government from 1972 to 1975 and again in the Keating government where he was Education Minister from 1991 to 1993. The Liberal Senator Margaret Guilfoile and the Labor Senator Susan Ryan, both education ministers in their respective governments, had a particular interest in women’s equity issues and girls’ education. This hard-fought and concerted policy focus is arguably one of the most successful equity initiatives and achievements within Australian education (Daws, 1997).

In 1987, A National Policy for the Education of Girls (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1978) was developed with the cooperation of the commonwealth and all states and territories. This policy identified four objectives:

- Raising awareness of the educational needs of girls;
- Equal access to and participation in appropriate curriculum;
- Supportive school environment; and
- Equitable resource allocation.

Sexual harassment as a barrier to girls’ achievement in school and in work was a major focus of the supportive school environment strand. Programs addressing sexual harassment at an individual, curriculum and school organisational level were implemented. Curriculum offerings and school policy implementation were designed to raise awareness that sexual harassment and violence towards women were unacceptable and at a school level would attract serious consequences for perpetrators.


Explicit in these documents was a significant programmatic focus on girls’ subject choices as a limiting factor in their later career choices. The awareness-raising campaign slogan “Girls can do anything” encapsulated the concept that girls could broaden their career and life aspirations. Role models of women in non-traditional jobs and industries were invited to speak to girls to encourage girls to enter male-dominated industries. Training programs to draw attention to specific curriculum offerings for girls and pedagogies to address the suggested
“preferred learning styles of girls” and to broaden post-school options for girls were developed.

Some school-based programs were designed to explicitly teach the theory of the social construction of gender and to assist students, particularly girls, to identify gender limitations, discrimination and unequal economic and social gender relations in society and at school that led to the oppression of women. To the extent that the strategies of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls* explicitly addressed boys at all, they were targeted towards boys’ recognition that their individual behaviours and patriarchal societal structures could have a detrimental impact upon girls and women.

During the early 1990s, as well as addressing the needs of girls as a gender group, reports on the implementation of the policy linked some activities funded under this policy to those funded under the Disadvantaged Schools Program, another federally-funded program that specifically supported targeted activities in schools in low socioeconomic areas. The reports describe some programs for low income girls, Aboriginal girls, girls from NESB backgrounds and girls with disabilities (DEET, 1999). These activities were designed to address the relationship between being female and other social factors seen as contributing to compounding disadvantage. They were part of the broader educational equity initiatives of the then Labor government. This approach represents the parallelist theorising of social structures espoused by the neo-Marxist curriculum theorist Michael Apple, and built upon by others, who identifies race, sex and class as the three great divisions in society creating inequities (Apple, 2004).

Yates (1993) has argued that the activities funded under the plan changed over time, keeping pace with new feminist understandings of gender. While the notion of a linear progression of feminist ideas is questionable, it does seem that the plans changed in ways that highlight struggles for dominance among structuralist and post-structuralist feminist theoretical understandings and other critical theorists taking parallelist positions with an emphasis on class, as well as some strategic compromises in the positioning of gender in the field of girls’ education. The themes in gender equity discourses about girls have been revisited and reconceptualised in successive policy documents and found their way into policy statements, supporting theoretical papers and practice documents in various ways, often with conflicting notions and different positions sitting side
by side. Dominant discourses in the field at the time are represented in the focus of the successive documents.

In the 1970s, the focus was on efforts to change attitudes. There was encouragement of non-sexist and non-stereotypical attitudes and encouraging girls to enter non-traditional jobs. These efforts were informed by role theory and analysis of sex-role stereotyping. In the 1980s the focus changed towards the specific learning needs and styles of girls, emphasising that differences between boys and girls were important and if not recognised led to discrimination against girls as a gender group. In an era when there was cooperation between states, territories and the federal government towards the development of a national curriculum, efforts went into developing ‘girl-friendly’ education, and ‘sexually inclusive’ curriculum (Yates, 1993, 1998). This focus on all girls and on differences between girls and boys has been described as ‘strategic essentialism’ within feminist struggles to foster and continue a focus on girls in education in education policy (Lingard, 2003). By the early 1990s, greater attention was paid to difference and diversity among girls. The influence of post-structuralist feminist theory also drew attention to the processes of individual gender identity construction for both sexes (Yates, 1993, 1998).

These differing feminist theories and understandings of gender clearly coincided with and were congruent with political, social and educational activism, as well as policy and practice struggles in the interests of girls and women from the 1970s to the 1990s. Many practitioners implementing these plans and policies, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, were also active in unions and the women’s and other social movements. This kind of direct activism and union membership has waned in many social arenas including in education during the 1990s.

The different emphases in policies represent struggles for dominance within the intellectual field at the time and struggles in the wider political movements. The relationship between the policy discourses and research and practice discourses is fraught, as is illustrated further in the coming analysis of boys’ education and emphasised by Bourdieu in his analysis of the relationship of any field to the field of power (Bourdieu, 1996).

Various critiques of these policies have suggested that while the symbolic strength of a national policy on gender has been a significant vehicle for legitimising feminist discourses on gender, the policy documents had
shortcomings. Some critiques go to the implementation aspects, suggesting that the policy offered little guidance for teachers on the implementation of pedagogy and curriculum (Johnson, 2002). Other critiques focused on theoretical underpinnings, suggesting that the essentialist positioning of girls as a homogenous group and the lack of positive framing of identities and experiences of girls from non-Anglo ethnic backgrounds contained in the policy created a deficit framework that did not enable positive gender identities for all girls (Tsoldis, 1996). The limits of policy as a vehicle for educational change have also been discussed in reference to these policies for girls’ education (Kenway, 1995b; Yates, 1999).

Nonetheless, this policy focus on girls’ education over a 20 year period has been an important vehicle for gender reform influenced by and congruent with changes for women occurring in the wider society. These policies, analyses and critiques in the field of girls’ education, representing discourses from educational research, policy and practice, illustrate the inclusive nature of the feminist and pro-feminist debates in the field and thus the strength of the field (Daws, 1997; Lingard, 2003).

While players in the field of girls’ education may have had a shared understanding of what was at stake in the field, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, gender policy is a site for struggles capable only of temporary settlement (Hayes, 2003). The influences of these various understandings of gender have ongoing importance for girls’ education and also have an important impact on boys' education policy and practice in more recent times. Many of the concerns, issues and critiques of the focus on girls’ education are revisited in the turn towards boys. I return to this point in later chapters analysing the differing discourses in the field of boys’ education from 1996 to 2006.

**Social Justice and Equity**

A common theme in all of these discourses is analysis of the ways girls’ education policies and plans relate to notions of social justice and equity. This is one theme that helps create coherence in the field of girls’ education that makes all players agree that the game is worth playing (Maton, 2009). The robust debates among feminist and pro-feminist theorists and practitioners in girls’ education all fit within some kind of equity framing. Gender, in most education writing in the field of girls’ education, is seen as an equity issue. If gender is an
important equity issue, an analysis of the field begs the question of how equity has been conceptualised in policy and education discourses.

Approximately every ten years since 1989, a statement of the National Goals for Schooling, outlining the significance of schooling, have been agreed to by all education jurisdictions in Australia. An examination of these national government policy documents about the purpose of education illuminates the relative importance placed on equity in the broader educational policy context. These goals have increasingly included equity as an important focus, and recently have included sex or gender as an explicit equity issue. While the policies for girls enacted during the 1980s and 1990s seem to align with a growing trend to see equity as an important goal for Australian schooling, with gender equity as one focus, the notions of social justice and equity enshrined in government policy documents are not unproblematic.

Goals for Schooling

Interestingly, the Hobart Declaration on the Goals for Schooling (1989), (AEC, 1989), an historic document which was the first national statement on common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia, signed by all state, territory and commonwealth governments, did not specifically mention gender or any other social factors contributing to disadvantage or to difference. The only reference to a specific group is Goal 8: ‘To provide students with an understanding and respect for our cultural heritage including the particular cultural background of Aboriginal and ethnic groups’.

Ten years later, in 1999, The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (MCEETYA, 1999), included a six point section on social justice. Point one of this section states that:

Schooling should be socially just, so that:

3.1 students’ outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students’ socio-economic background or geographic location. (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 1999, p. 2)

This statement could be read as implying that negative discrimination is the basis of differential student outcomes. This notion of equity as merely an issue of
specific discrimination is one that is contested in the literature discussed later in this chapter.

When the goals were revisited again in 2008 in Melbourne, there were only two goals. The first goal states that “Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence” (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008). Linking equity and excellence in this way could be read as implying that these two are two different unrelated aspects of education or that they are inextricably linked. The notion of discrimination is continued in this document. However, the terminology has changed from ‘sex’ to ‘gender’ and it is in the context of discrimination that the only reference to gender occurs, as part of a long list of possible targets for undesirable discrimination included in the first point in Goal 1.

This means that all Australian governments and all school sectors must:

- provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socio-economic background or geographic location. (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008, p. 7)

**Lenses on equity**

These national declarations, where they include equity at all, define equity very narrowly as freedom from discrimination rather than as a positive celebration of difference. Sex or gender is listed as one of several categories in relation to which discrimination might occur.

There is a substantial body of literature on equality, equity, social justice and social inclusion in Australian education. This literature in policy and educational research fields has a focus on education as a vehicle for contributing towards a just society. The literature suggests that a redistribution of economic, social and cultural capital in society is possible through better employment opportunities made available through the mechanism of universal participation in education. In this way, education is seen as offering possibilities for changing economic and social circumstances for previously excluded groups. Therefore universal participation in education is seen as having a central place in ensuring that all individuals are able to fully participate in private and public life (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011).
Yet, there are multiple different and competing versions of equity operating simultaneously in policy discourses and in educational theories. Thomson and Holdsworth (2003) argue that education policy and practice need to reflect this complexity and provide multiple approaches to equity. Some notions of equity focus on compensation for excluded groups. This notion acknowledges historic intergenerational exclusion, such as systematic racism affecting generations of Aboriginal students. Compensation strategies have continued throughout recent history particularly with a focus on indigenous education.

The ways gender equity policies in the 1970s and 1980s aimed for higher rates of girls’ completion of Year 12 and entry into tertiary education as compensation for previous policies that were seen to exclude girls from the public domain of employment is another example of a compensatory policy focus. Bottrell and Goodwin (2011) argue that the difficulty with compensatory policies is that they position the social groups targeted in the policies as outside of the mainstream without redefining the mainstream, thereby perpetuating the need for compensatory policies and in some cases reinforcing deficit views of these communities or groups. This is an interesting argument when applied to compensatory girls’ education policies, as it implies that boys as a group are considered the mainstream and girls are positioned as needing compensation to allow them to enter higher education and employment. This argument was made in 2000, citing women’s lower earnings as an important justification for ongoing attention to girls’ education (Collins et al., 2000a). One of the ongoing difficulties for advocates for girls’ education in a changing environment is the framing of girls’ education within discourses of disadvantage (Hayes, 2003). As theories have moved away from arguments of universal differences between the identities and experiences of girls and boys, it is equally difficult to frame girls’ education in terms of difference.

Other approaches to equity and participation adopt a framing of nurturing success for all students as well as for particular groups. It has been argued that schools should not just choose one version of equity at the expense of another (Thomson, 2005; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). These competing versions of equity can be seen within the policies and plans in the field of girls’ education and continue to be problematic in the discourses in boys’ education, in no small part because they focus on the students, their families and communities and often
ignore issues with the role of schooling and education itself in maintaining and reproducing social inequality.

Changes in Policy Discourses

Other changes in broader educational policy influenced policies and plans for girls’ education, and also set important contexts for changes in the field of girls’ education. These changes coincided with or signalled the turn towards the focus on boys. Many of these changes have been characterised as part of a global neo-liberal turn, to which Australian education policy and practice was not immune. Critics of this turn towards neo-liberalism emphasise the dangers of a focus on the individual and individualism, rather than on the collective and collectivism (Lingard, 2005). In noting the complex ways discourses take hold, intertwine and build upon each other, it is significant that the relatively radical traditions critiquing this turn have also seen a shift towards individual agency within their own theoretical framing of social issues. In the post-Whitlam era, principles of choice and diversity have increasingly been evident in education policy discourses. This neo-liberal market turn saw schools reorganised towards corporate managerial models, increasingly in competition with each other and scrutinised by the state and the public and parents of their students through standardised and publicly accessible performance indicators, benchmarks and targets.

By the 1990s this turn towards measurement and accountability was evident in most education policy. The beginnings of this turn in the field of girls’ education were evident in the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993-1997 when each state jurisdiction was required to report on measurable targets for outcomes within the plan. Yet, in the early 1990s, as the focus of gender equity turned away from girls towards boys, the use and analysis of large-scale data sets was hotly contested. As it coincided with the turn towards boys’ education in the 1990s, it is understandable that contestation over the significance and efficacy of measurements and indicators of attainment, retention and engagement is a strong theme in discourses of boys’ education in the 1990s.

During this period, discussions about ‘gaps’ in attainment came to dominate equity discourses. Considerable policy effort is currently put into producing statistical evidence and analysis of the educational situation of all students and of particular groups, with an emphasis on analysing outcomes and ‘closing the gap’
between different groups (Limbrick & Wheldall, 2010; Mensah & Kiernan, 2009; Nguyen, 2010).

While there is no doubt that larger scale data sets and measurement of outcomes are sometimes used in the interests of a neo-liberal agenda, most social sciences have embraced an empirical approach that includes providing statistical data or population-scale evidence to problem-posing about the social situations of particular groups and about the identification of social issues that need addressing. There are also numerous examples of ‘evidence-based practice’ within programs and strategies towards social justice, which use large scale data sets as evidence of both the problem to be addressed and as measures of success of these programs (Australian Council for Education Research, 2010; Dockett & Perry, 2010; Nguyen, 2011).

From the 1990s, in another shift in policy discourses and funding, there was a move away from compensatory programs for specific disadvantaged schools or groups towards programs with a focus on universal, individual needs, such as national literacy and vocational programs. Yet, a continuation of a focus on compensatory policies for specific groups can be seen in the Labor Government’s National Partnership Plan for low SES students, and federal targets and policies about increasing percentages of the population with a tertiary qualification (Council of Australian Governments, 2012). Under the Liberal Government elected in 2013, the notion of individual choice is again dominating educational discourses with suggested moves towards the development of a model of ‘independent government schools’.

Writing about educational discourses in Britain, which is in some ways similar to Australia, feminist educational writer Christine Skelton (2001) suggests there have been four major shifts in educational discourses in Britain from the early seventies to the mid-nineties. According to Skelton (2001), the early 1970s were concerned with equality of opportunity in relation to gender, race, disability, sexuality etc, with a focus on process. By the late 1970s and early 1980s discourses of equality had shifted to a focus on outcomes. In the late 1980s and early 1990s prevalent discourses were about choice, vocationalism and marketisation with a focus on competition. From the mid-1990s onwards dominant discourses were about school effectiveness and improvement, with a focus on standards. Skelton (2001) suggests these broader discourses interacted with the prevalent discourses of gender and education in the same time periods.
She argues that gender discourses in education shifted from equal opportunities and anti-sexism with an emphasis on female disadvantage in the late 1970s and early 1980s; to identity politics and feminisms with an emphasis on femininities and masculinities in the late 1980s and early 1990s; to performance and achievement in the mid-1990s with an emphasis on male disadvantage.

To conclude this chapter on girls’ education, I focus on changes and shifts in the discourses and the players in girls’ education that were significant in the turn towards boys’ education in the 1990s. While gender in education policy in Australia until 1996 had a clear focus on girls, sociology of education writings about gender have also had a strong strand of writing about schooling, masculinities and boys. Skelton (2001) refers to six different approaches to conceptions of masculinity. The categories, originally formulated by Clatterbaugh (1990), are:

- conservative, emphasising the traditional roles of men as protectors and providers for their family;
- men’s rights, conceptualising masculinity as restrictive and disabling of men and linked to many health and social problems;
- spiritual, encompassing the mytho-poetic men’s movement, arguing that men should be in touch with their inner selves to recognise and maximise their male energy;
- pro-feminist, seeing masculinity as socially and culturally constructed as aggressive, tough and competitive and therefore needing to be challenged and overcome;
- socialist, blending some ideas of Radical and Marxist feminism where male alienation is seen as resting in the relations of production and class division; and
- group specific, covering minority groupings such as gay and black activists concerned with homophobia and racism.

While these categories position various players in the field in relation to each other in ways that disguise the complexities of the interplay between various discourses in the field, there is a strong case to be made that feminist and pro-feminist discourses about boys dominated the field during the period where the policy focus was on girls’ education. The robust debates that influenced educational policy in this period were in response to differences between players...
in the field that would be regarded as fitting the categories of pro-feminist, socialist or group-specific.

The theoretical framing of the social construction of gender, widely supported in gender theorising outside of educational sociology, was also a shared understanding that unified feminist and pro-feminist theoretical research and policy discourses about girls and boys within the sociology of education (Connell, 1987, 1995). In particular the notion of hegemonic masculinity has been fundamental to feminist and pro-feminist theorising about boys and men and about masculinities and education (Connell, 1987, 1995, 1996, 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

This all-encompassing sociological theory, with its foundation in notions of patriarchal power and continuing dominance of men over women, with explanations of variance and differences across class, race and culture, has been central to the discussion of how boys were conceived of within a social construction of gender framework. Arising from a study of social inequality in Australian secondary schools (Connell et al. 1982), the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinities’ suggests a model of multiple and hierarchical masculinities and power relations.

This notion has informed other studies of schooling and masculinities (Alloway, 1995; Davies, 1989b; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998b; Kamler, 1999; Kamler, Maclean, Read, & Simpson, 1994). Over time, in education research utilising the conceptualisation of the social construction of masculinities, there has been an increasing emphasis on the link between gender and other factors such as socio-economic status, indigenous identities, and rural location. These were the theoretical or cultural struggles which occurred throughout the 1980s and early 1990s in the field of girls’ education. In other countries, it has also informed studies of the intersection of school environments and practices and the ways masculinities are enacted within different cultures. Mac An Ghaill (1994), for example, writing in England, suggested the need to address the oppositional culture and increasing alienation of working class boys from school.

In Australia, some research had been conducted about boys and schooling with a focus on sexuality and ethnicity (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003) but very little on boys and Aboriginality, despite clear evidence of differences in outcomes for indigenous boys and girls. Within girls’ education, perspectives on masculinities and the social behaviour of boys were largely seen to be of interest
because they were an aspect influencing the quest for equality for girls. They were examined in relation to the interests of girls (Davies, 1989a; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998b; Kamler, 1999).

The approach to equity contained in research and policy based on theories of the social construction of gender and hegemonic masculinity had been used to draw attention to broad power relations and to differences that result in disadvantage and marginalisation.

The rise of post-structuralist theories about femininity and masculinity within these three groups also gave rise to debates that centred on the relative importance of societal or systemic structures or individual agency (Kenway, 1997a). Theoretical work continuing this tradition in boys' education emphasised the differences within each gender rather than between girls and boys, and argued against 'essentialist' notions of male characteristics or experiences in education, even though these same concepts of female characteristics and experiences, prominent in the 1970s and early 1980s, were successfully used to support a policy and practice focus on girls education.

While structuralist parallelist positions in the social sciences and educational sociology that focused on the structures of race, gender and class have held sway with successive Labor governments, the state bureaucracies and the federal government's own well-funded mainstream research organisation the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) had also been interested in individual and social factors influencing student outcomes (Ainley & Gebhardt, 2013; Hattie, 2005). In the main, researchers in this organisation largely conducted large scale quantitative interpretive research of a positivist nature in order to demonstrate program effectiveness or changes in outcomes for particular groups of students (Nguyen, 2010, 2011). In the turn towards accountability, data from this research was providing government with information that was more useable to its system reform and decision making than some of the circular arguments of those social scientists taking a more radical parallelist position (Ladwig, 1996; Yates, 1999). Increasingly, sophisticated nuanced data about the importance of family poverty was providing the Labor government with an argument to move back to its primary concern of class. The loss of working class male jobs and evidence of the lack of success of working class boys in education fuelled this concern, and added weight to the views of some Labor politicians that attention to boys' education was warranted.
Debates within this movement about a methodological and theoretical research focus on localisation or globalisation in the face of neo-liberalism (Blackmore, 1999); on race, gender, sexuality or class (Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995; Tsolidis, 1996); or about gender and pedagogy and literacy (Lingard et al., 2001; Martino, 1994) had begun to fracture the seeming stability in the field. The close relationships between the national bureaucracy, the state equity units, and academics laid the way open for certain players to appeal to the field of power in the form of the state to intervene in the cultural struggles in the field (Martino, 1994; Yates, 1999).

While feminist and pro-feminist academics have long had an interest in boys and masculinity, and continued to be strong players in the field during the 1990s and beyond, the calls for attention to boys’ education in the 1990s were strongly influenced by writers and advocates outside of the field of education and from other epistemological and theoretical traditions. Writers from the men’s movement have been criticised by pro-feminist theorists for espousing a notion of presumptive equality, that assumes boys and girls can be seen as equal groups both in need of support (Lingard, 2003). Yet, an inclusive approach to equity would mean that it is appropriate to nurture the success of boys and girls as well as address particular equity issues for specific groups of boys and girls. I will discuss this notion further in later chapters.

The state of the Field of Girls’ Education

There is little doubt that despite the range of research, policy and practice interests and different political and strategic stances, there was a large degree of consensus among players in the field, that girls’ education was an extremely important intellectual and social field. Positive and equitable changes in the educational, social and economic situation for all women and girls were at stake in this field. It is equally clear that this is unfinished business in Australian and global education fields and discourses. In the small field of Australian education, the main academics, bureaucrats and practitioner activists in girls’ education were well known to each other, either personally or by reputation. Many of them had worked together on research projects, policy documents, committees and conferences devoted to advancement of the field. Their intellectual and professional dispositions and positions were well known. While there were always different emphases in theoretical research on gender and the ways gender
interacted with schooling, feminist and pro-feminist theoretical framings were the shared interpretive frame that allowed those in the field to make sense of what other actors were doing in the field. These framings shaped political and strategic struggles in the field (Bourdieu, 1988; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). This shared framing, along with the conventions of polite academic discourse, meant that internal debates about differences in the field were muted in published works, and alliances and concessions were made across these differences in order to bring about reforms to educational policy, funding and practice around girls’ education (Daws, 1997; Yates, 1999). Over this long period of attention to girls’ education, the field was relatively stable and shifts in the field were incremental as evidenced by the gradual changes in emphasis in feminist and pro-feminist theorising and policy making about girls’ education. Equity units in each state department operated to ensure that gender equity goals for girls were to be achieved by equity programs.

During the 1990s, feminist and pro-feminist researchers and policy makers collaborated to make strategic moves in the field in the face of growing public concern and imminent government intervention to turn away from a focus on the interests of girls towards boys’ education (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Yet, the seeds of changes in the field were being sown in global turns towards neo-liberal education and welfare policies and in global and local economic shifts. They were also evident in the gradual shifts in theories, strategies and purposes within the field of girls’ education. While there were tensions between mainstream and more radical feminist and pro-feminist researchers; and between players with a focus on policy and practice rather than wider gender theorising; and between academic, policy and practice players, an agreement about what was at stake in the field led to an uneasy stability in girls’ education. The field stability was built upon the compromises and alliances between different players. To a large degree, the field worked with and relied on the state to support the continuation of a focus on girls’ education. This has proved to be a dangerous strategy.

The 1990s – Economic and social situation

It is important to note that in the early 1990s there were changes to gender relations being enacted globally in many economic, public and policy arenas that interacted with and impacted upon girls’ and boys’ education in Australia. In the 1990s there was an economic recession that heralded changes in employment
patterns, particularly the decline of industrial manufacturing jobs in the car industry and steel making, as well as the textile and clothing industry, and the rise in jobs in hospitality and the service sector in Australia. These changes brought into question once again the relative power, social situations and opportunities for men and women. The loss of manufacturing jobs for groups of early school leaving boys who may have traditionally been able to find meaningful, skilled and relatively well-paid employment through apprenticeships raised issues of the future employment opportunities for boys and therefore highlighted educational issues such as literacy and school retention. These circumstances go some way to explain the turn towards an interest in boys’ education and the skills that boys would need in the workplaces of the future.

There was a growing men’s health and well-being movement in Australia, similar to other developed countries, which was becoming increasingly influential in the public arena. This movement highlighted social and well-being issues such as depression and suicide rates, and accident and violence rates among men and boys. The men’s movement suggested a public health approach to these issues, with positive public awareness campaigns highlighting the issues as relevant to all men as well as targeted programs for specific groups such as rural and indigenous men. Many feminist advocates for women also raised similar issues within a framework of hegemonic masculinity. The cultural struggles over approaches to these issues were important in boys’ education as well as in family, health and social policy fields more generally.

Changes to family law and social policy were also enacted that sought to recognise the importance of fathers to their children and to define parental responsibilities for ongoing social and financial support. These issues fuelled emotional reactions, particularly fears, as some men’s rights groups, such as the Lone Fathers Association, characterised family law decisions as a feminist-driven favouring of mothers by the courts and some women’s rights advocates raised concerns about access arrangements that ignored domestic violence and child abuse issues. The complexities within gender relations which were highlighted by government attempts to enact policies that would lead to equal responsibility for children by both mothers and fathers were also evident in the boys’ education field. These competing discourses in other fields and in wider social relations played into a sense of a discourse of ‘competing victims’ within boys’ education (Kenway, 1995a; Weaver-Hightower, 2003).
The turn towards boys’ education

The turn towards a focus on boys developed momentum in Australia and elsewhere in the early 1990s. This turn towards boys in Australian education policy was signalled by the change from the National Action Plan on the Education of Girls to a national Gender Equity in Australian Schools policy in 1996 (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, 1996). In Chapter 4, I describe in detail the events in the field of boys’ education from 1996 onwards and I develop a model for the field. I argue in Chapter 4, that this change represented a seismic shift or shock in the field that was instigated by the state, in the form of the national Department for Education, Employment and Training, as it was at the time. In Chapter 6 on the policy field I also argue that this shock was anticipated, tactically agreed to and supported by some feminist and pro-feminist players in the field, as a necessary shift in theoretical, policy and practice understandings of gender in education.

Public, Practice and Program Literature – a different discourse

Despite the inclusion of boys into the 1996 policy and increasing research attention to boys within the social constructivist research tradition, there was a growing perception that issues of boys’ education were not being adequately addressed. Mounting public concern about the achievement of boys grew in Australia, as in other developed countries, such as the USA, Canada, the UK and New Zealand, in the 1990s. Consultations on implementation of the National Action Plan for Girls identified concern about boys as a recurring theme from as early as 1992 (Collins et al., 2000a). The state of New South Wales commissioned an inquiry into the issue in 1994 and developed state policy in 1996 (O’Doherty & NSW Government Advisory Committee for Education Training and Youth Affairs, 1994).

In keeping with the performance and achievement discourse prevalent in education in this era (Skelton, 2001), The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls and the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations on National Goals for schooling all outlined reporting and accountability measures that were designed to map progress made towards the agreed goals and strategies and for the first time reporting of statistical data was required of state jurisdictions. Population
level literacy and numeracy levels, and performance on key employment related competencies and student pathways were expected to be reported on in the annual National Reports on Schooling in Australia (Daws, 1997).

Prior to this very little school based data was collated or aggregated by gender and it was quite difficult to get accurate information about relative achievements of boys and girls, or of specific groups of boys and girls. Systematic national and international population data gathering, analysis and comparison of relative academic achievements as part of increasing accountability measures for public programs and institutions became prevalent at this time (ACER, 1999; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004; DeCourcy, 2005; Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs: Analysis and Equity Branch, 2000).

The increasingly publicly available data fuelled equity debates about identified gaps in boys' and girls' literacy and school retention rates as well as academic outcomes in many subjects. Other researchers, working from a different research paradigm to the social construction of gender, entered these debates, using aggregated data about the physical, emotional and social health factors for men and boys. Data on the health of men and boys were gathered together for the first time. Accident rates, deaths, completed suicide rates, involvement with violence, with the exception of domestic violence (either as victim or perpetrator), drug and alcohol abuse and incarceration rates all showed greater numbers of boys and men represented by these indicators than girls and women (Vimpani, Fletcher, & Vorobioff, 1995). The personal, social and economic costs of lack of attention to men’s health was emphasised, as was the relationship to poverty and parenting styles that could impact upon criminal behaviour (Weatherburn, 2003a).

The linking together of academic and social data on boys created a powerful set of indicators that, it was argued, illustrated that the academic, social and emotional needs of many boys were not being met by current school programs and policies (Fletcher, 1997, 1999). A causal chain of difficulties that particularly impacted on boys’ achievement was identified in research in this tradition. In reviews of the statistical and social research evidence, links were made between auditory processing, early literacy attainment, attentiveness in class, school engagement and eventual outcomes in school, employment and social well-being (Cresswell et al., 2002; Rowe & Rowe, 2004). Interestingly,
researchers working in this paradigm concurred with other research which identified individual teacher effectiveness and quality of teaching as the most significant factors in addressing the causal and compounding effects of this sequence. The importance of teacher development in appropriate methodologies to enhance early literacy attainment was also emphasised (Rowe and Rowe, 1992, 1998; Rowe, Pollard, Tan and Rowe, 2000; Rowe, Turner and Lane, 1999).

From the 1990s, the confluence of attention to reporting and accountability which brought out population level evidence of boys’ under representation in school retention and literacy and over representation in social and affective factors, such as engagement and motivation, opened up space for different discourses on boys’ education that came from activism by the men’s movement and concerned parents and practitioners (Hawkes, 2001; Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, 1997) However, even as far back as 1975, a minority report was submitted to the Schools Commission’s inquiry into the education of girls that argued that an analysis of the data would recognise that boys’ educational needs were not being met, and should be addressed, rather than a sole focus on girls (Yates, 1999).

One influential writer in Australia in the 1990s was Steve Biddulph, a family therapist. His popular books about manhood and raising boys could be characterised as drawing on concepts of masculinity of the men’s rights and mytho-poetic men’s movement (Biddulph, 1994, 1997). His forewords to educational writings by Browne and Fletcher (1995) and his public talks with those presenters, linked these writers from the men’s health and well-being field to these strands of discourse on masculinity.

Some public activists and academics advocating for men’s health approached boys’ education from a different paradigm to the feminist and pro-feminist framings of girls’ education (Vimpani et al., 1995). The positivist methodology of measuring a whole population prevalent in epidemiology and population health was treated with great suspicion by social scientists with a critique of neo-liberalism and the new turn towards measurement and accountability in education. While some feminist and pro-feminist researchers were embracing mixed method studies, and population level statistics were used as evidence of successful social justice interventions, debates about boys’ education became focused on the interpretation of data. Population level
comparisons of data about boys were characterised as contributing to essentialist notions of boys and girls. Earlier methodological divisions between qualitative and quantitative, local and global, large-scale and more experiential methods were evoked.

Similarly the approach to education advocated by these researchers familiar with health programs that simultaneously targeted a whole population as well as specific at-risk groups did not fit neatly with the notions of equity embodied in calls for an understanding of ‘which boys’ were in most need of specific forms of support in education and specifically rejected as essentialist the notion that all boys could be a legitimate target of attention (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003).

The new men’s health discourses about boys were responded to with alarm by some feminist and pro-feminist theorists. Arguments were raised about the dangers of essentialising boys and masculinity (Lingard et al., 2012). The fears of essentialism that health discussions of physical sex differences and behavioural differences raised, meant that common understandings of a client focus or strength-based practice in health and human services were unrealised in much education theory. Despite this, there was a strong interest by practitioners in ways teachers and schools could utilise the positive qualities and assets of the boys and the communities they serve. Some have advocated for a ‘strengths-based and male focused’ approach to boys’ educational issues that recognises that boys and men have positive personal, cultural and gendered qualities that can be built on to bring about positive change (Clay & Hartman, 2006; Hartman, 2006).

Practitioners and commentators in boys’ education and in men’s health have advocated this way of working with boys and men (Barwick, 2004; Hawkes, 2001; King, 2004). At the same time, this approach to boys’ education issues has been criticized as under-theorised at best or at worst anti-feminist and undermining important gains made by girls and women (Keedie & Churchill, 2003; Kenway, 1997b; Lingard, 2003).

While the debates among feminists and pro-feminists that impacted upon girls’ education seemed to strengthen the field, these new discourses in boys’ education seem irreconcilable with the feminist and pro-feminist discourses that dominated girls’ education (Mills et al., 2007).
At the heart of current discussions of gender policy and practice in schools are questions of difference and equity. Feminist and pro-feminist theories and approaches to equity and difference emphasise power relations and disadvantage (Hayes, 1998, 2003). In contrast theories from the men’s movement, particularly those informed by a discussion of men’s health and well-being often emphasise the link between physiological and psychological differences and social relationships within a bio-social ecological system (Fletcher, Matthey, & Marley, 2006; King, 2004; Macdonald, 2006).

In attempting to make sense of these important and seemingly intractable divisions between feminist and men’s movement discourses, two themes seem particularly relevant to the policy and practice of boys’ education. The first is whether boys’ issues can be incorporated into a gender equity framework largely designed to provide equity for girls (Fletcher, 2005a; Hartman, 2008a; Kenway, 1997a; Yates, 1997). The second is how theoretical insights about gender can be incorporated into a coherent framework that also provides some useful guidance for practitioners who are daily faced with the task of meeting the individual and diverse gendered needs of boys and girls in Australian schools (Jackson, 2006; Keddie & Mills, 2007). The gulf between different theoretical and practice discourses about the interaction between boys’ and girls’ social identities, learning and relationships and how these are played out in school systems is the subject of much of this thesis.

This review of girls’ education and the beginnings of the turn towards boys’ education serves to illustrate the many different perspectives and views on education, equity and gender informing and leading to the turn towards boys’ education. A Bourdieusian analysis of the field and the discourses during this time will make sense of the actions, inactions, silences and gaps in the discourses. It will have some explanatory power in understanding what seemed possible and impossible in the field. It will help develop an understanding of the seeming impasses in the field and will enable some directions towards reinvigorating or reinventing the field. In the next chapter I discuss the field of boys’ education in the light of these critical field issues.
Chapter 4
Boys’ education – a field within fields

The immediate harmony between the logic of a field and the dispositions it induces and presupposes means that all its arbitrary content tends to be disguised as timeless, universal self-evidence (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 29)

In the previous chapter about events prior to 1996, I discussed some changes in the field of girls’ education that prompted the turn towards boys’ education. In this chapter, I use the conceptual tools of field analysis, homologies between fields and relationships between proximal fields to build a model of boys’ education in Australia in this period. I use the metaphor of sets of Russian dolls to build a model of hierarchical fields within fields. This model provides the reader with a large picture view of the location of boys’ education in a series of sub-fields and proximal fields. The model serves to conceptualise the inter-relationships between the politics, policy, academic and practice sub-fields of boys’ education and the political, public, academic, practice and journalistic discourses about boys’ education generated by the proximal fields of politics, social science and journalism. I focus on the complexities of these inter-relationships and suggest the relationships can be examined in a number of ways, with each way bringing into focus different aspects of the operations of the field.

I use these metaphors and perspectives to discuss the nature of a field undergoing change and to analyse contestation about: (1) what is at stake in the field; (2) who the players are and the positions they occupy; (3) the rules by which the field works; and (4) a shared interpretive frame that allows those in the
field to make sense of what other actors are doing in the field in a particular situation (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). I investigate the empirical events in the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. I illustrate the volume and nature of activity in the social field of boys’ education in this decade, in relation to the periods immediately prior to and following this. Through this historical representation of events in the field, I continue to address the primary question of the research: What changes occurred to prompt the turn towards boys’ education between 1996 and 2006?

In the following chapters I undertake a forensic analysis of a corpus of texts produced in each of these sub-fields and proximal fields, discussing the volume of texts and the themes and discourses within texts in each of these fields, in greater detail. I delve deep into the field of boys’ education, the discourses within the field and the interplays between them. In the final chapter, I return to the model to summarise and make sense of the ways the forensic analysis of each corpus of texts has contributed to the conceptualisation of the model and to discuss what can be learned from this period to reinvigorate or reinvent the field.

I take this approach to engage readers in a continual process of moving between an analysis of the overall field depicted in the model in this chapter and the details of the subfields, the moves of the various players within the fields, and the discourses in which they participate, depicted in subsequent chapters. While I am commencing here with the big picture account of boys’ education, the journey that I have actually taken in this study commenced with the inner layers of boys’ education and of practice, and I gradually built a model by moving in and out of the finer-grained analysis of each corpus of texts towards an overall conceptualisation of fields. In this chapter, I begin at the end, with a view of the whole field and related fields, then in subsequent chapters I move through the layers of the field, to return to the big picture in the concluding chapter.

**Conceptualising the field**

Bourdieu suggests that education as a field has relative autonomy from economic and political power (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). It is a social field with its own culture and practices, not just a reflection of industrial or political needs. Yet, like many applied fields, education is strongly influenced by the power of the state. In the specific context of Australia, education is an applied field in a very small social sphere where the state, in the form of national and
state governments and education departments, has a large degree of control over policy and practice and where state and private funding, policies and education systems have significant impact on differing outcomes for students. Taking this perspective, boys’ education in Australia can be thought of as a structured space – a relatively autonomous space. This autonomy is indicated by such things as: a body of policy documents; research and practitioner literature devoted to and named as boys’ education as well as scholastic and professional endeavour in the field such as research, training and professional development courses and programs; and professional bodies purporting to oversee and provide leadership to the field in some ways (Bourdieu, 1993; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Indeed, much of my work and the work of my colleagues at the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, has been directed towards establishing boys’ education as a field of scholarship in Australia, developing university subjects devoted to it, publishing a practitioner journal and conducting regular conferences and publishing the proceedings to facilitate internal debate and exchange in the field (Fletcher et al., 1999; Hartman, 2006).

Bourdieu’s concept of education as a social field brings a materialist perspective to an analysis of the discussion about boys’ education. The notion of a social field offers the possibility of change both in reality and in discourses (Maton, 2009). It allows for discussions of: how the field of boys’ education has changed over time; which players have influenced the field; which ideas, ideologies and concepts have been transferred from one set of discourses to another and how the discourses within different genres have influenced each other and, importantly, how particular discourses can influence the actions of people in the field (Bourdieu, 1993).

Following Bourdieu, I use this field analysis to investigate important questions. How do we identify social ‘calls to order’? What are the conditions for hearing such calls? Which social groups and individuals are more inclined to respond to calls to order? Fields are structured to shape what we know and how we come to know it – the limits of knowledge produced and what can be recognised or goes misrecognised. It is the structures operating in the field that largely determine what is thinkable and unthinkable or expressible or inexpressible (Grenfell & James, 2004). How was the unthinkable question ‘what about the boys?’ read by the different players in the field? Why was it unthinkable? Who was called to arms by this question?
In any intellectual or social field there are struggles for legitimisation – the right to exercise the ‘symbolic violence’ of the domination of one set of ideas over others. This legitimisation produces an orthodoxy, or doxa in a field. If fields can be thought of as structured spaces organised around particular forms of capital or combinations of capital, then the autonomy to decide its own doxa or illusio, its agreed practices, and its ability to produce recognised objects, is what allows us to recognise the field. The doxa in a field is also legitimised by a certain degree of agreement about what is at stake by all players in the field. The state of the field can be shown by the level of debate and contestation over the legitimisation of ideas.

Bourdieu argued that habitus becomes active in relation to a field. This is an important point in the analysis of boys’ education as a field. Bourdieu suggests that the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field. This interplay between habitus and field is pertinent to the time of change that produced the turn towards the education of boys. The policy, academic and practitioner players involved in this field have taken up positions and built intellectual reputations and careers defending these positions. They are players in specific sub-fields with their own doxas and capitals. As players in these fields, they hold certain positions in the social space of the field. As people they are all genuinely concerned with improvement in the field and are intellectually committed to certain overarching goals of equity in the school system. Bourdieu argues that it is the misalignment and tension between habitus and fields which may give rise to social change. At any one moment in the cultural struggles within fields, certain individuals come to represent positions in the field. In a social analysis of a field these individuals become epistemic individuals to be analysed. Bourdieu (1988) makes an important distinction between these epistemic individuals – units of analysis in a field analysis, representing a particular position in a moment of time in the cultural and social field – with the actual people who in life are these individuals.

Furthermore, Bourdieu's concepts of the social world are fundamentally a set of ‘relational principles’ in that he believes that any object or idea within a culture only has meaning in relation to other elements in that culture. This relational thinking is fundamental to an understanding of boys’ education in a particular historical and geographical context – Australia in the period 1996 to 2006. A field is never fixed. It is a set of possibilities or a series of moves that
could be made by people or institutions. It encompasses how practices within institutions change, how certain dispositions are developed in specific situations, how individuals and groups might act to change their situations and what circumstances might motivate them to do this (Maton, 2009; Reay, 2004, 2010). Conceptualising boys’ education as a field in this way illustrates the historical and contextual grounds on which the current social order is based and therefore shows that the social world is arbitrary and contingent on the moment. The continuing oppositional binaries that plague the field can most usefully be understood in relation to the previous policy period and the related concern for girls’ education.

**Homologies between fields**

A field is autonomous to the extent to which it has power to set its own agenda and to validate its own cultural capital. Yet, while fields have their own forms of valued cultural capital, Bourdieu and others (1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) argue all fields are structured largely in the same ways. Bourdieusian scholars define these similar structural features and operations as homologies across fields. Bourdieu suggests that although fields can be relatively autonomous, there are homologies within and across fields. In Bourdieusian theory, two field structures are evident in all fields and are crucial to any field analysis. These are: the opposition between field specific cultural capital and economic capital; and between old and new ideas and players, termed incumbents and challengers by Fligstein and McAdam (2012). According to Bourdieu, the connections between fields, like the oppositions within fields, stem from structural factors, not the dispositions of the players. This means that all fields develop positions of dominance and subordination, and mechanisms of reproduction and change, and actors within the fields have strategies of exclusion and usurpation.

The notion of homologies suggests that, through the distribution of various types of capital, those who find themselves in a dominated position in one field also tend to find themselves in subordinate positions in other fields. So, Bourdieu argues, cultural struggles in a field tend to produce cultural distinctions that are also social distinctions. Some enduring binaries played out in all social fields are particularly relevant to this field analysis.

There are social distinctions made between practical or manual and intellectual workers, where intellectual workers tend to be in the more dominant
position. In the field of boys’ education, the division between practitioners and researchers is a manifestation of this social division played out in field-specific ways. The division between gender theorists who see themselves primarily as sociologists analysing gender relations and the more practice-oriented gender in education theorists who see their work as relevant to the practice of education is also relevant here. Those undertaking or researching practice are more likely to be in subordinate positions to those whose primary concern is the broader society or more intellectual than practical or applied in its nature. There are also distinctions within the field of power where intellectuals are a dominated group within the field of power. Bourdieu (1996) and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) emphasise the power of the state and its unique ability to intervene in and influence other fields by an imposition of an agenda in its own interests. The influence of capital, pulling fields towards the commercial pole is also an homology across fields.

In boys’ education, the division between researchers and policy makers, or practitioners and policy makers or between both researchers and practitioners and politicians is relevant here. Distinctions between players from public or private education systems are also important when discussing this structural aspect of field. This field structure can also be seen in the academic distinctions between mainstream and radical researchers that are played out in this field in the different intellectual and strategic positions taken up by players. While mainstream researchers often have a monopoly on the capital of a field, radical researchers, including some feminists have sometimes distanced themselves from mainstream concerns in education (Ladwig, 1996).

There are social divisions between men and women. Bourdieu argues in Masculine Domination (2001), his anthropological study of a particular honour society, that while these sex divisions are enduring, they are not uniform and can take different forms in different societies at different times. This enduring dichotomy is relevant in the cultural or ideological struggles at the time, as well as to the dispositions and positions of the players in the field of boys’ education.

The inter-relationships between different positions in the field, and different discourses and the actions of players in the field can be made sense of by tracing these homologies across fields. Bourdieu (1988) argues that it is these often unrecognised constraints of the field itself that impose restrictions on the actions of the players in the field. He suggests, in every field, the implicit pre-suppositions
of players in each field, which make up the doxa of the field, are not completely explicit to the players. Yet, the dispositions of the players, shaped in some ways by the doxa of the field, ensure that all players see the game as important and worth playing.

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) argue that players can knowingly and strategically take collective actions to change a field. They focus more on intentional and knowing collective actions of field players, suggesting that the human desire to connect to others in meaningful ways underpins individual habitus, and actions and interactions within fields. This interplay between the doxa of the field, the dispositions and positions of the players and the knowing actions taken by the players is an important aspect of my analysis.

Although boys’ education can be characterised as an autonomous field, I suggest that it cannot be understood without an analysis of the homologies between boys’ and girls’ education and between education as a field and the political and journalistic fields. These homologies structured the discourses and actions available to the players in all of these fields. In the following sections, I build a model of boys’ education which takes into account these homologies that operate across fields as well as the field specific capital and positions available to players in the field.

**Fields within fields**

Fligstein and McAdam (2012) suggest that the boundaries of fields are not easy to define as they are fluid and shift depending on the issues at stake and the situation at hand. They argue that new fields often grow from and are populated by players from close proximal fields. They also place a great deal of emphasis on the interdependence of fields, arguing that fields are often embedded within other fields in a vertical, hierarchical system, like a set of Russian dolls. This metaphor is particularly apt in conceptualising the field of boys’ education as one that clearly sits within the broader field of education. Following Bourdieu and Fligstein and McAdam, I analyse some significant inter-relationships in the field in terms of sets of interlocking Russian dolls. In this analysis, the cultural distinctions made in each layer can be foregrounded.

These representations highlight and foreground certain relationships. In singling out these relationships, the representations are necessarily a simplification of the complexities of the whole set of possible field and inter-field
relations. In following Bourdieusian technologies of analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), I acknowledge that any analysis of social reality cannot fully describe this reality. I draw these particular distinctions to highlight what seems significant in my analysis of boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. Taking these multiple perspectives enables the complexities and interwoven nature of fields to be shown explicitly. An important aspect of this kind of analysis is that each conceptualisation of one set of inter-relationships enables a view of what could be lost in the trajectory from inner to outer layers in that set of relationships. The specific capital and cultural concerns of each sub-field or layer is at stake in these trajectories.

**Cultural positions**

Figure 2 is a heuristic that represents the first important set of inter-relationships between: boys’ and girls’ education; gender in education; equity in education and education itself. This heuristic illustrates the ways boys’ education is conceptualised within the field of education. It emphasises the cultural or ideological positioning of boys’ education within the broader field of education. In Figure 2, I conceptualise these as hierarchical relationships within the field of education. This heuristic highlights the cultural struggles within the field and the proximate nature of girls’ and boys’ education in Australia. While I want to distinguish boys’ education between 1996 and 2006 from the previous period and from the field of girls’ education, I am suggesting that boys’ and girls’ education are both in the inner, most subordinate layer of the doll. In the cultural struggles in the field, they are both sub-fields of the next layer, gender in education. Gender in education, in turn, is nested in the next layer, equity in education, which is nested in the outer layer of education itself.
Figure 2: Heuristic of subfields within education

This heuristic brings to the foreground interactions between boys’ education and girls’ education inside gender in education. Viewed from the perspective of fields within fields we can see both the turns towards girls’ education, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, and towards boys’ education, from the from the 1990s through the 2000s, as dependent inside dolls that constitute gender in education. In the larger field of education, gender is only one equity issue considered as significant in education. Gender in education sits within the broader field of equity in education and then within the field of education itself.

An analysis of this particular set of hierarchical relationships brings into relief the field specific framing of boys’ and girls’ education, gender, and equity that helps make sense of some of the major cultural struggles within the practice, academic and policy discourses in the field at the time. This research has one half of the inner-most layer as its focus. As I’ve described in Chapter 3, prior to 1996 boys’ education and girls’ education were not seen as proximal subfields within the gender and equity layers of education. Girls’ education was in a more dominant position in the field of gender in education, with little attention being paid to boys’ education within gender or other equity framings in education. In fact, gender in education was often equated with girls’ education prior to 1996. After 1996, boys’ education was profoundly influenced by this framing and by established players in girls’ education.
A focus on this set of field relationships allows cultural contestations within the field to become foregrounded. Struggles over what constitutes legitimate topics for study in gender in education, which groups might legitimately be the subjects of study, and what aspects of education are relevant to gender in education are highlighted. Many of the cultural struggles in the field can be seen to be over whether boys as a group could legitimately be considered an equity group in similar ways to girls, as well as whether boys’ education should be a focus at all. The emergence of arguments about ‘competing victims’ and ‘which boys/which girls’ can be made sense of in the light of the shock waves that echoed through each layer of this set of dolls in the decade after the 1996 policy change, during the turn towards boys’ education. These debates are examples of field struggles over what was at stake in the field; over what would be lost in the gender and equity layers if boys’ education was characterised as an equity issue. The subfield of girls’ education had staked its legitimacy as a field on its analysis of gender in relation to girls and the contribution of this gender analysis towards equity in the field of education. If boys were to be included within this framework, then definitions of gender and equity were at stake. Compromises in feminist analyses of equity issues and strategic decisions made by feminist academics and bureaucrats in the previous period, to ensure the inclusion of girls’ education in policy and the funding of girls’ programs, became salient in debates about boys’ education. Narrowly defined notions of equity in policy documents were again brought into question during this period of focus on boys’ education. Earlier, some feminist theories informing girls’ education had discussed girls as a homogenous group and policies were directed towards all girls. This has been described as a necessary ‘strategic essentialism’ (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003). More recent theorising tended towards focusing on differences between groups of girls. Yet the main areas of policy focus still tended towards issues such as sexual harassment and bullying that can occur in any social grouping and was seen as partly a product of hegemonic masculinity affecting all boys and all girls in different ways. These tensions in theorising and policy making about girls, as well as earlier conceptualisations of equity for girls that had discussed girls’ learning styles and preferences, came to the fore again when the same issues were raised about boys. The rise of boys’ education in this decade caused ripples and some ruptures throughout all layers of this set of dolls. The shock waves moved through the layers of the doll in both directions.
The actions contributing to these shocks and instability in the field are analysed in greater detail in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

**Sub-fields and structural positions**

Figure 3 is a heuristic that represents another important set of hierarchical relationships in boys’ education. This hierarchical series of sub-fields from the inner, most subordinate layer to the outer, most powerful layer is: practice of boys’ education; academic research relating to boys’ education; policy about boys’ education; and interventions of the state and political apparatus as it relates to boys’ education. In characterising this set of relationships, I do not suggest that academia is always in a dependent and subservient relationship to policy and to education systems or state and national education departments and political interventions in education. In fact, in the next set of relationships, I foreground another perspective on fields. There, I describe the social sciences as a proximal field to politics and journalism in a later heuristic. In Figure 3, I am characterising a particular set of relationships occurring within this small and thin field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. This relationship is the close hierarchical and dependent relationship between various players in certain structural sub-fields within the field. Sometimes these also coincide with professional groupings. In this heuristic I evoke and highlight distinctions between: the practice of education by practitioners such as teachers and principals of schools; the research conducted through projects specifically commissioned or funded by the state; the policy developed by the state in the form of the national government department overseeing all of these activities; and the products of specific political interventions into the field by the parliament. I am highlighting the particular relationship between commissioned research and the policy and political purposes of this research. In this set of dolls, I am evoking some of the significant social distinctions suggested in the earlier discussion of homologies between fields, particularly the distinction between the practical or manual and the intellectual. The overarching power of the state dominating intellectuals in the field is also highlighted here.
In Figure 3, I conceptualise the practice of boys’ education as the innermost layer of the doll, dependent on and subservient to findings of national government commissioned research in order to undertake sanctioned practice in boys’ education. Following Bourdieu and others (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), moving from the inner layer of the heuristic, I understand practice as subordinate within any field. Next, research commissioned by the national government is dependent on and subservient to policy making by the federal department. While I discuss policy making in the broad sense (Blackmore, Wright, & Harwood, 2006b), and acknowledge that intellectuals are also a dominated section of the field of power, in this heuristic I am describing a specific dependent relationship within the small field of Australian education, suggesting that policy players in the federal government department responsible for boys’ education and political players in the parliament both dictated the topics of the commissioned research as well as selectively took up certain findings over others. From this perspective, the ways the state can intervene in internal field struggles, played out by players from subordinate and dominant positions, come into focus. Unlike more autonomous fields in other sciences, for example physics, the intellectual field of education research, involving universities and other research institutions and researchers, and the field of educational practice involving school systems and teachers, is very much subject to the field of power in this thin field (Maton, 2009; Nash, 1999).
Education academics can act with a degree of autonomy in the field of social sciences conducted within universities or research institutions, as depicted in the next heuristic. However, the academic layer of this set of dolls describes the position of research commissioned by government in this period. The academic players conducting this research were dependent on and severely constrained by the policy and political field.

Policy making itself is in a subservient and dependent position, subject to the outer layer of education politics. These interlocking layers, in a hierarchical relationship can be seen as sub-fields of practice, commissioned research, policy and politics in boys’ education, with these sub-fields all closely inter-related and intertwined. A view from this perspective highlights that these sub-fields will all have slightly different interpretive framings and ideas about what is at stake in their sub-field. Although aspects of discourses can transfer, be interpreted and reinterpreted and have currency with each, these sub-fields will always have slightly different emphases about what is at stake in the field and how to make sense of what is going on in their own and other sub-fields. As concepts travel through the hierarchical layers of the field, important autonomous aspects of each subfield are lost. In this field analysis of boys’ education, I have found it generative to categorise who the players are and what positions they occupy in terms of the functions they play or identify with, in these sub-fields. I categorise the actions, texts and discourses conducted and produced as being part of the practitioner field, the academic field, the policy field or the political field.

The calling of a public inquiry into boys’ education in 2000 and the strategic take up of particular findings of this inquiry from 2002 onwards illustrate the strategies open to political players within this relationship and show the profound effects these actions of the political field had on the autonomy of the field. Fligstein and McAdams (2012) suggest that many disruptions to fields come from the state rather than from inside the field.

**Proximal fields**

Figure 4 represents the final set of relationships I analyse as significant in boys’ education in this period. It adds to and illustrates the complexity of the inter-relationships between subfields and proximal fields. In a body of work built up from empirical studies over many years, Bourdieu emphasised several aspects of field: autonomy; homologies between fields; and proximity of fields (Bourdieu,
1988, 1998a; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). My analysis of boys’ education highlights the inter-relatedness of all of these aspects. In his later work, Bourdieu highlighted the close relationship between social science, politics and journalism as proximal fields. Each of the fields in the set of Russian dolls, illustrated in the heuristic in Figure 4, has a similar aim. Bourdieu suggests that each lays claim to the imposition of the legitimate vision and division of the social world. He argues that those who deal professionally in making things explicit have two things in common. First they strive to set out explicitly practical principles of vision and division. Second they struggle, each within their own field, to impose these principles and have them recognised as legitimate categories of construction of the social world. This is what is at stake in each of these fields.

The fields of social science (in this case especially gender studies, sociology of education and educational psychology), the political field, and the field of journalism, are proximal fields all vying for the right to describe and inscribe their vision of the world onto social reality. Bourdieu (1991) has described this as symbolic violence. While it might not be the explicit, knowing intention of individual players within these fields to exercise symbolic violence, the struggle to impose symbolic violence on other fields is the overarching purpose of these fields (Bourdieu, 2005). Players acting within the logic of practice of their own field might not always explicitly recognise this overarching purpose. They might not regard themselves as participants in this kind of struggle. Yet, the struggles over field specific doxa and illusio within these fields interacted with and impacted upon the cultural struggles within the field of boys’ education. In many ways the struggles within the field of boys’ education are struggles between these fields, such is the complexity of the inter-relationships between fields. The struggles to impose a particular vision and way of characterising gender in education issues, and portray this vision as legitimate, are deeply rooted within the boys’ and girls’ education sub-fields and were also enacted across the political, journalistic and social science fields.

The impacts on the field by forces from the political field and from players within journalism and others outside the intellectual field of the sociology of education or theories of practice of education were profound. The independent actions of those in the field of social science were in turn constrained by their relationship with the state in the thin field of Australian education.
The similar aims across the three fields, and the different doxas of each field, could account for a theme in both the academic and practitioner discourses on boys’ education that is highly critical of media reporting of the issues to do with boys’ education. It also can account for the moves of players in the field to appeal to the political field to support their own positions within the field. Players from each of these fields also operated within the field of boys’ education, or in the case of journalism, saw themselves as having a legitimate place to comment on, analyse and report on activities, players and positions within boys’ education, within the field-specific sanctioned operations of the journalistic field. These intersections, homologies and overlapping aims of these fields and the sub-fields within boys’ education add layers of complexity to an analysis of the field.

In Chapter 9, I follow Bourdieu (2005) in categorising texts from newspapers in an analysis of how the journalistic field intersects with the field of boys’ education. I characterise the journalistic field as similar to the academic field of boys’ education, in that academics (social scientists) and journalists, as intellectual workers, are both players in dominated sectors of the dominant field of power.

While Habermas (Benson & Neveu, 2005) has described a public sphere as a place where people can comment on issues, I see the public inquiry into boys’ education as an intervention by the field of power, in this case the political field, into the field of education. In my analysis of submissions to the Inquiry in the next chapter, I have foregrounded this complexity, by characterising the Inquiry...
as an intervention by the political field and then I have categorised the
submissions to the Inquiry into categories denoted by the ways the authors of the
submissions describe themselves as participants in the sub-fields or proximal
fields related to boys’ education, as teachers, academics, bureaucrats.

Bringing to the foreground the overarching purpose of these fields, to
impose their vision and divisions of the world, also highlights an important aspect
of what is at stake in each of these fields. The Inquiry took submissions from
parent groups, unions, and community groups as well as individuals. The
thematic analysis of these submissions illustrates the extent to which certain
visions and divisions had taken hold in discussions of boys’ education in these
groups.

The homologies between politics, social science research and the
journalistic field, in relation to boys’ education are significant in shaping the field
of boys’ education in the period. The interactions among the public, journalistic,
practitioner, policy and research discourses and the relational aspects across
fields are surprising and highlight that the structures of fields and actions of
players within fields are not inevitable. Change can occur within and across fields
in surprising ways.

The similar aims across the three fields and the different doxas of each field
brings to the foreground possibilities within the field. In this small, thin and
dominated field, moves by players to appeal to the political field to support their
own positions within the field begin to make sense. I now turn inwards to the field
and to a characterisation of the internal struggles within the field of boys’
education which is framed by these notions of fields, field structures, sub-fields,
proximal fields and homologies between fields.

**Boys’ education as a field**

The turn towards boys’ education has been characterised as a struggle between
players from the men’s movement and feminist and pro-feminist players. It has
been suggested that ideas put forward by newer players from the men’s
movement supported a return to an earlier period of male domination in society
and education and that this was resisted by feminist and pro-feminist players
continuing the struggle for equity embodied in girls’ education (Lingard et al.,
2012). While I take the dichotomous categories of men’s movement and feminist
players as a starting point, my analysis also emphasises the different positions
within these two dichotomous categories already mentioned in Chapter 3 (Skelton, 2001). I suggest that while players in the field of boys' education can be seen to fit the broad categories of feminist, pro-feminist and men's movement, and in some cases explicitly identify with them in the cultural or ideological struggles of the field, this characterisation does not adequately express the complexities in the field. In many cases, players in the practice, academic, policy and political fields do not explicitly identify with any theoretical or analytical positions, yet they are influenced by all of them. In this thesis, I analyse struggles within the field over field specific capital and positions as well as the homologies between education, social science and the political field that all impacted on boys' education.

Figure 5, the heuristic below, represents the possible moves and flows between positions in the field during this period of change and contestation. Following Albright (2006), this Bourdieusian heuristic allows us to make clear the relationships between the moves players in the field make in cultural struggles for the legitimisation of ideas and the strategic moves they make for the relatively small amounts of economic capital in the form of research grants, contracts and fees available to the field.

This Bourdieusian heuristic represents the field of boys' education as a whole, dominated by the overarching field of power. The vertical axis represents possible positions (not people) in the field, along the continuum between high recognition in the field and low recognition. The strategic game within any field is to achieve and maintain recognition within the field. Newer players entering the field are not well recognised in the field. They commence at the lower end of the recognition axis. Some established players have achieved recognition, so these positions are represented at the top of the diagram. The vertical dotted lines represent the possible trajectories towards and away from recognition. No player strives to move away from recognition, but this is a possible trajectory in field struggles, if a cultural or ideological position in a field is overtaken or discredited by different ideas. This means established players can move down the recognition axis towards a similar position on this continuum with newer players who have not yet achieved recognition in the field.

Bourdieu (1993) distinguishes between field specific cultural capital and commercial or economic capital. The horizontal axis represents possible positions along the continuum between the autonomous pole in a field, where...
there is a large degree of autonomy over the cultural or ideological direction of
the field, or heteronomous pole, where commercialism or economic capital
dominate the culture of the field.

Within any field, players have certain moves open to them within the
agreed consensus by which the field works. In the strategic struggles for
recognition in a field, any player can take actions that enhance their own
recognition in the field or that of others. Established players, or incumbents,
usually operate to protect and further their field specific capital and their
established position in the field. One strategic move open to established players,
to ensure domination of the cultural field, is to support newer players in their
tradition, causing flows of capital to increase for both the established player and
the newer player. Another is to ignore or discredit other newer players, who might
be challengers to the illusio of the field, and therefore to the positions of the
established players.

Newer players can mount a challenge to the doxa of the field, challenging
both the field specific capital of established players and their positions within the
field. Or they can build on the field specific capital of established players,
producing new versions of it, supported by the established players. The different
actions of the players can cause flows of capital to go towards or away from
established players or newer players in these different ways. A further strategy
for newer players is to challenge the doxa of the field by joining together to create
a new cultural tradition in the field. Depending on the stability of the field and the
situation in the field, particularly in relation to the power of the state, all of these
moves can cause flows either towards the autonomous pole or the commercial or
heterodoxic pole in the field.

I argue that prior to 1996, feminist and pro-feminist cultural positions
dominate the field and represented the autonomous pole of cultural capital in
the field. In this period, cultural struggles in the field were between the various
theoretical positions within feminism and pro-feminism and between feminist
theorising and mainstream educational concerns for equity and measuring equity.
The shift in focus towards boys’ education after 1996 opened up different
possibilities and positions for established and newer feminist and pro-feminist
players. At the same time, newer men’s movement players who had been
instrumental in this shift entered the field, and the struggles for autonomy over
doxa intensified.
There were no explicitly identified men’s movement players operating in the field of girls’ education. In Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006, men’s movement ideas represented a challenge to feminist and pro-feminist doxa or orthodoxy in the field, despite the considerable overlap in discourses and ideas between feminist, pro-feminist and men’s movement conceptualisations of social reality. The horizontal and diagonal dotted lines represent possible trajectories and movements in the cultural struggles in the field, as discourses intersected and theoretical ideas were challenged and changed, and as players vied for recognition in the field. This heuristic represents possible positions and trajectories in a shifting field of possibilities. At any one moment, any particular player in the field could occupy a specific position in the field. In fact, several players could occupy the same position in the field. Epistemic players in fields come to represent particular positions in the field by their strategic and cultural actions and reputations in the field.
When newer players influenced by ideas from the men's movement entered the field, they were in the position of challengers to the doxa or orthodoxy of the field that had been established by feminist and pro-feminist incumbents in the field, who were established players in the field of gender through their work in girls' education. In attempting to establish their positions in the field, men's movement challengers largely joined with and formed strategic alliances and
actions with practitioners in the field. They also attempted to develop strategic actions with both newer and established feminist and pro-feminist players in the field. These attempts were generally rejected by established players. Incumbent players championed and built alliances with newer pro-feminist and feminist players who could build careers in the small group of institutions where there was a critical mass of researchers able to do ongoing research work in the field. These groups built on the cultural and economic capital of the incumbents built up during the focus on girls’ education.

This heuristic is a conceptualisation of the possibilities within the field and is underpinned by the previous analysis of subfields and proximal fields and illustrated by the events described below and expanded upon in the more detailed analysis in later chapters. In Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, I use the texts of epistemic players representing particular positions in this heuristic to further illustrate the cultural and strategic struggles in the field.

Events in the social field of boys’ education

I now turn to the events in the field in order to further build the empirical case for a model of the field of boys’ education. There is little doubt that the turn towards boys’ education was an important change in policy focus and in some ways was a disruption to long held doxa in the field of girls’ education (Kenway, 1995a, 1997a; Yates, 1997). In girls’ education, academic struggles between structural and post-structuralist feminism were subsumed in the policy and practice fields to ensure that feminist and pro-feminist social science had a somewhat tenuous but significant grip on orthodoxy or doxa in the field (Daws, 1997; Kenway, 1997a; Mills et al., 2007; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Indeed, arguably, feminist theoretical positions were, until the period this research examines, somewhat buoyed by the field of power in educational policy making and were also supported by powerful practice organisations such as the Australian Education Union (Daws, 1997).

I argued previously that, for many years, girls’ education was a relatively stable field, in which there was a degree of consensus among the players about what was at stake, with a recognisable shared interpretive frame of feminist and pro-feminist theories. This is not to say there was complete consensus in the field. While there had been very productive theory building about masculinity in relation to education in the social sciences and sociology of education (Alloway, 1995; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998b; Kamlert et al., 1994), for all intents and purposes,
a focus on girls’ education prior to 1996 was synonymous with gender in education. Equity for girls in schools and for women in family, work and society was what was at stake in the cultural struggles of the field of girls’ education and in the wider feminist movement. I contend that girls’ education was a relatively stable field even though struggles in the field were hard-fought and establishing girls’ education as a field was not without opposition and contestation from conservative and mainstream political and academic forces and discourses.

I argue throughout this thesis that boys’ education as a field did not establish the same degree of field stability or the same degree of consensus over what was at stake in the field. Subsequent chapters will add weight to this argument. However, there is substantial evidence that the period from 1996 to 2006, during the turn towards boys’ education, was a very active period in the policy, academic and practice sub-fields of boys’ education and in the political field influencing boys’ education.

Table 3 is a timeline of some significant events that shaped the social field of boys’ education. To emphasise what was at stake in this field – the struggle to impose a view of the social world – I have included highly cited and influential texts outside of the policy, academic and practice fields as well as texts by authors within the field aimed at a wider audience than players in the field itself. The timeline is slightly extended either side of the period of the study to contextualise events during the study period. Building on the realist ontology of Bourdieu (1992), Fligstein and McAdam (2012), Maton (2009), Fairclough (2006) and Albright (2008), I have defined actions in the field as including the social and the textual. The list in Table 3 is by no means exhaustive. Instead it is indicative, designed to illustrate that there was a large volume of activity in the field, and that this activity was diverse with activities enacted by many different players. I have selected specific events to illustrate this diversity.

The number and nature of these events show an active field and a field in flux. This activity was mainly instigated by the state or by challengers within the field. It represented a shock to the field and created an episode of contention in the field that created instability within the field. In contrast to the previous period, this was a time of heightened contestation over the doxa and illusio of the field. I also argue that activity in the journalistic field impacted upon the field of boys’ education. However, I discuss this activity in a later chapter as in my model of
boys’ education, journalism is characterised as a proximal field. I do not include it in this timeline as its impact was not as significant as the events outlined here.

Following the models of boys’ education represented by the heuristics in Figures 2 to 5, and drawing on these concepts of sub-fields and proximal fields, I have classified the events in the timeline as coming from either within or outside of the field. I have coded some of these events as: interventions or incursions by the state into the autonomous field of boys’ education; others as moves by players within the field, as activities by different players from the sub-fields of policy, academia or practice; and others as moves in proximal fields that impact on the autonomous field of boys’ education, particularly from the proximal fields of social science and politics. I have also used, as my starting point, the dichotomous distinctions between feminist and pro-feminist or men’s movement players, and established or newer players.

In addition to texts, I have included important conferences and academic programs that grew out of the field of boys’ education at the time. The overlapping nature of these categorisations, and the types of activities they engaged in, illustrate the complex and interwoven relationships that tie together the events, actions, ideas and players in the field.

All of these events were significant in shaping the field of boys’ education and the positions available to players in this field. They can be understood as actions within the field and the various sub-fields. This perspective highlights that players made cultural and strategic actions in relation to the field-specific framing of the particular subfields. The strategic or political purpose of the actions by the players as well as the cultural or ideological nature of the content of texts produced can be interpreted as making sense within the field-specific doxa or illusio of these sub-fields. The events can also be understood from the perspective of actions by vying fields proximate to each other, all intervening in boys’ education. This analysis of the events in the timeline illustrates the trajectories of the texts produced in the social space of boys’ education at the time. The production and consumption of these particular texts are understood as events in the field in this period of history (Albright, 2008).

Table 3: Timeline of Events in the Field 1994 – 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The popular book <em>Manhood</em> by Steve Biddulph was published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>The Labor Government was in power, Simon Crean Minister for Employment, Education and Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>The popular book aimed at practitioners and parents <em>Boys in Schools</em> by Fletcher and Browne was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools</em> Part A Policy Document prepared by Margaret Clarke and Carolyn Page was produced. Part B Papers from the 1995 conference were attached to be read in conjunction with the policy document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>ACER report <em>Gender and School Education</em> by Collins, Batten, Ainley and Getty was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>The popular book aimed at parents <em>Raising Boys</em> by Steve Biddulph was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century</em> - MCEETYA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Curriculum Corporation 6th Annual Conference addresses by Minister Kemp and Ken Boston</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The book <em>One of the Boys: Masculinity, Homophobia and Modern Manhood</em>, by David Plummer was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1st Family Action Centre Skillshare on boys’ strategies and resources was held in Newcastle (50 delegates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1st Family Action Centre Conference <em>Working with Boys, Building Fine Men</em> was held in Newcastle (250 delegates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>Boys in Schools Bulletin</em> launched by the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td><em>I can hardly wait till Monday - Women teachers working with boys</em>, by Deborah Hartman, was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>DETYA report - <em>Factors influencing the educational performance of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school</em> By Collins, Kenway, and McLeod was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys – 235 witnesses appeared in person; 231 written submissions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>AARE report <em>Are they all the same? A project to examine success among adolescent males in secondary and tertiary education</em> by Slade and Trent</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Establishment of the Specialisation in Boys’ Education in the Master of Educational Studies, University of Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The popular book aimed at parents and teachers <em>boy oh boy</em> by Dr Tim Hawkes was published.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>The popular book aimed at teachers <em>Boys’ Stuff</em> by Wayne Martino and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Family Action Centre Conference <em>Working with Boys, Building Fine Men</em> was held in Brisbane (360 delegates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>DEST Report: <em>Boys, literacy and schooling: expanding the repertoires of practice</em> by Alloway and Freebody was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>DEST Report - <em>Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys</em> by Lingard, Martino et al was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>ACER Report – <em>Boys in School and Society</em> by Cresswell, Rowe and Withers was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Launch of Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>DEST Report - <em>Meeting the challenge summary report: Guiding Principles for Success from the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools Programme Stage One – Interim Report on BELS</em> was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The book <em>So what’s a boy?</em> by Wayne Martino and Maria Pallota-Chiarolli was published</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Family Action Centre Conference <em>Working with Boys, Building Fine Men</em> was held in Newcastle (450 delegates)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Gay Sherridan International (GSI) was awarded the DEST contract for re-drafting the <em>Gender Equity in Australian Schools Policy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Special issue of <em>International Journal of Inclusive Education</em> is published with a focus on Rearticulating gender agendas in Schooling: an Australian perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Launch of Success for Boys (S4B) Program and Professional Development Materials by Alloway et al by Curriculum Corporation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Attempted Gender Equity policy change commissioned by DEST, rejected by MCEETYA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>DEST Report - <em>Motivation and Engagement of Boys: Evidence-based Teaching Practice</em> by Munns et al was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Family Action Centre Conference <em>Working with Boys, Building Fine Men</em> was held in Melbourne (900 delegates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Final Report on BELS – Cuttance, Imms et al was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td><em>Educating boys: the good news</em>, edited by Deborah Hartman was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Family Action Centre Conference <em>Working with Boys, Building Fine Men</em> was held in Newcastle (500 delegates)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>The book <em>Teaching Boys</em> by Amanda Keddie and Martin Mills was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Melbourne Declaration and 4 year plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*At the time of writing, there has been no final report on the S4B programme despite an expenditure of $19,400,000 on this programme (Weaver-Hightower, 2008), and no change to the national Gender Equity in Australian Schools Policy. The 1996 policy still stands in 2014, without any changes to national policy on gender in the past 18 years.*
The events in the timeline and the following chapters analysing these events illustrate: how the field of boys’ education has changed over time; which players have influenced the field; which ideas, ideologies and concepts have been transferred from one set of discourses to another and how the discourses within different genres have influenced each other; and, importantly, how particular discourses can influence the actions of people in the field (Bourdieu, 1993).

Through this analysis of the events in the timeline and the deeper analysis of the texts produced in the subfields and proximal fields in Chapters 5 to 8, the moves made by various players in the field can be mapped and the inter-relationships between events, positions, dispositions, texts and discourses can be seen.

The intersections and complexities illustrated by events in the timeline can be captured in the matrix in Figure 6 below, which shows the connections and overlaps between the within field events and events in proximate fields. These types of events are illustrated by the colour coded categories in the timeline. The matrix illustrates that players within the field of boys’ education operated within the field in ways that intersected with the proximal fields, often using the strategies and tactics of the proximal fields, such as academics or practitioners publishing books aimed at a popular audience. It also illustrates that players from the proximate fields intervened in the internal cultural and strategic struggles.
within the field in ways that either supported or challenged the positions of established or newer players in the field.

**Figure 6: Matrix of Events in the field of Boys’ Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Policy</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Field</strong></td>
<td>Inquiry into Boys’ Education (2000)</td>
<td>Policy Documents</td>
<td>Funding specific research.</td>
<td>Funding for the implementation of specific practice initiatives at individual school or cluster level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Science Field</strong></td>
<td>Peer reviewed journal articles theorising gender and gender in schooling, boys’ education policy and critiquing government stances.</td>
<td>Government-commissioned reports</td>
<td>Peer-reviewed journal articles analysing aspects of boys’ education. Research publications.</td>
<td>Practitioner journal articles describing evaluated programs or school-based action research and findings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Journalistic Field</strong></td>
<td>Newspaper or Television news stories, opinion pieces, letters or commentary on politics and boys’ education</td>
<td>Newspaper or Television news stories, opinion pieces, letters or commentary on boys’ education policy.</td>
<td>Books by academics aimed at wider practitioner or parent audience. Commentary and analysis by journalists or paid commentators about the field and players in boys’ education.</td>
<td>Books by practitioners aimed at wider practitioner or parent audience. Media commentary and analysis about topics relevant to the practice of and players in the practice of boys’ education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Actions by the political field

I have coded three types of events in shades of blue to highlight their close relationship. In events from the political field, I have included the broader political events of elections (in dark blue) to emphasise the impact of the political field on the field of boys’ education and on girls’ education. These political events illustrate changes in the field of political power, and therefore the state, that influenced the policy, academic and practice subfields. The beginning of the turn towards boys’ education in the field emanated from before 1996, during the time when the Labor Party held government, and Simon Crean was the responsible minister. Yet for almost the entire period of the study, from March 1996 onwards, the Liberal party was in power and controlled the federal government. The Liberal government was re-elected twice during the period and four education ministers, Amanda Vanstone, David Kemp, Brendon Nelson and Julie Bishop were involved. David Kemp oversaw the increasing moves towards national data gathering about schooling, a significant broader discourse that was a backdrop to some debates about boys’ education. Brendan Nelson was a significant player in the instigation of boys’ education programs, taking a personal interest in boys’ education and men’s and boys’ issues. He was particularly open to men’s movement characterisations of the issues due to events in his family and personal history, such as his brother committing suicide.

The action of instigating a parliamentary inquiry into the education of boys in 2000 is also characterised as an intervention of the political field into the field. The report on this Inquiry, which specifically recommended suggestions from certain players and explicitly rejected arguments of others is also characterised as a direct intervention by the political field into the field of boys’ education. The impacts of this Inquiry on the field is investigated in detail in Chapter 6.

Actions by policy and academic players

Policy events instigated by the state and enacted by the bureaucracy are coded in a shade of mid-blue to indicate their close relationship to the political field. Using a broad definition of policy (Blackmore, Wright, & Harwood, 2006a), these events include policy conferences and policy documents regarding the goals of schooling, including equity goals and gender equity in education. Events in the policy category also include programs funded by the state and reports of these programs, shaded in light blue. It is estimated that between 2000 and 2005, a
total of $29,662,300 was spent by the state on funding these various boys’ education activities (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). In Chapter 7, a detailed analysis of the policy sub-field, I show that despite its enormous influence and power over the field, activities of the state were by no means monolithic or consistent. The policy field is subject to the same kinds of cultural and strategic field struggles as any other field.

The aqua blue events represent research commissioned by government with the specific purpose of informing policy discourses or program implementation within the field of gender in education or boys’ in education. In coding these in blue, I highlight that, while these research projects were conducted by well-established players in the intellectual field of social science, either educational sociologists or educational psychologists, unlike other research or theoretical papers written by these players, the topics of these commissioned or funded projects were decided by or negotiated with the state and therefore were constrained by the interests of the state in both their content focus and on how the state decided to use the information in the final reports. In coding these academic contributions in this way, I am highlighting that, in these endeavours, they are in the layer of the Russian doll that is dependent upon policy, given their contribution to it, and upon the politics of education in funding commissioned research. Approximately $901,300 was spent on the research component of boys’ education by the federal government from 2000 to 2005, which is included in the total figure I mentioned previously (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). While an overarching purpose of social science is to impose the doxa from social science upon the fields of education policy and practice, undertaking commissioned research is a dangerous strategy in the game, as the political field has the same overarching purpose of imposing its visions of the social world. Yet as Bourdieu (1996) and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) reiterate, the field of politics has its own field specific doxa and illusio and also has enormous power over all other fields, particularly the field of education, over which the state has jurisdiction.

It is important to note that all of the authors of this commissioned research had established their positions in the field of girls’ education or in other equity issues. The authors of five of the six research projects in this category explicitly identified as feminist and pro-feminist academics and had previously written about gender in education in relation to girls’ education. The final research report in this period was authored by academics from a social psychology tradition with
a focus on class or socio-economic impacts on education (Munns et al., 2006). While it is beyond the scope of this study to undertake a detailed analysis of the social science field in relation to gender or gender in education, a somewhat more detailed discussion of different cultural positions of players within this field is included in each of the subsequent chapter, especially in Chapter 8 on the academic corpus. Chapter 3 also included some references to the literature produced by these and other players in this field in relation to girls’ education. In this research I have confined my analysis to the intersection of social science and policy in boys’ education through a detailed analysis of commissioned research and a brief discussion of the context below.

**Actions by actors in proximal fields**

In an extension of Bourdieusian theory about the importance of the state, Fligstein and McAdams (2012) have argued that shocks to fields most often come either from the state or from proximal fields. I argue that their analysis of the impact of the state can be shown to apply to the rise of the field of boys’ education in this decade, when the state was instrumental in opening up the field to debates already happening in proximal fields. Prior to 1996, there were tensions brewing in girls’ education where there were increasing challenges from both the journalistic field and from consultations with practitioners in the field about the enactment of girls’ education strategies. The question, ‘what about the boys?’ was increasingly being asked within the field and in the proximal field of journalism. Also outside of the field of education, men’s movement advocates were beginning to publish popular books. Queer theorists and advocates were also challenging long held doxas in masculinity theories that had held sway in educational theorising, particularly interrogating the nature of hegemonic masculinity. While there were many, two authors stand out as epistemic individuals from outside of the field. Steve Biddulph, an Australian family therapist, published two books in the tradition of the men’s movement characterisation of masculinity as damaging to the personal well-being of boys and men. His books *Manhood* (Biddulph, 1994) and *Raising Boys* (Biddulph, 1997) while directed at a wider, popular audience of parents and others, created much contention in the field of social science and boys’ education. He is widely cited in academic critiques of the men’s movement as being influential in a retrograde turn towards essentialist thinking about men and boys, in that he
describes issues in modern manhood, and in raising boys to be men, as applying to all men and boys (Mills, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). In seeming contrast to Biddulph, David Plummer (1999, 2001), writing from within a queer theory perspective, published his academic books suggesting that the ways boys learn about homophobia affects the development of adult male identities of all boys and men. His central thesis was that homophobia, while affecting gay and straight men in different ways, was also damaging and limiting for all boys and men. Neither of these writers are educationalists, both are writing from within social science traditions and both profoundly influenced the field of boys’ education by bringing new ideas and discourses about boys and their social development into the field. Both challenged the then-current orthodoxy or doxa about boys and masculinity in different ways. Both added fuel to a focus on boys’ education.

Within field actions by incumbents within feminist and explicitly pro-feminist traditions

In Table 3, I have used a dichotomous distinction between feminist and pro-feminist actors and men’s movement actors on the other hand. While this dichotomy can be shown to exist, there is a wide range of positions within each group and significant overlap between the two which cannot be easily seen in the discourses of each. This will be taken up in a later chapter. For the purposes of categorising activity in the timeline in Table 3, I have only included authors who have specifically identified as writing from within a feminist or pro-feminist tradition about boys’ education in this category. The timeline does not include all events within the intellectual academic field of gender theorising or of theorising about gender in education, such as all journal publications by established players, as this level of detailed analysis of the social science field is beyond the scope of this study. There was a great deal of activity in social science about boys’ education at this time analysing both structural and individual aspects of schools, teachers and boys’ masculine identities in relation to schooling (Clarke, 1989; Comber, 2004; Connell, 2000; Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998a). There was also great deal of activity in the social sciences discussing policy in relation to boys’ education (Willis, Kenway, Rennie, & Blackmore, 1992; Yates, 1997). The 2003 edition of the Journal on Inclusive Education, *Rearticulating gender agendas in Schooling: an Australian perspective*, is a particularly relevant example of a
feminist and pro-feminist publication about policy. This is included as an indication of the nature of the field in that feminist and pro-feminist academic players in the field were in established positions and able to use the strategy of a special edition of an academic journal to put their positions in the cultural struggles of the field. Books included in this category illustrate that popular books aimed at a wider audience of parents and teachers were published by both feminist and pro-feminist authors and men’s movement authors. This activity can be used as a strategy in the cultural struggles over the doxa in the field, as a way of building cultural capital in the field and as a strategy to build political capital in the field.

**Within field actions by challengers from men’s movement**

Following Bourdieusian descriptions of agreed upon practices within an academic field (Maton, 2009; Swartz, 1997; Weaver-Hightower, 2008), I have included books, journals, conferences, and higher education programs contributing to the development of the field in this category. There had been little men’s movement activity, as defined by Skelton (2001) in Australian gender and education until this period. The activities in this list only cover a broad focus on boys in schooling. Other works on boys’ reading preferences, or behaviour and other specific topics within boys’ education could also have been included (Griffith, 2002; Moloney, 2000) and did add to the richness of the field. It is clear that most of the activities in this category have a practitioner focus and books published are based on practice knowledge and aimed at a wider audience. In this sense they are situated at the commercial or heterodoxic pole of the field.

**Strategic and cultural struggles in the field**

In the field of boys’ education, built in a relational and parallel position to girls’ education, and mirroring many of the same emphases discussions and tactics, the struggle between established feminist and pro-feminist researchers and challengers with support from the men’s movement dominated public, journalistic and policy debates. Additionally there were cultural struggles within the two broad categories of feminist and pro-feminist and men’s movement activists and academics to strengthen support for their visions and divisions of the social world
within the field and to attain and further their strategic positions in the field. For example, queer theory cultural explanations of homophobia as relevant to the growth and development and identities of all boys were vying for ascendancy over the more structuralist arguments about dominant masculinities and gender relations within social science discourses. Within the practice discourses, the merits of single-sex schooling was a hotly contested cultural issue, with established elitist boys’ schools strongly arguing this case supported by the International Boys’ Schools Coalition. This organisation has run annual international conferences aimed at strengthening their sector and arguing for the merits of single-sex schooling for boys, every year since 1993.

While the media attracted much criticism for fuelling a ‘moral panic’ about boys, established players rarely entered into the journalistic field, leaving comment and intuitive field analysis to journalists and to newer players from both feminist and pro-feminist and men’s movement approaches who were eager to engage.

Established players in the field of girls’ education used the resources available to them and in the process were able to attract more resources in the form of government commissioned research into boys’ education. Occasionally these more radical well-established players would collaborate with more mainstream well established players in order to enhance their own cultural capital. Over the period in question, the nature of these reports moved from a purely sociological analysis to a more psychological analysis and from an emphasis on gender as the element of study to a focus on class or socio-economic status, reflecting the concerns of the government at the time. This apparent dichotomy between sociological/psychological explanations harks back to older unresolved cultural struggles in the field of education and social science more generally (Ladwig, 1996).

The political intervention, of the instigation of an inquiry into the education of boys in 2000, cemented boys’ education as the focus of gender research, policy and practice for the next decade. Despite some opposition from the academic field and a range of theoretical views expressed, the inquiry established a degree of systemic, academic, practitioner, parent and public support for a focus on boys’ education which came to be characterised as a turn towards boys’ education (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). The two government programs that followed this inquiry were managed by the Curriculum Corporation.
and the materials were produced by well-established feminist literacy academics with strong cultural capital in the field of girls’ education as well as a focus on practice.

Grants were directed to individual schools or clusters of schools. A plethora of newer players entered the practice field fuelled by consultancy monies available to schools through these two well-funded government programs, Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools, (BELS) and Success for Boys (S4B). The field of practice was invigorated by practice conferences, a journal and the commencement of a new professional education program at Graduate Certificate and Master level at the University of Newcastle.

During this turn towards boys’ education, when many of the established players began to vacate the field of gender policy and practice in schools and move towards a more general policy analysis (Blackmore et al., 2006a; Lingard et al., 2005), newer players in the feminist and pro-feminist tradition began to publish books and journal articles in their own right, often discussing the politics of the 1996 to 2006 period in ways that can be seen as an attempt to establish and re-establish pro-feminist positions as the only legitimate discourse about boys’ education (Keddie & Mills, 2007; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012). In a Bourdieusian analysis of the field, this could be seen as vying for the right to exercise the symbolic violence of this view on the field, thereby entrenching the seemingly intractable divisions between men’s movement and feminist positions in the cultural struggles in the field.

Tactical moves by players

The moves by players in both incumbent and challenger positions can be seen as positioning players and discourses in the social space of the field, either towards the heteronormous pole (more commercial and dominated from outside the field) or autonomous pole (more autonomous field-specific capital). Players in the field can be seen to occupy positions in the social space that are contingent on their cultural and economic capital within the field. Moreover, their dispositions or academic habitus (Bourdieu, 1988) are partly formed by the constraints of the field itself. In this field analysis, the strategic actions of the different players, including texts they produced, can be seen as both moves within the cultural struggles of the field to advance their cultural, ideological or theoretical position as either explicitly pro-feminist or as a boys’ education advocate and as strategic
moves to defend or increase their own cultural and economic capital and position in the field.

Players in the field acted strategically together and used the field-specific cultural, social and economic capital available to them. The degree to which certain strategies and tactics were used by different players depends to a large extent on the position of the players in the field as either established incumbents or newer challengers, and on their dispositions shaped by the nature of the field and the cultural struggles within the field. There is considerable overlap in these tactics and strategies, as the structure of the field largely determines the practices acceptable in the field (Bourdieu, 1988). Journals were used by both feminist and pro-feminist protagonists and by men’s movement activists, with differences being in the nature of journals, either as practitioner focused or peer reviewed academic journals. Books aimed at a wider audience were produced by feminist and pro-feminist academics, and by authors from the men’s movement. They were produced in the field of sociology of education, practice of education and in other proximal fields of social science, family therapy or masculinity studies. Conferences were used tactically by both feminist and pro-feminist protagonists and by men’s movement activists.

Well-established players made decisions about accepting or vying for government commissioned research grants within these field and proximal field relationships. However, these grants were about aspects of boys’ education of interest to the state. As such, they can be seen as an incursion into the autonomy of the field by the field of power. In accepting these grants, both the established and newer players can be seen as moving the whole field towards the heteronormous pole of the field. While this was a strategic move by these players to enhance and protect their field-specific capital, it did change the nature of the field.

Newer players from the men’s movement used tactics available to them, such as running conferences and producing popular publications which were towards the commercial or heteronormous pole of the field. These successful activities had the effect of helping these players amass field-specific capital, particularly among practitioner players in the field. To a certain extent these tactics were also deployed by newer feminist and pro-feminist players. Indeed there was some collaboration between newer players in these endeavours, such as in the authorship of chapters in *Boys in Schools*, published in 1995 (Martino,
Educating boys: What’s your problem?: Deborah Hartman

1995; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1995). However, explicitly feminist and pro-feminist newer players also had access to the field specific cultural and economic capital of the established players in the form of research grants provided by the government, based on the established reputations of the incumbent players in the field of girls’ education. Collaborating on these research reports gave newer feminist and pro-feminist players access to the field specific cultural capital at the more autonomous pole of the field.

Conclusion

The social analysis in this study examines how the habitus, dispositions and capitals available to players in the field were determined by the strength of the field, the autonomy of the field and its interactions with the field of power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). There were close relationships between the cultural struggles within the field and the political and economic struggles in the context of this thin, small and not very autonomous field. Relative positions in relation to the field of power became very important for any player in this field. Positions of heterodoxy, orthodoxy, and power significantly impact upon the relative positions of various players in the field of education. In subsequent chapters, I use these notions to further inform my analysis of the public, journalistic, policy and practitioner discourses of the field of boys’ education.

In a small field such as Australian education, both established and newer or incumbent players in the field must make strategic and cultural decisions with reference to state power. Even well established players in the intellectual field, are the dominated section of the field of power with the state usually in a much more dominant position. Dominant and subordinate positions are based on types and amounts of capital. They are determined by the unequal distribution of relevant capital rather than by the personal attributes of their occupants.

To summarise struggles within the field, this analysis points to some important and surprising aspects of positions the field and the effects of interventions by the state. In the field of Australian boys’ education between 1996 and 2006, the strategic moves by newer players from the men’s movement were almost always located towards the heterodoxic pole in the field. Without access to financial assistance afforded from research grants, they ran conferences and sold publications, placing them clearly at the commercial pole of the field. While there was considerable overlap, their views did not neatly align with the radical
theoretical views in the autonomous pole of the field and therefore were a challenge to the doxa in the field. Coming from a different theoretical tradition to established players in the field, they had no established players to champion or support their ideas, so used self-published books and journals in their attempts to carve out a space for men’s movement conceptualisations of boys’ education in the cultural sphere of the field. Coming from public health, welfare and therapeutic traditions, their publications and concerns aligned more with practitioners in the field than with sociology of education or gender theorists. They saw themselves as advocates for and aligned with boys and teachers who wanted to change the practice of education in schools. In this way their positions were doubly subordinated in the academic field, as challengers in the field and as coming from a focus on practice, which is always subordinated in any intellectual field.

Despite this subordinate position in the field, the field of politics intervened by instituting an inquiry into the education of boys. Then the government intervened by establishing two well-funded programs that supported practice in boys’ education in schools, if not the actual men’s movement players within the field. These were significant moves by the field of power to intervene in the field. The consequences of these actions were to move the field away from its autonomous pole of feminist, pro-feminist and radical theorising about gender and gender in education. Established players in the field resisted these moves in every layer of the field, in policy, academia and practice. They published conference papers and peer-reviewed journal articles and books critical of the turn towards boys’ education and the men’s movement analysis of boys’ education. They argued for particular positions and theories in the government-funded research reports and professional development packages associated with government-funded programs for schools. This contestation over what was at stake in gender in education, created by the sudden turn away from girls’ education towards boys’ education, created instability in the field that was not evident when the focus was on girls’ education.

While this chapter somewhat gives away the ending of my story by laying out the big picture of my model, I deepen this analysis in each of the following chapters and I return to this over-arching analysis of the field in the concluding chapter, discussing lessons that can be learnt from the state of the field in this period. The metaphor of sets of Russian dolls of sub-fields and proximal fields
underpins this model of the field of Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006. In the detailed analysis that follows in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, I continue to build the model. I undertake a forensic analysis of these social and textual spaces by examining a corpus of texts produced by players in these subfields and proximal fields. I systematically work through the layers of the field captured in the heuristic of the set of dolls in Figure 3 on page 89, from the outer, most powerful layer of politics as it relates to boys’ education, through the layers of policy and academic players to the inner, most subordinate layer of practice. Through this analysis, I also discuss intersections between the proximate fields of politics and social science as they relate to the field of boys’ education. In Chapter 9, I investigate an example of interventions into the field of boys’ education from the field of journalism. Finally, in Chapter 10, I return to the model of boys’ education introduced in Chapter 4 to draw conclusions about the state of the field and to discuss lessons that could be learnt from this period in Australian educational history in this field. I commence in Chapter 5 with an analysis of political interventions in boys’ education.
Chapter 5
The political corpus – Interventions by the field of politics

It is the complex interplay between the internal and the external that shapes the possibilities for field emergence, stability and transformation (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 32).

In the previous chapter, I outlined a model for Australian boys’ education from 1996 to 2006 discussing how the hierarchically nested sub-fields of politics, policy, research and practice of boys’ education and the proximate fields of politics, social science and journalism were structured spaces organised around particular forms and combinations of capital.

In this chapter, I commence the forensic investigations of these sub-fields or layers, with the outer, most powerful layer of politics. The chapter focuses on textual and other events represented in the dark blue in Table 3 on page 101 and 102, reproduced below as Table 4. I investigate a corpus of texts produced in relation to a particular event in the social field of boys’ education, the public Inquiry into boys’ education in 2000, where the government opened up the field of boys’ education to public discourse, testing the weight of public opinion about boys’ education. Following Wallace (1992) and Albright (2006), I highlight the trajectories of texts through the social space of the field of boys’ education through a Critical Language Analysis (CLA) of a small section of texts by two epistemic individuals in the field. Ken Rowe represents a position of a well-established mainstream researcher in education at the Australian Council for
Educating boys: What’s your problem?: Deborah Hartman

Educational Research. He had a particular focus on literacy and behaviour. He writes with his wife Kathy, a well-known medical specialist in children’s health, who also specialised in children’s behaviour. Richard Fletcher on the other was a newer player in the field of education, also with a focus on health, advocating for boys’ education from a men’s movement perspective with a particular focus on relationships and well-being.

I analyse the impact of these events and texts, which were set in train by interventions by the political field into the field of boys’ education. I discuss the possible strategic and cultural moves behind these specific interventions by the political field at this time. I conclude by highlighting subsequent actions taken by government in clearly privileging some voices and positions in the field over others.

Table 4 outlines the events within the political layer of the field relevant to the ways the field structures of the political field and the field of education, the positions and dispositions of the players and the cultural struggles within these fields intersected in this particular historical context to create shock waves that reverberated through each layer of the field.

Table 4: Political events in the social field

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>The Labor Government was in power. Simon Crean was Minister for Employment, Education and Training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>March Federal elections – the Liberal/Coalition Government came to power. Amanda Vanstone was Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Inquiry Report - Boys: Getting it Right. The Report on the Inquiry into the Education of Boys was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Government response to Boys: Getting it Right was published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>November elections- Labor Government came to power – Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister and Julia Gillard became the Minister for Education and the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The important strategic interventions by the political field in the period 1996 to 2006 were: to instigate and conduct public hearings for an Inquiry into the education of boys; commission a report on that Inquiry; and then respond to that report with major funding and policy initiatives. These events occurred during the 39th and 40th parliaments of Australia. The Liberal/Coalition Party (a coalition of the major conservative parties in Australian politics), was twice elected to government during the events and retained power for the five years after the Inquiry reported. This long period in power gave this conservative government an unprecedented opportunity to influence the field through the strategic political actions described below and the major policy interventions described in the next chapter. In particular, Brendan Nelson as a member of the Committee of Inquiry and then as Minister for Education, Science and Training was an important political player instigating many of the initiatives in boys’ education during this turbulent time.

I examine these events from two perspectives. These events were instigated by the Parliament of Australia, the overall political arm of state. The actions of a parliamentary committee charged with some jurisdiction over education can be seen as interventions by the political layer of the field. As illustrated in Figure 6, on p. 104, these actions can also be seen as interventions by the proximal field of politics, vying with the field of social science and journalism to impose its view of boys’ education on public discourse and on the field. In this analysis, I distinguish between politics – in this case the parliament, on one hand, and the bureaucracy, the federal department overseeing the operations of education, on the other, which I have included in the policy layer of the heuristic. I find this distinction useful in order to highlight the complexity and interwoven nature of the field and its close relations with other fields. These two interwoven aspects illustrate the enormous sway the overarching field of power has over any cultural field, and in particular the field of education, over which the government has clear mandatory jurisdiction enacting laws and processes ensuring universal access to education (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Yet, in many ways this distinction is arbitrary and both of these can be considered as actions of the state or as actions of the field of power (Bourdieu, 1996; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).
The instigation of a public inquiry, however, has particular significance when considered as an intervention of the field of politics into the autonomous field of education and into the cultural struggles positioning boys' and girls' education within gender equity and equity in education discourses. This action opened the autonomous field to public discourses about boys and sent shock waves through the layers of the field, disrupting the stability of the hierarchical field, where policy and academic discourses usually prevail over those of practice, as well as challenging some well-established feminist and pro-feminist doxas in the autonomous field established during the previous era where the focus had been on girls' education.

In this chapter about political interventions, I examine the interests of the political field in disrupting the field in this way, in terms of field structures and homologies between fields. I illustrate fractures, strategic alliances and interconnections which occurred in the field during this time of rapid change. I investigate what the public submissions and report on them said and left unsaid that was compelling enough to allow the committee from all sides of the political spectrum to unanimously endorse the report and the recommendations contained in it and the government to make such a dramatic and quick response. First, I examine the three actions of the political field, opening the inquiry, receiving the report on it and responding to the report.

**Political Interventions**

The Inquiry into the Education of Boys was conducted by The Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The terms of reference for the inquiry were to:

- inquire into and report on the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling; and

- the strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. xi)
These terms can be read as both broad and differentiated, focusing not just on learning or on gender construction, or on specific groups, but on social, cultural and educational aspects for all boys. The focus on early and middle years, where there were already system reforms underway towards developing middle schools to address inequities and early disengagement, particularly in low socio-economic areas and indigenous communities, connected this inquiry to other government programs. It also shifted attention away from a narrow focus on high schools, final exam results favoring girls, or teenage boys who were often cast negatively as badly behaved or disengaged in public, academic and media discourses.

The focus on literacy and socialisation together is also significant as it seems informed by both gender and child development perspectives as well as the established disparities in literacy achievement that indicated an over-representation of boys in lower and middle achievement bands. The inclusion of literacy as a major focus in the terms of reference is not surprising in this era where governments around the world shifted towards outcomes and accountability in education, as early literacy is strongly linked to later educational outcomes. It could also be read as part of the move ‘back to basics’ being firmly a core function of education. This focus on educational outcomes is consistent with the turn towards performance in international and national government and educational policy concerns (Skelton, 2001).

The second paragraph clearly privileges practice and shapes the inquiry around current successful strategies for boys in schools, rather than around current gender theories or policies. In this way the terms of the inquiry shape the public debate, and indicate positions and directions the government is likely to support in its intervention into the field.

The committee of inquiry involved members from all major political parties. Throughout its two terms, the 23 committee members seemed to have a genuine interest in the topic. The committee included politicians from all major political parties. Prominent Labor Party members such as Anthony Albanese, a well-know left wing parliamentarian representing the very culturally diverse and high youth unemployment areas of inner west of Sydney, who had a young son at the time and Julia Gillard who became Education Minister in the Labor government after the Liberals lost the November 2007 election, and then went on to become the first female prime minister were members. Bob Katter, a rather eccentric and
unpredictable National Party representative representing a rural electorate with a very high youth unemployment and suicide rate was also a member. Brendan Nelson, a prominent member of the Liberal Party was a member of the committee for some time before leaving to become the Minister for Education in 2001. He then instigated and oversaw much of the implementation of the subsequent well-funded programs Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) and Success for Boys (S4B). His personal interest in boys’ education was built upon his own educational experiences as a boy from a working class family, ending up undertaking a medical degree and becoming a doctor, before entering politics. The suicide of his own brother also shaped his positions on the ways health, well-being and education were inter-related for boys.

The Committee of Inquiry held its first hearings in October 2000 and its final hearings in June 2002. There was a large and broad public response to the Inquiry. In addition to the 231 written submissions, 235 witnesses appeared in person at the Committee hearings held in all states and territories of Australia. The Inquiry afforded all authors who were motivated to submit an opportunity to put propositions to the government about the direction of the field. Participants were from a variety of fields, and identified in different ways. The largest number of submissions came from the 109 individuals coming from a number of occupations or positions and particularly identifying as parents or teachers. The next largest group were 62 from a representative body, either professional, parent, union, or other body from education or a related field such as welfare or recreation. Others included: 19 affiliated with academic faculties or universities; 15 from a government body or department; 10 from an independent or private school; 9 from a state or government school. Authors of only 7 submissions requested their names and affiliations be withheld. I discuss the content of the submissions in some detail later in this chapter.

The Inquiry was reconvened and renamed after the 2001 federal elections to reflect the renaming of ministerial portfolios and departments after these elections. In October 2002, the renamed committee tabled its findings in a report entitled **Boys: Getting it right** (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002). The authorship of the report was attributed to the whole committee, the members of which were thanked for their painstaking efforts in compiling it in the foreword by the committee chair Kerry Bartlett. All committee members signed off on the final report and its 24 recommendations.
The final report summarised the nature and extent of what the committee identified as widespread public concern about the education of boys. The report contained several sections and the authors made recommendations in each of the sections: Addressing the need for policy change; Curriculum and pedagogy issues; Assessment; Improvement of Literacy and Numeracy; Schools, teachers and role models; Reporting and policy frameworks and Funding and Cost-shifting issues. (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2002).

A month later, on November 27, 2002, the government rapidly responded to the report by launching two further reports of research, into boys’ literacy and improving boys’ outcomes, that had also been undertaken during the period of the Inquiry (Alloway et al., 2002; Lingard, Martino, Mills, & Bahr, 2002). At the same time they announced a new program of funding for school-based initiatives in boys’ education, Stage 1 of the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) program. Through its research interests and the terms of the Inquiry the direction of the government’s focus on boys was to shift the field away from theoretically driven approaches prominent in girls’ education towards a focus on ‘what works’.

By early 2003 the government had released a comprehensive response to the 24 recommendations in the report (Minister for Education Science and Training, 2003). The government accepted 19 of the 24 recommendations and the intention of several others.

It is very clear from these events that the political field, including parliamentarians from all parties involved in the Inquiry, intervened to turn the field of education towards a focus on boys’ education and towards a practice focus on successful outcomes. The Liberal/Coalition government was instrumental in shaping these shifts in the field and was enabled in this aim by previous policy shifts instigated by the Labor government and by the members of the committee from all political parties.

In understanding the interconnections between the interests of the political field, the positions and dispositions of players and the influences on public discourse on boys’ education, I now turn to a Critical Language Analysis illustrating how knowing players in the field used the Inquiry to put propositions to the government, calling on the government to support positions in ways that attempted to disrupt the autonomy and doxas in the field.
Epistemic Individuals in the field

The following extracts from two submissions to the Inquiry from epistemic individuals illustrate the ways knowing players use texts strategically to operate within the spaces open to them in the field, particularly when read in relation to the thematic analysis of the public submissions, the subsequent actions by the government and to textual examples from other cultural positions in the field discussed in Chapter 6 on the policy corpus. The government clearly privileged the arguments of the cultural positions of these individuals. Ken and Kathy Rowe had already presented one submission to the Inquiry before making this specifically invited further submission to the Inquiry before it closed and reported in 2002. Ken Rowe was a principal researcher in the government funded Australian council for Education Research. This body was the main research body funded and relied upon by the government to undertake large scale population level research with a particular focus on factors important to the workings and outcomes of systems. The proposition made by Richard Fletcher that the policy document on Gender in Australian Schools needed re-writing was taken up and a team that included Richard Fletcher to do this work in 2003.

In the Critical Language Analysis of these texts, I analyse the ways language features create meaning in these texts, enabling authors to make their propositional claims in powerful ways through skilful use of textual features and conventions of the genres they are using. I also analyse how textual features enable authors to simultaneously make their cultural and strategic moves the field through the production of and positioning of the ideal reader or ways of consuming of meanings of the texts.

In each of the charts of small sections of text, I colour code the features in the following ways:

- Features signifying Agency
- Features signifying Action
- Features signifying Co-location
- Features signifying Modality
Illustrative Example 1: CLA Rowe & Rowe (2002)

This text is the abstract of an invited paper by Ken and Kathy Rowe (Rowe & Rowe, 2002) submitted in 2002 to the parliamentary inquiry into the education of boys. The inquiry delivered its final report not long after this submission. The Inquiry was an opportunity for players in the academic field and others to directly seek to influence the political field and call on the field of power to support particular positions in the cultural struggles within the field.

Bourdieu (2005) argues that the political, journalistic and social science field have one aim in common. They are all attempting to lay claim to the right to impose a dominant principle of vision and division. In other words, to impose their way of seeing and categorising the social world. Each field aims to have their categories of construction of the social world recognised as legitimate. This text is an excellent example of this struggle in action in the field of boys’ education.

The text adheres in some ways to the conventions of the report genre and radically diverges from these conventions in others. The abstract of the paper is 16 lines long. It has six quite dense sentences with many embedded clauses. This kind of writing is common in academic papers. In a blend of a hortatory style often used in polemic argument and a persuasive style more usual in academic reports, it uses textual features, such as bolding, inverted commas, explanation marks and italics for emphasis. In making these choices the authors are constructing the text to serve several purposes at once in the strategic and cultural contests in the field of boys’ education.

Authors and Title

The title, What matters most: Evidence-based findings of key factors affecting the educational experiences and outcomes for girls and boys throughout their primary and secondary schooling, is very long. However it explicitly points the readers to several major themes in the debates about boys’ education that the committee was trying to understand. It mentions evidence, experiences, outcomes, boys, girls, primary and secondary. Anyone familiar with these debates would recognise that each one of these words carry significant contested meanings. Together they encapsulate the essence of the cultural struggles about theorising the causal or other relational aspects of issues in boys’ education at the time. From the title onwards, the authors make clear that this paper is a weighty and important text, dealing with many important issues.
In naming themselves as authors, the authors include their academic qualifications and their position titles as Research Director, Australian Council for Educational Research for Ken and Consultant Physician, Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne for Kathy. All of the committee members reading this report would be familiar with the authors, their status in the field, and the status of the organisations they work for. Including this in the information on the title page could be read as a normal convention of this genre. Interestingly, in the footnotes to the title and author names, it is made clear that the views expressed in the paper are the authors and are not necessarily held by their employer organisations, so in this sense it could be argued that their employment positions were therefore not relevant. The decision to include them could be read as a strategic move to reinforce their status and therefore the weight of their views. It is also made clear in the footnotes that this paper follows up an earlier paper submitted to the Inquiry and a subsequent invited address to that committee, thereby establishing and reinforcing the importance of the authors and their views to the committee and to the field.

I use this examination of the textual features in the abstract to demonstrate how this text was used by the authors at this very important time in the field, just before the final report of the Inquiry was completed.

Table 5: Text features chart Rowe and Rowe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Text Features Highlighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract: Unfortunately, much of the prevailing public interest and media ‘hype’ surrounding gender issues in education – especially differences in boys’ and girls’ experiences and outcomes of schooling – amount to little more than anecdotal rhetoric and opinion. Moreover, the post-modernist claptrap espoused by academics promoting the de-construction of gender-specific pedagogy is equally unhelpful. Above all a good deal of this ‘discourse’ is not supported by findings from evidence-based research. In this expanded.</td>
<td>Mode, first order, signalling importance and disagreement. Colocation – experience, outcomes linked by and Co-locations – adjective,noun Negative Colocations - adjective,noun, Inverted commas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
supplementary submission to the *Inquiry into the Education of Boys*, key findings are presented, highlighting ‘real’ effects from recent and emerging evidence-based research on teacher and school effectiveness. For example, whereas on average, boys’ literacy skills, general academic achievements, attitudes, behaviours and experiences of schooling are notably poorer than those of girls – despite their socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds – these differential gender effects pale into relative insignificance compared with class/teacher effects. That is, the quality of teaching and learning provision with major emphases on literacy and related verbal processing and written communication skills are by far the most salient influences on students’ cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes of schooling – regardless of either student or teacher gender. Indeed, findings from the related local and international evidence-based research indicate that ‘what matters most’ is quality teaching, supported by strategic teacher professional development!

**Strategic or political work in texts**

The mode and tenor of texts often do the strategic or political work for the author in constructing an argument and positioning the ideal reader. The first paragraph of this text has the purpose of calling on the political field, which the authors are attempting to influence through this text, to support their analysis that the journalistic field and members of the public who have expressed concerns during
the inquiry have mis-recognised what is going on in the social world. The way the text is organised demonstrates the importance the authors want the audience to place on the information they are providing. The information selected to appear first in the order of the words and sentences can reveal the ways the authors are leading the audience to perceive the ideas presented in the text (Fairclough, 2003).

The first word of this text is *unfortunately* indicating that there is a problem to follow. The first and second sentences outline the problem, according to the authors. Nominalised noun phrases *prevailing public interest*, *media ‘hype’* and *post-modernist claptrap* are the head that come before the verbs in these sentences. This denotes that these phrases contain the most important themes. The final clause in the first sentence leads us to the authors’ suggested reason for the problem with public interest and media hype. These *amount to little more than anecdotal rhetoric and opinion*.

The authors suggest that the journalistic field and the public submissions are only indulging in hype, opinion and anecdotal rhetoric – not analysis. In the doxa of the academic field, the job of social scientists is to reveal what is hidden from others (Ladwig, 1996). Rowe and Rowe are setting up oppositional categories of analysis/opinion and calling on the political field to recognise the superiority of analysis over opinion.

In the second sentence, they also call on the political field to support their position in the internal struggles within the academic field of boys’ education. They are making the claim that their analysis is superior to that of other social scientists in the field. They label the work of other academics as *post-modernist claptrap* in this very public document, and link it to the *opinion* and *anecdotal rhetoric* of the journalistic field. This disparaging and colloquial language and sarcastic use of terms used in other theoretical and methodological research traditions such as *discourse* and *de-construction* is not the way Australian academics usually conduct academic argument in text.

Other text features, such as the use of bold, italics and exclamation marks for emphasis, are text features more likely to be found in a rhetorical argument or political polemic. These authors are writing more in the genre of a political speech, a hortatory call to arms. In effect they are speaking the language of the political field to their audience in the political committee. This could be considered
acceptable in a submission to a political inquiry. They are putting forward a point of view, an opinion and calling on the committee to act.

Yet they are writing as academics and arguing for a specific position in the cultural struggles in the academic field. While they are well-known academics and have much cultural capital in the field, the tone of this submission is more like that of a new-comer in the field. It is similar yet much more strident than the tenor of Fletcher’s (2000) submission to the inquiry, and in fact, later in their submission, they do support Fletcher’s arguments in an offhand way when discussing barriers to reform.

This text is an interesting mix of genres. It uses nominalisation extensively, as is common in academic writing, to have the effect of making the text appear objective, by removing personal pronouns or agents. In this text, there are no personal pronouns and the authors are never referred to directly. The only people referred to directly are other academics whose work is described as equally unhelpful as the anecdotal rhetoric and opinion of media ‘hype’. The juxtaposition of the work of these academics and the theoretical tradition of the authors is continued by the use of collocations of adjectives and nouns throughout the following sentences. The use of the adjective/noun collocations ‘real’ effects and recent and emerging evidence based research.

Cultural or Ideological Work
The cultural or ideological work can be seen in the propositions the authors are prepared to commit to. Rowe and Rowe are clearly and explicitly pitting feminist and critical academics, particularly those they label as post-modernist theoretical positions, against evidence-based research. They are suggesting that there is strong empirical evidence of boys’ experiences and outcomes of schooling being worse than that of girls, across all social groupings, thereby arguing against the ‘which boys’ which girls?’ position. Their main point, however, is that even though there are gender differentials in all social groupings, these are not as important to the experiences and outcomes of schooling as teacher quality. They are also suggesting good quality teaching and professional development would improve outcomes. This argument is interesting, in that it simultaneously dismisses the views of some academics about ways to understand the experiences of boys, yet at the same time supports the conclusions of these academics, in that quality teaching is also often advocated as a suitable response to addressing the
academic difficulties of certain groups identified by those advocating for a ‘which boys, which girls’ approach (Lingard et al., 2002).

Co-locations and cohesive relations are used extensively in this text. Rowe & Rowe (2002) use lists to argue against the positions of the academics they have labelled as producing post-modernist claptrap. They link cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes together as equal domains that are all influenced most by the quality of the teaching students receive from teachers. Readers who are familiar with the internal struggles in the field and the other writings of these and other authors can use intertextuality to fill in the gaps and understand the import of these lists. By listing all of these factors together, and suggesting a causal relationship between these factors and the quality of teaching boys and girls receive, the authors are directly contradicting other theories. They contrast the unquestioned and unquestionable “findings from evidence-based research” with theorising about social constructs. They evoke a positivist critique of social theory suggesting that these theorists have developed untested causal relationships between the disruptive behaviour of boys and the social construction of their masculinity. Another argument they dispute is that cognitive outcomes are due to in the primary years to inattentive and disruptive behaviour and in the secondary years to poor subject choice related to some boys’ over-inflated sense of their mathematical abilities.

While the authors of the works they refer to are not named in the abstract, in the body of the submission Rowe and Rowe use an unconventional referencing style to clearly name those that they see as the culprits of this “post-modernist claptrap”. Contrasting empirical evidence to what they describe as ‘mainstream, ideologically-driven opinion’ they name the listed referenced authors: ‘(e.g., Blackmore, 2000; Collins et al. 2000; Lingard et al., 1998; Slee et al., 1998; Teese & Polesel, 2003)’ (Rowe & Rowe, 2002, p. 15). Continuing the discussion of the suggested dichotomy between empirically tested teaching approaches versus uninformed or untested opinion (Rowe & Rowe, 2002, p. 16), the authors suggest that popular literature is “replete with untested intervention techniques for dealing with the claimed educational interests and needs of boys (eg., Alloway & Gilbert, 1997a,b; Frater, 1997).” This description of this research as popular literature is an attempt to turn the arguments made by critical theorists against practitioner experimenting that is not theoretically based back onto the
work of these critical theorists. In this argument, the cultural struggles in the education field over approaches to literacy are what is at stake.

One purpose of text is to further enhance the cultural and economic capital of the authors in the field, by foregrounding the importance of the findings of their own research and discrediting those of others researchers. A possible effect of this text is to enhance the authors’ own opportunities for further government funded research grants and restrict those of their opponents. They are evoking other dichotomies of qualitative versus quantitative methods, text versus numbers, psychology versus sociology, whole language verus phonics.

The authors seem to have a wider purpose related to the contests across fields. In attempting to establish the empirically based cognitive and behavioural sciences research field as superior to both the journalistic field and to other researchers in the academic field, the authors equate social theory based sociological research with the journalistic field. Rowe and Rowe are attempting to develop a hierarchy or categorisation scheme in the minds of the readers in the political field, that has empirical, evidence-based research at the top and theoretically based research at the bottom on an equally low status as media ‘hype’ and popular opinion. They are inviting the political field to join with and throw their power in with the hard cognitive sciences. It is no wonder that positions in the academic field hardened considerably after 2002 as battle lines were so clearly drawn. It is also little wonder that practitioners attempting to join with and make sense of the academic field were left bewildered by seemingly intractable positions, particularly as Ken Rowe was seen as a supporter of practitioner attention to boys’ education and had spoken at practitioner conferences vigorously advocating for further attention to improving boys’ literacy outcomes (Rowe, 2000).


Richard Fletcher’s Submission to the Parliament of Australia House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations was written on behalf of the Men and Boys Program of the Family Action Centre University of Newcastle in 2000. In this section, I analyse the Executive Summary of this submission, which is three paragraphs long. I chose Fletcher as an epistemic individual in the field as, while based in a university, Fletcher was a clear advocate for attention to boys’ education and closely aligned
with men's movement popular writer Steve Biddulph. In the cultural struggles in the field over ideas and propositions, he represents a position within men's movement and men's health and well-being framings. As a player in the field of boys' education, he also represents a new entry into the established field of boys' education. The academic field of gender in education at the time was dominated by educational sociologists with longstanding academic histories in feminist and pro-feminist theoretical framings of gender in education associated with government policies and programs and school practices with a focus on girls. Fletcher, by contrast, came from a tradition of public health and epidemiology. His entry into the academic field of education was in 1994 when he was second author of a paper on social health statistics of adolescent boys that included some educational outcomes (Vimpani et al., 1995).

From then on, rather than take the usual beginning academic route of connecting to an established academic research team, completing a PhD and publishing research through academic journals (a pathway he took much later), he took a practitioner advocacy route, building a team who together published edited practitioner books, held and disseminated the findings of conferences and conducted many professional development seminars while gathering school based anecdotal and statistical evidence about boys' education in a wide range of contexts (Fletcher, 1997, 2005c; Fletcher et al., 1999). His alliance with Ken and Kathy Rowe stemmed from an interest in evidence-based practice approaches to boys' health and education and advocacy for attention to the needs of boys from a public health perspective.

In the short space of time, from 1995 until the findings of the Inquiry were published in 2002, Fletcher and the Family Action Centre became well known advocates for boys' education, and as new players in the field, actively sought to influence practitioners and policy makers and join with established academic players. When Fletcher went on to establish research and advocacy programs focused on fathers, the boys' education team continued the previous activities as well as developing academic teaching programs specialising in educating boys and participating in school based research projects, including many funded under the government established BELS and S4B programs. (To make my affiliations clear, I point out that I was a member of this team, entering the field as an advocate for boys' education from a practitioner standpoint.)
His clear advocacy focus is evident in Fletcher's choices of textual features in the field, tenor and mode of the text of the Executive Summary. The genre of submissions to an inquiry is often an exposition, one of presenting a case. In keeping with the conventions of this genre, the overall tenor of these three paragraphs is hortatory. In the first paragraph, Fletcher makes several propositions about what he thinks is going on in boys’ education. In the second he positions readers to see particular stances as the problem, and in the third he offers solutions that could be enacted by named and un-named agents. As an author he has an authoritative voice and is clearly positioning himself with the agents he names. He is calling for and supporting specific actions by named actors and calling on those in power to support these agents through policy.

Many of the sentences in these paragraphs have a simple subject verb object construction. The longer sentences are not dense with embedded clauses. Often they are a two or three clause structure joined by verbs or conjunctions linking phrases or clauses. This has the effect of appearing straightforward, making meanings clear and being explicit about actions he considers should happen, and problems he perceives. It invites readers to join with him in his propositions and positions them, particularly if they are one of the named agents – parents, teachers, men and women from the community – as part of the solutions.

The tenor of the second paragraph, where he lays out his propositions about the problems in boys’ education, is quite different from the first and third. In this paragraph the sentences are longer and the clauses more embedded. No actors are named as agents. Here, readers are invited to see nominalised policies and assumptions made by unknown actors as the problem. Readers are invited to fill in the gaps through their intertextual knowledge of the field, particularly the positions of established players in the field.

Bourdieu argues that the conventions of academic writing disguise the struggles within field, so that they are often only recognisable to those whose work is being criticised (Bourdieu, 1988). Unlike Ken and Kathy Rowe, Fletcher stops short of naming particular individuals, in naming current policies and supporting research. However, readers familiar with the field would understand through intertextuality that he is criticising the work of some well established players in the field, such as Jane Kenway and Bob Lingard and Nola Alloway, who were the first named authors of the then current government funded
research reports in the field. This is a common tactic of new players in an academic field. Bourdieu calls this kind of textual tactic a feel for the game. He argues that all players accept the conventions of the field, or to extend the metaphor, the rules of the game. The constraints and structures within academic fields, particularly small fields dominated by the field of power shape the tactics available to the players (Bourdieu, 1988, 1998a; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In a contested field, the tactics open to newer players are those of polite opposition to the established order, making it almost certain that newer players need to show that their analyses holds something new and different to those of established players rather than discuss the similarities and agreements across different positions. This strategic positioning of opposition is particularly clear in the linguistic features of paragraph two of Fletcher’s executive summary.

Below is a reproduction of the paragraphs followed by a detailed description of the ways the linguistic features in the text operate to do the strategic and cultural work that enables the text to interact with the social field.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language Features highlighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents and teachers from all areas of Australia have expressed concern at boys’ lack of success at school. This concern has led to school-based boys’ education initiatives in the classroom, the delivery of the curriculum, and in school management.</td>
<td>Colocation adjectives and noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The policies in the area of gender and education have not kept pace with these developments. While there has been a genuine attempt to broaden the gender frameworks from one focused exclusively on girls to one addressing the needs of both girls and boys, the current policies and supporting research have serious limitations. A number of assumptions developed during two decades of activity in</td>
<td>Agency personalised – thematically linked to actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Colocation: list |
| Proposition/Assertion. Inter-textuality |
| Connector, first clause “While there has been a genuine attempt... the current policies and supporting research have serious limitations) – Intertextuality - Kenway |
| Proposition/Assertion |
girls’ education have been uncritically carried forward into the renamed gender strategies. The assumptions that material rewards are a sufficient basis for evaluating and guiding education policy, and that boys’ needs can be deduced from girls needs or from sociological theories of masculinity have been particularly damaging.

An appropriate gender policy framework for improving boys’ education would recognise boys and girls as distinct groups without overlooking within-group differences. It would take the development of fine men as the central task and identify positive strategies for schools to identify and meet boys’ needs. Parents and men and women from the community need to be recognised as important resources and invited to contribute to the schools’ efforts with boys.

**Strategic or political Work**

The strategic or political work done by this text is in relation to the field at the time. The 2000 Inquiry opened up a strategic opportunity for both new and established players in the field, but particularly for newer players who had not had many other opportunities to address the government, through funded research or well established research cited often in government documents or academic publications in the field. The Inquiry invited views from a wide range of players to be considered and acted upon by government, or the field of power. In that
sense, every submission to the Inquiry has the political field, the government or the field of power as its main audience, actively trying to influence the government towards its own position and therefore calling on the field of power for support for the authors’ particular positions in the cultural or ideological struggles in the field at the time.

The tenor and tone of this submission is one of a new player, challenging more established players. The paragraphs are a call to arms or to action. The imperative mood and active voice, positioning parents, teachers, men and women from the community as agents are the textual tools that Fletcher uses to do this. He invites readers to take up this call, positioning it as something new and different, suggesting that policies have not kept pace with what is happening on the ground or at the chalkface. He positions sociological theories as particularly damaging to this work.

Fletcher’s use of the imperative mood and his clear opposition to particular theories are strategic moves within the text to position himself as a player in the field willing to challenge established players and their views. He is inviting readers to also challenge the authority of accepted theories and epistemic individuals in the field. He mounts an explicit challenge to current policies and supporting research in the second paragraph. In further detail he names The assumptions that material rewards are a sufficient basis for evaluating and guiding education policy. Those familiar with the field, particularly those in the government that commissioned the research, would have been well aware that the then recently published report by Collins et al (Collins et al., 2000a) argued strongly that girls, as a gender group, were disadvantaged in the post-school labour market, despite gains made in academic achievement and retention at school. They also argued that particular groups of girls, who left school early, were severely disadvantaged, more so than boys who left early. Sociological theories of masculinity are the other target of Fletcher’s challenge as a newcomer in the field, coming from a health focus. The social construction of gender for both boys and girls, and for boys in particular, Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, has long been the major theoretical tool of educational theorists and practitioners concerned with gender. One of the contentious issues within the field has been the difficulties of translating these theories into practical programs or strategies in the classroom.
Fletcher is appealing to the theory/practice divide, positioning practitioners as knowing and his stance as relevant and useful to them. He is also using the old/new dichotomy familiar in radical academic traditions to position himself and his stance as newer, more up to date and relevant. While the tenor is challenging to some positions and invites questioning of those, his hortatory tenor does not allow for much questioning of the propositions he proposes. As a reader, you have a choice to be with him or against him. Yet he leaves open the question of how these stances and approaches he is advocating may apply in different contexts. This has the effect of leaving readers who accept his propositions some room for interpretation and for applying their own knowledge to evaluate his propositions. In emphasising school-based solutions, he could be implying diversity and differences between boys in different contexts. However, he does not explicitly acknowledge any differences between boys until later in his text, preferring to foreground a universal distinction between boys and girls.

**Cultural or ideological work**

Fletcher presents a series of clear proposition he is willing to commit to and positions readers to agree and to see the need for action and perhaps even take action themselves. From the very first phrase, he places parents, teachers and schools as those who have clear agency and knowledgeable authority in the boys’ education debate. He credits these groups as a whole with raising issues and developing innovative solutions. He positions policy makers and current researchers as holding back this positive process. He calls for further involvement of parents and community members in school based programs and in policy development. This is in direct contrast to other positions that present the proposition that current concerns about boys’ education are the ill-informed product of a media-driven crisis or of a male backlash against the gains made by women and girls.

In the first paragraph, his simple sentences with the subjects first in the order of the sentence, make very explicit who Fletcher thinks could be responsible for the solutions to the issues and problems raised by the named agents. *Parents and teachers* are collocated at the very beginning of Fletcher’s summary. This sentence implies that large numbers of the two groups most involved in the outcomes of education are concerned about the issues the Inquiry was set up to address. This colocation also positions parents and teachers, as
representative and homogenous groups, unified in their concerns, not as
differentiated by other factors such as socio-economic background or culture, nor
as responsible for the problems.

In the final paragraph, Fletcher uses a similar colocation in positioning the
agents who might do the work to resolve the issues. In naming *Parents and men
and women from the community*, he is clearly suggesting some divisions between
parents and teachers and advocating for a greater role for those outside the
school. Readers familiar with Fletcher’s written work or public seminars would be
able to fill in the gaps and know that he is a strong advocate for male role models
and for involving fathers in schools. In the deliberate choice of colocation of *men
and women* he is addressing critiques of men’s movement positions, as
essentialist in categorising men and excluding women as appropriate models for
boys. He is also making a clear proposition that the gender of the adult is
important. In the final paragraph, while Fletcher’s verb choices of *could* (which
could easily have been *should*) somewhat soften the imperative mood and
hortatory tone of the text, they are a call to action. They address and position
Fletcher’s ideal audiences (the government and teachers) by holding out
possibilities for policy and practice that could be made reality by particular
actions.

His hortatory tenor positions the reader as an active participant in these
debates – either as teacher or parent with concerns who could make changes or
as a policy maker/researcher or person involved who might have made a genuine
attempt to change but is uncritically carrying forward old ideas into boys’ policies.
He positions the reader to accept his propositions in the final paragraph through
a series of collocations with a thematic logic. Following this logic, the reader can
see that he is calling for *an appropriate gender policy with a central task of the
development of fine men*.

He explicitly outlines that such a policy would *recognise boys and girls as
distinct groups without overlooking within-group differences*. These clauses
contain inter-textual references to other authors and positions in the cultural field.
The proposition he is suggesting is a direct challenge to the *which boys/which
girls* position asserted by those framing boys’ educational issues from within a
structural feminist or pro-feminist sociological approach. Instead Fletcher seems
to be arguing from a public health approach which usually structures
interventions around a whole of population awareness and education campaign
as well as specific targeted interventions for vulnerable groups – an *all boys and which boys* approach. While he does not describe strategies for girls, it seems, since he advocates for a gender policy which recognises girls as a distinct group, he would accept the same approach for girls. It could be argued that this aspect of Fletcher’s framing, in practice, would be very similar to a sophisticated analysis of disaggregated data called for by structuralist pro-feminist educational sociologists.

Another thematic thread that can be read from the collocations in the paragraphs are the textual moves that link a focus on *boys’ needs*, to *the central task of the development of fine men* to the clear need for the involvement of *parents and men and women community members*. In this thematic thread, Fletcher is again taking a public health position that men and boys, in very similar ways to women and girls, have legitimate needs that they can expect to have met by education, health and social welfare systems. He also seems to be arguing that teachers, parents and community members, in other words actors within social structures, all have specific roles to play in supporting boys to develop positive male identities that could be recognised as ‘fine men’. He does not define the characteristics of fine men, yet the choice of adjective invites everyone to agree, as the logical dichotomy set up in the readers mind is that unless these policies are enacted bad men will be produced. Fletcher also argues that government policies should enable these actors to do this work. Here Fletcher is closer to post-structuralist positions that give more credence to individual agency. It could be read from Fletcher’s propositions that each community and each school should decide these questions. Indeed, in other places he does argue this.

However, this very concept is criticised as an essentialist position and one of presumptive equality. It is here that there are clear differences between his position and those of pro-feminists who accuse arguments like this of not recognising structural differences such as class and race and as universalising all parents or all community members, or all fathers, men or boys as the same.

In these paragraphs, Fletcher puts clear propositions and positions parents, teachers and community members as active agents. He challenges the doxa of the field and the authority of the established players. He calls on the field of power, in the form of policy makers, to support his stance in the cultural struggles and to advance his standing in the field by legitimising his position. In this case,
this text in the field at the time was a very powerful intervention as the government did support his positions.

It is clear that both of these epistemic players, in established and newer positions in the field, took challenger positions to the established doxas of gender in education that had been established during the focus on girls’ education. Rowe, in his position as an established researcher in ACER was able to tap into discourses of evidence and accountability attractive to the government at the time to mount his challenge to gender theories. His alliance with Fletcher was built on their mutual reading of ‘evidence’ of health and educational statistics. Fletcher, by foregrounding alliances with parents and teachers built during his public advocacy for boys’ education was able to take advantage of the public and political unease about changing economic circumstances, male identities and future employment skills to argue for attention to boys’ education in similar ways to policies for girls which were perceived as successful. They took strategic advantage of the opening the government afforded them in calling this inquiry to mount these challenges in order to enhance or establish their positions in the field and to build their cultural capital in the cultural struggles within the field. These texts illustrate the ways this intervention of the political field opened the field to different positions and exposed internal field fractures that the turn to boys’ education was causing.

The Inquiry also opened the field to public scrutiny and public debate, testing the weight of public opinion for boys’ education. I turn now to the thematic analysis of a sample of submissions to the Inquiry to investigate in detail what propositions were put during the Inquiry, and how these intersected with the propositions and cultural positions of the established academic layer of the field and those outside of this layer or outside of the field.

The submissions

It is well-known that public inquiries attract only the most interested members of the public, as most people do not intervene in public issues in this way unless they see an issue as important enough to make the effort to write a submission. The majority of submissions to this inquiry came from those with a direct interest in the field such as academics, school systems and schools or closely related social support organisations. However, almost 50% of submissions to this inquiry
were from individuals, indicating that there was also considerable concern about boys' education in the wider community.

In previously published work, I described my analysis of a representative sample of these submissions using argument catalogue methodology (Hartman, 2008a, 2008b). In that work, I analysed a sample of approximately 30% or 73 of the 231 written submissions. While this 2008 work was not explicitly structured as a field or a discourse analysis, my use of Argument Catalogue methodology to generate a detailed transparent catalogue and categorisation of the various texts resulted in the categorisation of this corpus of texts and authors as public, practitioner, policy maker or academic contributions. In that work, I also developed categorisations that allowed me to compare the arguments and propositions in these diverse submissions that ranged from a few paragraphs long to over 50 pages. I analysed four main aspects of the arguments or propositions expressed by the authors in the submissions: the issues or concerns raised; the critical factors contributing to or causing the concern; the attributed explanations, reasons or underlying causes for the issues; and the apportioned responsibility for dealing with the issues or for the suggested changes. (See Appendix 1: Submissions to Inquiry, Argument Catalogue Categories and Analysis.)

The most interesting aspect of the submissions was the clear intention of most authors across all author categories to understand the field of boys’ education in presenting their propositions in this inquiry. Bourdieu (1988) warns against intellectual arrogance and insists that in attempting to understand situations, many people undertake ‘naïve sociology’ (Swartz, 1997). In this aspect, although academic and policy players sometimes had a lot of knowledge about certain aspects, most authors were grappling with understanding the perceived problems and solutions to them in the same ways. Many authors had a very personal and often a professional interest in working with young people in some capacity. They spoke from their own experiences of boys in specific contexts to suggest changes that would improve opportunities for those boys. In order to make sense of the issues, they were drawing on and interpreting the discourses available to them from a number of sources. Whether explicitly stated or not, each author from all categories, was writing from one or more assumptions or theoretical positions when asserting propositions in their submissions, explaining the issues they considered significant, suggesting
strategies to deal with the issues and in attributing responsibility for addressing them (Fairclough, 1995; Wallace, 1992).

The most significant factor uniting all of the submissions was the united concern for appropriate attention to boys’ education. While the terms of the inquiry may have shaped this united response, another important factor evident in the analysis was the diversity of responses. There were many different perspectives, explanations and approaches suggested to improve boys’ educational outcomes, or overcome perceived problems with boys and education, as well as some caution that attention to boys’ education should be balanced with an ongoing focus on girls. Yet, no-one suggested that attention to boys’ educational issues was unwarranted. If there was opposition to a focus on boys’ education per se, it was not voiced publicly in these submissions. Commonwealth and state departments of education presented statistical evidence and detailed analysis to the Inquiry. While academic debates on interpretation of statistical data still raged, the statistical evidence of the many differences in behavioural and academic outcomes between and within groups of girls and boys was a major factor in prompting interest in the ‘boy turn’ from all author groups.

The diversity of issues raised in the submissions is evident in the range of aspects in main content themes that emerged from the content analysis. These were: Identities; Learning; Relationships; and Systemic Factors. Identity themes included physical and developmental differences between boys and girls as well as characteristics such as geographic, socio-economic, language and ethnicity factors, interests and motivation, and sexuality, self-concept and self-esteem. Learning themes included learning styles and approaches, pedagogical issues, classroom factors and specific learning programs. Relationships included male and female peers, parents, fathers, teachers, adults, male role models. Systems included state and private, single-sex settings, system constraints on change, people and gender in power.

Table 6: Thematic Content Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity (I)</th>
<th>Learning (L)</th>
<th>Relationships (R)</th>
<th>Systems (S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male characteristics</td>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>School system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences between</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Teacher/student</td>
<td>Government or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While there were different emphases and interpretations of these themes, another interesting area of consensus between the categories of authors was the tendency to see the inter-connections between the issues and factors, rather than seeing them as separate and unrelated. The majority (54.7%) of submission authors across all categories recognised the complexity and inter-relatedness of the issues by suggesting that a combination of identity, learning and relationship and system factors were critical.

Propositions that attempted to explain the issues and propose solutions fell into clusters which I categorised as: Evidence-based, Theory-based, Strengths-based practice or Deficit-focused (Hartman, 2008b). It appears that the fractures, epitomised by the positions of Rowe and Fletcher above, were widespread in the public and field discourses of the time. A major difference between the academic and policy maker categories and the practitioner and public categories was that most academic and many policy makers explicitly used theories, particularly the social construction of gender and hegemonic masculinity, in mounting an argument or defending a proposition, while most practitioner and individual submissions did not. There was a more extensive overlap between the public and practitioner submissions in relation to the themes emphasised, than there was between those groups and either the policy makers or academics. The public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>boys and girls: physical, developmental, interests, social</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Fathers</th>
<th>private</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male role models</td>
<td>Differences between boys and girls in learning</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Single-sex or co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender based subject choices</td>
<td>Male learning styles</td>
<td>Male role models</td>
<td>People in control of system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male interests</td>
<td>Learning styles/teaching styles</td>
<td>School/community</td>
<td>Gender in control of system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Teacher activities and pedagogy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Systemic changes needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>Teaching/school structures related to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
submissions were more likely to be concerned about boys in a holistic way, including both social and academic concerns and linked these together as a general concern about how boys were coping in the wider world. The emphasis on aspects of male identities illustrated this. Of the 39 submissions from the public that were analysed 12 (30.7%) had identity factors as the major critical issue, compared to only 1 of the 5 (20%) of the academic submissions (Hartman, 2008a). It seems that the field-specific doxa of practitioner accounts which favoured 'how to' solutions about boys’ education coincided with men’s movement accounts of the need to develop positive male identities through activities with men. While 12 of the 25 practitioner submissions identified complexity, a number also focused on a particular learning concern such as literacy, or a relationship concern such as disruptive behaviour.

Table 7: Author type by concern and critical factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In recognising the complexities and intersections between the issues, many authors also struggled with positioning arguments for boys’ strategies in ways that were not oppositional to girls’ strategies. While there were calls for an ‘evening up’ or balancing attention for boys’ issues, in recognition of a sustained focus on girls’ education, very few authors suggested that boys’ issues were caused by girls’ education strategies, or that this attention to girls had been unwarranted. The discourses about boys were often couched in similar language to discourses about girls’ education in ways that suggested successful strategies for girls could be replicated for boys. Some noted the attempts to make curriculum more ‘girl-friendly’ and suggested that now there was a need to also
make it ‘boy-friendly’. Some commented on boys’ learning styles in contrast to
girls, echoing earlier discourses about girls.

Many noted that there had been gains for girls and drew attention to under-
representation of boys in successful outcomes in contrast to girls. In the period
prior to the Inquiry, there had been media coverage of gender issues, particularly
the annual Higher School Certificate results at the completion of Year 12 of
secondary school, which tended to highlight winners and losers in these public
exams and school based assessments that determine students’ post-school
choices. (See Chapter 9 for further discussion on the media). There had also
been coverage of other equity issues in schools that had highlighted concerns
about boys. This coverage had been widely criticised in social science discourses
as fuelling essentialist concepts of boys as victims and as an homogenous group
(Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997; Thomas, 2006).

It is therefore interesting that another significant aspect of the submissions
was the ways authors used categories of distinction, particularly when either
distinguishing between or ignoring universal, group specific or individual
characterisations of boys. Authors used specific and general terms in an attempt
to mount a convincing argument in their submissions, intertwining meanings from
theoretical perspectives and from common-sense notions or realist experiences
of people, families, schools and communities. The multiple meanings implied in
the use of the word boys in many submissions from all author categories are a
good example of the confounding difficulties in the field. Authors often moved
between common-sense notions of boys, using the word boys as a collective or
plural noun or as a noun to describe all males, all the male students in their
specific context or specific groups of male students in their context. While many
authors highlighted that boys are not all the same, authors often used the plural
boys in ways that seemed to suggest a collective characteristic or responsibility
for a situation. This confusion highlighted an important aspect of social distinction
very salient in discussions of gender, that all categories can be dangerous
(Parkes, Gore, & Elsworth, 2010; Slade & Trent, 2000a).

In Submission 7, about frustrations in seeking support for her son’s literacy
difficulties, the parent author argued strongly that teachers’ universal beliefs
about boys as a group could lead to mis-recognition of specific learning
difficulties and a lack of early intervention in cases of individual need.
The point I am trying to make…is that learning disorders can be ignored in some children because they are boys and some teachers believe that generally boys take longer to learn things. (Heath, 2000)

Yet there was also a strong discourse that there were some issues pertaining to all boys as a gender group. This example, from Submission 66 by Professor Lyn Yates and the UTS Faculty of Education illustrates the complexities from a feminist perspective. In an argument that echoed many practitioner concerns, she argued that boys should not be treated as a uniform group, and programs for boys should be appropriate to the group and the context. She simultaneously argued that all boys were affected by changes for girls and subsequent changes in employment and gendered social relations.

…it is also important not to operate as if boys are a uniform group and to develop programs that are appropriate to boys from different backgrounds and in different contexts…

The impact of girls and women claiming a right to be equal and their changing educational and work patterns is something that has affected all boys. (Yates & the University of Technology Sydney Faculty of Education, 2000)

She seems to suggest that a universal attention to gendered aspects of schooling for both boys and girls was warranted, particularly from a feminist perspective and that specific local programs should flow from this. This clarity that both the specific and the universal needed to be taken into account was rare, yet was implied by many authors. In some feminist and pro-feminist accounts, there was a silence on this complexity that disguised a lack of interest in boys’ education and in some men’s movement accounts there was a gap in acknowledging difference and diversity among boys, in the struggle to get boys’ educational issues on the political agenda.

Authors also used the term boys to imply a socially constructed gender category in binary opposition to a similar category labelled girls or as a group of male beneficiaries in a power imbalanced dichotomous binary. This slippage and difficulty in language use points to the continual struggle in language and theoretical positions to deal with recurring issues related to gender and to the various experiences of boys and girls, as these three sentences from Submission 84 by well-known academic players Mills and Lingard illustrate.
We would reject an approach which treats all boys as victims and all girls as successes.

However, it should be noted that from the beginning of state policies on gender there was also a focus on the need to change boys.

There is no magic, or quick fix, solution for improving boys’ behaviours, including those which cause some boys to disengage from the academic curriculum. (Mills & Lingard, 2000)

The authors are putting a proposition against a universal categorisation of boys in the first sentence arguing against treating all boys as victims. Yet, in the second sentence they imply that all boys need to change. Then in the third sentence, evoking the universal and the specific, they seem to suggest that the behaviour of all boys is a problem, especially those who are disengaged from school. Their inconsistent use of the universal and specific disguises or confuses their position. It appears they are making a case that being male is the problem, yet they argue like many others that targeted programs for specific groups of boys are necessary. This could easily be read as a deficit positioning of categories of boys, such as low socio-economic or indigenous boys who are over-represented in disengagement and early school leaving.

The extent to which men were seen to be part of the solution to boys’ educational issues was often a distinguishing feature that seemed to separate academic feminist and pro-feminist discourses from men’s movement and other discourses in the public and practitioner submissions. The example below from Submission 52 from the NSW Secondary Principals Council illustrates this. In the first sentence, the author seems to draw on sociological theories of gender power imbalances. And in the second sentence, the author draws on men’s movement concepts of the importance of male role modelling.

Schools need to help these boys discover a masculinity that is not formed at the expense of other people. This places considerable responsibility on schools to provide a balance in male role modelling, quite difficult in a feminised workforce. (New South Wales Secondary Principals Council, 2000)

Many authors of submissions saw the involvement of appropriate men in schools as part of a systematic solution to both improve boys’ outcomes and to counter ‘laddish’ behaviour. The need for male teachers or other appropriate
males to specifically teach boys relationships skills, particularly those of self-control and of accepting responsibility, was often mentioned.

While there was some evidence of extreme positions the content analysis showed much less evidence of extreme views than expected, given the propensity of academic literature to suggest a moral panic or explicit backlash politics (Connell, 1996). Only 3 out of 231, with 2 of those from the same person, expressed an extremely conservative anti-feminist position. An example of the style and content of this type of argument is a submission from Alan Barron (2000), from the Endeavour Forum, a men’s rights advocacy group, claiming to represent men and the men’s movement. In the first page of his submission, the author used hortatory style as well as textual features such as font size, underlining and bold text in the textual equivalent of screaming at the audience to make his point. In the submission from his organisation also written by him, he argues

There are innate differences between the sexes…Modern education must be freed from the doctrinaire approach foist on the educational system by radical feminist ideology. (Institute of Men’s Studies, 2000)

This essentialist positioning of men and boys as innately different to girls and as victims of feminists and feminist policies is extreme. Yet differences between boys and girls were seen as interesting, worth exploring and problematic in many submissions taking a variety of positions. In another mirroring of the ways discourses about girls’ education had incrementally changed and were gradually influencing the public discourse, many authors were rejecting the very notion of victim, for both girls and boys, in favour of a notion of personal difference and agency. In the turn towards boys’ education, they were calling on schools and school systems to enable teachers and boys to enact teaching and learning that would enhance outcomes for all, through a focus on the strengths, interests and talents of individual boys in community contexts. They did not see this as in competition with a similar focus on girls. Often these approaches were couched in terms of the solutions coming from boys themselves as a counter to hierarchical structures that impede quality learning and relationships, as this example from a practitioner illustrates.

Situations are being set up where boys will have to work with other boys who may be a little older or younger than themselves…(Tudor, 2000)
This analysis of discourses, from the various sub-fields evident in the submissions, highlighted important contested cultural issues within the field, and the relative importance attached to theoretical or practice-based knowledge within the different sub-field discourses. It also showed the hierarchical nature of the sub-fields, with practitioners tending to align with public or parent discourses about the need for empathetic understandings of the diverse maturational and learning requirements and the struggles to forge male identities for specific boys. Practitioners tended to look critically towards and have expectations of the more powerful academic and policy sub-fields, to guide understandings of the issues yet recognised that the discourses in these sub-fields did not seem to fully connect with the daily concerns of how to address the issues in the classroom.

Governments have multiple interests in conducting public inquiries on issues including informing future policy and program responses. As such, submissions to inquiries are a very useful source of evidence about research, practice and opinion on any current issue. Increasingly governments are seeking advice on program and policy development that is informed by statistical evidence, social theories, and practice based research on ‘what works, how and when’ in any applied field. Contemporary governments are also increasingly concerned with public opinion. My argument catalogue approach to the authors, submissions and propositions in the submissions enabled an analysis of the complexities and intersections between these various discourses. It enabled me to distinguish differences and similarities in the layers of the field. The analysis of submissions to the inquiry does not seem to support the characterisation of advocacy for attention to boys’ education as merely or predominantly a product of an anti-feminist, right-wing backlash. There was diverse and substantial public interest in a turn towards boys that was cognizant of and attempting to grapple with multiple explanations of the needs and issues in boys’ education, including competing discourses from feminist and men’s movement positions. There was little public support for the extreme position of boys as victims of feminist practices and policies. Yet, unlike the stable field of girls’ education that was united in its purpose within equity discourses, this turn towards boys in Australian education was a disruption to the focus on girls and equity. The field of boys’ education was in flux, with many competing and intersecting discourses resounding through the layers of the field. The aspects and discourses taken up or disputed in the final report on the Inquiry and in the government response to
the report highlight the effects this political intervention had on the autonomy of
the field.

The Report on the Inquiry

In the final report on this inquiry clearly set the political direction towards a policy
and program focus on boys’ education for the next decade. The 24
recommendations on: Policy change; Curriculum and pedagogy issues;
Assessment; Improvement of Literacy and Numeracy; Schools, teachers and role
models; Reporting and policy frameworks and Funding and Cost-shifting issues
illustrate the ways the political field intervened in and interacted with public and
field discourses. The authors emphasised that the Inquiry was responding to
public concern, rather than creating or directing that concern. In the introduction
to the Executive Summary of the final report on the Inquiry, it is stated that

This inquiry was referred to the Committee in response to growing
community concerns about the education of boys. (Commonwealth of
Australia, 2002, p. xv)

The committee emphasised that in their view, many of these public concerns
were genuine and could be supported by evidence. Using much of the evidence
from the Collins et al report (2000a), and from the federal department’s statistical
analysis of literacy, numeracy and school retention (Department of Education
Training and Youth Affairs: Analysis and Equity Branch, 2000), the report on the
Inquiry emphasised enduring gender differences in outcomes in literacy, with
boys over-represented in lower bands of attainment and widening gaps in school
retention between boys and girls. Noting that boys seemed to have a more
vocational orientation to subject choice, the committee called for attention to
school subject choice and as an important factor impacting upon employment
and therefore the ongoing long-term economic outcomes of both boys and girls. It
also noted that the requirements of jobs in the future were likely to include
qualities and skills learnt in humanities, areas that boys were less likely to
undertake or excel in, concluding that boys would benefit from programs that
emphasised social and emotional intelligences.

They also called for ongoing attention to girls, noting that girls are much
more likely to choose biological rather than physical science subjects; and
humanities subjects over sciences; and a wider range of subjects that limited
their immediate vocational options because their cluster of subject choices were less likely than boys’ choices to follow a recognised pattern towards a profession.

The report authors also directly addressed and took a position on discourses around ‘which boys, which girls’. They suggested that the ‘which boys, which girls’ argument was mounted in resistance to a focus on boys’ education. In an explicit challenge to this dominant discourse in the academic field, that many boys are achieving well and only some boys have specific needs to be addressed, this paragraph in the section on post school outcomes suggests that there are disparities in some social and academic outcomes between boys and girls in every social grouping:

Resistance to addressing boys’ education issues has often argued that rather than gender, the focus should be on ‘which boys and which girls?’ While this is, in itself, a valid question, the fact is that for almost every socio-economic group, boys are underachieving compared to girls. Significantly, the disparity is greatest for those in the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups. (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007a, p. xvii)

In this way, the report seemed to support assertions that boys’ educational issues should be addressed at a whole of population level as well as with specific groups. In arguing for a boys’ education focus the authors suggest a nuanced approach to the much wider gaps between boys and girls in low SES and indigenous communities as well as the disparities between low SES and indigenous boys and girls and their higher SES and non-indigenous counterparts.

In the introduction to the report, the authors state that work to raise achievements for boys can be undertaken without threatening gains for girls and that attention to both the education of boys and girls need not be a competition. Their statements challenged the notion of a binary opposition between the genders, as competing sets of victims in education, and the notion that meeting the needs of one group automatically disadvantages another.

The committee also believes that efforts to raise the educational achievement of boys can be undertaken without threatening the gains made by girls in recent decades. It is not a competition. (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007a, p. xv)

These statements made sense to those familiar with the ‘competing victim’ discourses and the claims that attention to boys will necessarily be to the detriment of girls. They can be read as an appeasement to those feminist and
pro-feminist players in the field who feared that a concerted focus on boys would set back gains in girls’ education and draw attention away from girls’ education. They can also be read as a clear indication to the men’s movement that the more extreme anti-feminist positions would not be supported.

The committee also explicitly address the 1996 Gender Equity in Australian Schools policy document, challenging a number of the assumptions at the basis of this policy. As shown by the quote below, the committee is clearly taking a different position on gender equity to that identified in this policy and later signaled its recommendation to change that policy. It was explicitly intervening in the cultural struggles of the field.

…the Committee has concluded that the focus of the current approach embodied in Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools is too narrow and recommends that it be recast, focusing on positive values and goals, to provide for distinct but complementary, education strategies for boys and girls. (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007a, p. xviii)

This focus on outcomes and measurement of indicators was a move away from previous framing of gender issues as power imbalances with a focus on processes such as sexual harassment as barriers to participation and achievement. It was hotly contested both in terms of competing interpretations of outcomes data and post-school consequences as well as in terms of theoretical explanations for the perceived disparities. While boys’ education was an ongoing focus, the field remained fractured and these political interventions were a source of ongoing contestation within the field.

**The Government Response**

The relationship between political interventions, such as setting the terms of the Inquiry and responding to it, and the strategic and cultural struggles and positions within the field, are complex. Bourdieu (1996, 2005; Bourdieu et al., 1994) and Fairclough (2000, 2001) have written extensively on the strategies the field of politics uses to intervene in other fields, as well as the ways field-specific logic drives the actions of the field of politics. While both analyses draw us to the conclusion that the purposes of the field of politics in conducting an action such as a public inquiry would most likely stem from the internal logic of the political field, rather than from a concern for the needs of their constituents, the need for
engagement with the public and media is clearly necessary in the struggle to exercise ‘symbolic violence’. In particular, Bourdieusian and critical language analysts alert us to the ways the field of politics both utilises and manipulates public discourse to its own ends (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Fairclough, 2000). A careful investigation of the recommendations supported and rejected and the programs instigated in response to the report on the inquiry are revealing of the government intentions in this regard.

Its direction for boys’ education was outlined in the preamble of the Minister’s response:

In responding to the recommendations, the Government’s approach is cognisant of the many traditional and innovative programmes that have been implemented in Australia and elsewhere that seek to improve the educational outcomes of boys. The Government’s strategy is to build upon successful practice in boys’ education by:

- launching early specific initiatives in boys’ education to identify, encourage and disseminate successful practice;

- building on existing Commonwealth programmes which target areas of the Committee’s concern, including the existing research programme in education; and

- where recommendations concern the responsibilities of other jurisdictions or stakeholders, establishing a process of dialogue and consultation on cooperative strategies to consider and as appropriate address the recommendations. (Minister for Education Science and Training, 2003, p. 3 and 4)

In supporting many of the recommendations directly and in principle, the Government was clearly intervening in the field, to shift the emphasis, and perhaps the power in the field towards practice and away from the then current policy field and players, especially those involved in producing or supporting the 1996 policy framework which built upon the previous girls’ education strategy documents, which the report had explicitly rejected. The suggestion to recast the gender equity in schools policy, made by relative newcomer to the field, Richard Fletcher, who had strongly advocated for changes to policy to government ministers, was accepted and he was subsequently invited to be part of a consortium to undertake this work.
The government was clearly supporting a focus on boys in research, policy and practice, and it drew on the widespread public endorsement of this turn evident in the majority of submissions to the inquiry. In a clear privileging of practice, it committed over a million dollars to Stage One of the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) program to support school-based innovation and consolidation of practice and promised to expand the program in Stage 2. Funding was to go directly to schools rather than to state jurisdictions. Interestingly, the two research reports released at the same time were both practice focused as well and the government also committed a further half a million dollars for research into pedagogy, curriculum, testing and assessment. It also committed to teacher professional development to improve practice in a range of areas, including literacy education. From the point of view of a practitioner advocate for boys’ education these moves by the government were welcomed.

The next two dot points reveal further interests of the Commonwealth government and the internal political field struggles between the Commonwealth and the states. Its response to recommendations about literacy is interesting in this context. The government seemed to accept the analysis of statistical data that showed that boys, as a gender group, were over-represented in lower literacy bands and in remedial language and literacy programs. In outlining the programs relevant to support literacy attainment for all students, it also seemed to accept that rural, indigenous, English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and student with a disability were also over-represented and schools with high proportions of these students were likely to have a need for funding for additional literacy support. Recommendation 11, supported by the government, explicitly supports intensive literacy support programs for disadvantaged students in the middle years whose need for these programs is identified by the Literacy Benchmark Tests.

However, it did not provide additional funding for literacy programs. Instead, it distributed responsibility for the carriage of some recommendations to existing programs including SAISO, CQTP, the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects Programme, Effective Teaching and Learning Practices Leading to Improved Literacy Outcomes in the Early Years of Schooling project.
Nor did it explicitly intervene in the cultural struggles in the field about pedagogical approaches to literacy. In a section of the response entitled *No Mandate for Specific Educational and Management Practices*, the Minister states:

…it is a matter of policy and philosophy that the Government will not mandate specific practices in teaching or practices in the management and administration of education. The Commonwealth aims to lead, encourage and support the providers of education. Ultimately decisions on practice are best made by the practitioners. (Minister for Education Science and Training, 2003, p.8)

However, in a strong message to the field, it did state that ‘The Commonwealth recognises that explicit phonics instruction is an important part of the repertoire of literacy programmes’ (Minister for Education Science and Training, 2003, p. 14).

The three recommendations it clearly did not support were: Recommendation 5, about auditory and visual screening of kindergarten aged children by state and territory health authorities and joint funding of teacher awareness programs on the impact of hearing and sight difficulties on learning outcomes; Recommendation 13, about class sizes, where the government argued that research on the positive impact of small class sizes was inconclusive and disputed and that class sizes were a matter for state jurisdictions; and the provision of a substantial number of HECS-free scholarships to enable equal numbers of males and females to undertake teacher training, arguing that the proposal is unlikely to have the desired effect of more male teachers in schools, would be costly and set a precedent for the same argument for any university course with unequal numbers of male and female students; and Recommendation 18 about teacher remuneration, which the government argued was wholly a matter for states, territories and non-government authorities or schools.

In rejecting these recommendations, it could be argued that the Commonwealth government, rather than considering the merits of the content of the recommendations, was acting in its own interests within the political field. As a government, it did not want to open itself up to a commitment that would mean additional expenses for the Commonwealth Government or cost shifting from the states to the Commonwealth. As a Liberal Government, it did not want to be seen to support, even in principle, any moves for higher wages or, in the case of class sizes, better conditions for education workers, as this would impact private and state employers of teachers and could well have had a flow on effect to other
care sectors such as child-care and health. Auditory screening and attention to phonics were suggested by the epistemic players, Ken and Kathy Rowe. While the government seemed to support their arguments, they were not willing to expend their own funds or create an unwinnable dispute with state jurisdictions over them.

Importantly, the response to the report offered the government an opportunity to impose reporting requirements on all jurisdictions receiving Commonwealth funds under existing and newly announced Commonwealth BELS programs. It used this opportunity to reinforce accountability measures for state jurisdictions for the National Goals for Schooling and the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

Strategic and cultural moves by the political field

The three events analysed in this chapter: the calling of the inquiry, conducting hearings and receiving the large number of submissions; the crafting of the committee report and recommendations to the government; and the government response to the report are all moves by the political field that had profound effects on boys' and girls' education, gender in education, equity in education and education itself. It sent shock waves through all of these layers of the field. It impacted on the practice, academic and policy layers of boys' education. It shifted discourses, interpretive framings and ideas about what is at stake in these sub-fields.

These events were strategically instigated and acted upon by political players in the Liberal federal government. Other players in the political field, in the major political parties participated as committee members and report writers. Many interested players from the policy, practitioner and academic layers of the field acted strategically in their participation in making submissions to the Inquiry. Their stances, put to the government and to the Inquiry are part of the cultural struggles within the field of boys' education. In participating in these events, all players were acting strategically, in recognition that the government, the state, the field of politics has enormous power over the field of education. In response to this deliberate intervention by the political field, players had little choice but to vie for the favour of the government to support their own stances and positions in the cultural struggles in the field.
Yet, as Bourdieu (1996, 2005) and Fligstein and McAdam (2012) have shown, the political field has its own field specific aims and capital at stake. The analysis of these events highlight what was at stake in the political field at the time the events occurred. There is an implied inevitability in some narratives of this period by authors offering linear explanations suggesting that moves towards boys’ education were enacted by a conservative government in neo-liberal times against the gains made by women and girls in recuperative ways, for the benefit of men and boys. The intersections of the various political interests, public interests and interests of players in the layers of the field are much more complex.

The Government was unlikely to have opened the field up to the range of views in public submissions without understanding that there was enough public concern about boys’ issues, incremental change in positions on girls’ education and internal contestation within the field of equity in education to enable or support actions shifting the focus of the field towards boys’ education. The setting up of a broad, cross-party committee can, in that sense, be seen as a strategic move by the Minister and Liberal/Coalition Government to ensure that their subsequent actions were seen to be in response to an established public concern and with bi-partisan support in the parliament. The fact that there was no dissenting report and all committee members agreed to be authors of the report indicates that Labor and other politicians on the committee most probably also made a strategic decision that it was not in their political interests to disagree with the findings or the positions of the Committee on the educational needs of boys. This is not to say that there was no contention over the issues, explanations and suggested strategies to overcome perceived concerns.

Clearly, staying in power and gaining or retaining government is a key aim for a political party. The tension between the Commonwealth and state governments is a political reality in Australia. Discourses about the role of education in creating an equitable society are very important in the political discourses in the small nation of Australia, striving for an egalitarian vision of itself. Educational outcomes have always been closely linked to employment, status and equity. Both Liberal and Labor political players vie for the votes and allegiances of blue collar and lower paid workers as well as white collar workers. The Liberal Party had been elected for two terms running and appeared to be winning over substantial numbers of ‘aspirational’ blue collar workers, the
‘battlers’ who had been traditional Labor voters, and were increasingly voting Liberal. Many of these voters live in ‘mortgage belts’ encircling capital cities. Changes in employment structures, shaped by 1990s recession, the ongoing loss of rural and manufacturing jobs, and the shift to lower-paid service industry jobs, as well as the very small numbers of jobs created by the mining industry, despite the growing mining boom rhetoric about job creation, were the economic and social context of these political interventions into the field of boys’ education. The rising cost of living, particularly rising house prices in capital cities ensured that most families needed a dual income in order to provide an adequate standard of living. This affected many middle-class families struggling to afford housing in the inner city as well as those in the outer suburbs. Many parents in both of these SES groups were concerned for the long-term economic and employment prospects of their sons and daughters in these economic circumstances. The drift of young people away from rural areas towards jobs in the city meant the gradual depletion of the cultural and social capital and the pending demise of many rural towns. Concern over the behaviour, mental and physical health and employment of young men was not restricted to the traditional constituents or supporters of any one political party. All parties would have understood the need to be seen to be doing something for working class and rural boys and young men. While traditionally, at this time, the majority of indigenous people would have been seen to be Labor supporters, no party could ignore the shocking disparities between indigenous education and health outcomes and those of other Australians and the obvious incarceration rates of indigenous young men.

The education policies for girls were seen by many as having created better opportunities for many girls and young women. Though hard fought within the field of education, public consultations showed that among many teachers and parents, the policies were seen to have been relatively successful. The economic and social climate seemed to indicate a change would be well received by many in schools and the public. It would have been difficult for any political party to argue that some attention to boys’ education was not warranted. The breadth of the terms of the Inquiry, encompassing academic and social factors, literacy and socialisation, also ensured that most players within the field would have seen a space to advocate for their own cultural or theoretical position in the terms of the Inquiry. These strategic moves by the field of politics were very successful in
opening the field to huge policy implications and to intensified cultural struggles over the purpose of the field.

In this era, where political discourses had moved towards national accountability for outcomes, rather than activities, accountability measures were becoming important globally for nation states. Governments, world-wide were affected by this global trend. The performance of the education systems of nation states was increasingly being measured globally in terms of international comparisons of educational data (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2012). Australia has been characterised as having a high quality but low equity system. The over-representation of boys on many measures would have influenced the Commonwealth government to instigate the turn towards boys’ education. Bringing the Australian states into line by requiring all jurisdictions to provide evidence of the outcomes of educational programs where federal funds were provided would have been a strong motivator for a federal government, whether that government happened to be Liberal or Labor at the time. Undermining the autonomy of the mainly Labor state governments, and particularly of state equity units, where these reporting functions often resided within state education jurisdictions, could also be seen as beneficial to the Liberal Party politicians in the cultural struggles within the small and largely dual party political system in Australia.

This chapter focused on the actions and events instigated by the field of politics and I have argued that these actions, while strongly directed by the internal logic of the field of politics, had a profound effect on the field of boys’ education. These actions by the political field privileged practitioner actions and men’s movement advocacy and understandings of boys’ education, which drew attention to a wide range of issues effecting boys’ social and academic outcomes, rather than a more targeted focus on gendered power imbalances that characterised attention to boys when the focus was on girls’ education. In the next chapter, I concentrate on a corpus of texts produced by the policy field, the next layer of the field represented in the heuristic of the field on page 89. In this way I continue to tease out and analyse the complex inter-relationships between the layers in the field.
Chapter 6
The Policy Corpus

The modern state formalizes the problem of creating new social spaces in two ways: it provides for or enables expansion into known or unknown social spaces, and it limits that expansion by setting the rules by which that expansion can occur. (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 70)

This chapter continues my analysis of the nested layers of the field represented in the heuristic of the field on p. 89. I have worked inward from the outer, most powerful layer of politics, described in the previous chapter. In this chapter I move to a careful exploration of the next layer, the policy layer of the field. Blackmore, Wright and Harwood (2006a) suggest that ‘Policy’ has multiple dimensions within any field of activity. Indeed, according to Blackmore et al

Policy could be considered to be a text, a process, a discourse, a political decision, a programme, even an outcome (Blackmore et al., 2006b, p. 23).

In this chapter, I follow the broad concept of policy of Blackmore et al, and focus on both government policy documents and programs instigated by the government from 1996 to 2006. In the last chapter I analysed the impact on the field of the Inquiry into the education of boys. The moves by strategic actors in the field I discuss in this chapter are directly related to the Inquiry, particularly the instigation of the well-funded government programs Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) and Success for Boys (S4B). They also intersect with the production and consumption of the 1996 policy document Gender Equity in Australian Schools (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, 1996). All of the events in these policy and program documents and
actions were instigated by the state and can be seen as direct interventions by the field of power into the intellectual field. I am interested in how these moves by the field of power shaped discourses and positions within the field. The key illustrative events in the policy field are depicted in the lighter blue and mid-blue sections of Table 3, on pages 101 and 102 that are reproduced below as Table 5. As I’ve discussed earlier, as the state is also a responsible for some funding and oversight of education, it is also a player within the field. The policy layer of the field is the social space where many of the cultural and strategic struggles arising from and contributing to the confounding complexities in the field are enacted. These events illustrate the importance of the state as a player in this applied field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In instigating these changes, the state was expanding boys’ education and it was also setting the parameters of that expansion by the types of activity it funded and the policy documents it produced and supported.

This analysis illustrates how actions in any layer of a hierarchical field resonate through each layer, creating waves throughout the whole field, either intended or unintended. Knowing players in these sub-fields, or layers within the field, operate within the field-specific actions, positions and capitals open to them. There are cultural and strategic moves in every layer. These moves are often defined by the field-specific logic and the ‘feel for the game’ that knowing strategic actors can use in pursuit of their cultural and strategic aims in the layer of the field in which they operate.

Table 8: The policy corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Promoting Gender Equity Conference, Canberra, February 1995 – Papers to be read in conjunction with the policy document. Eva Cox, Christopher McLean, Jeannie Herbert, Maria Pallotta-Chiorolli, Elisabeth Hastings, Wayne Martino.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td><em>Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools</em> Part A Policy Document prepared by Margaret Clarke and Carolyn Page was produced. Part B Papers from the 1995 conference were attached to be read in conjunction with the policy document.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century - MCEETYA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Curriculum Corporation 6th Annual Conference addresses by Minister Kemp and Ken Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Launch of BELS Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the extremely active period in the policy field between 1996 and 2006, many explicit moves were taken by the Liberal government, attempting to change the 1996 policy in 2003 and funding large scale school-based practitioner focused programs to address boys’ education between 2002 and 2006. These events in the policy field signalled not only government support for an explicit focus on boys within gender in education but a shift in policy to support theorising about gender relations with an emphasis on individual and group differences that could be measured rather than on structural power relations.

In 1999, the Adelaide goals agreed to by all states and territories set the broad parameters for schooling. As discussed in Chapter 3, the only mention of sex or gender was in Point 3.1 in the section on social justice, where sex was included in a long list of possible negative forms of discrimination. Interestingly the focus of this section of the declaration was on student outcomes from schooling, not experiences of schooling. At the Curriculum Corporation Conference that same year, the then Minister David Kemp and Head of the Commonwealth department, Ken Boston outlined the policy agenda to be pursued by the department which included a focus on ‘evidence-based’ programs and large scale reporting on outcomes of schooling. This policy focus on reporting outcomes intersected with debates in the policy, academic and practice sub-fields about the interpretation of large-scale data sets and the ways this kind of statistical evidence could and should inform policy and practice. It also intersected media reports drawing public attention to results of year 12 outcomes and with men’s movement advocacy for a focus on boys’ education. It is in this context that two large programs with a focus on boys’ education were instigated and a policy change about gender in education was attempted.
The changes in policy

The previous chapter focused upon the moves by the field of politics when the then Liberal government instigated a bi-partisan committee to conduct a public inquiry into the education of boys. However, before that event there were moves towards a change in the policy field by the then federal Labor Government under the auspices of the then current policy document *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993-1997* (Australian Education Council, 1994). The 1995 policy conference held in Canberra was the first event in a sequence leading to the policy change to include boys in 1996. This policy change moved the field away from a focus on girls’ education towards a focus on the next layer in the cultural field described in the heuristic in Figure 2 on p. 86, gender in education. Speakers at the conference included bureaucrats, academics and commentators who were active in the field at the time, such as well-known feminist social commentator Eva Cox, who gave the keynote speech, and feminist bureaucrats such as Susan Cameron. Then upcoming feminists and pro-feminist academics Wayne Martino and Maria Pallota-Chiorolli also participated. In 1996 a ‘draft’ policy document and several supporting papers from the conference were subsequently published.

The differences and similarities in the two policies are important as they underscore some differences in perspectives within the field. The previous policy *National Policy for the Education of Girls* (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1978) which was operationalized by the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993-1997*, and overseen by the Curriculum Corporation, identified four objectives:

- Raising awareness of the educational needs of girls;
- Equal access to and participation in appropriate curriculum;
- Supportive school environment; and
- Equitable resource allocation.

The policy document produced in 1996, which remains current government policy until this day, was developed in the context of the looming election and subsequent re-election of Liberal governments, and in the context of a global policy shift towards accountability and measurement of outcomes of social policies as well as a growing media and public discussion about boys’ education.
and advocacy for attention to boys’ education and male health from men’s movement advocates.

The 1996 policy addresses five major areas:

- Understanding the process of the construction of gender
- Curriculum, teaching and learning
- Violence and school culture
- Post-school pathways
- Supporting change.

In the 1996 document elements of awareness-raising, supportive environments and equitable resource allocations which were so important to a focus on girls were removed. In this move away from a focus on girls towards a focus on gender, this document was underpinned by a theoretical position about gender and gender relations, focusing on the adverse effects of particular behaviours, largely perpetrated by boys and on some post-school inequities for girls, rather than in-school processes, except in the area of curriculum, teaching and learning. The theory of the social construction of gender, which was the approach to equity contained in research and policy in girls’ education, was used to draw attention to broad power relations and to differences that result in disadvantage and marginalisation. Changes in this policy document privileged this theoretical construct, emphasised broad power relations between boys and girls and limited boys’ education strategies to programs focused on the most disadvantaged and marginalised.

This theoretical framing was strongly informed by the notion of hegemonic masculinity which has been fundamental to feminist and pro-feminist theorising about boys and men (Connell, 1987, 1995, 1996, 2000; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This all-encompassing sociological theory, with its foundation in notions of patriarchal power and continuing dominance of men over women, with explanations of variance and differences across class, race and culture, has been central to the discussion of how boys are to be conceived of within a social construction of gender framework. Arising from a study of social inequality in Australian secondary schools (Connell et al. 1982) ‘hegemonic masculinities’ suggests a model of multiple and hierarchical masculinities and power relations.
The beginnings of the change to the 1996 policy that included boys, and a more general focus on the education of boys, can also be seen in the cultural struggles and discourses in the field of girls’ education discussed in Chapter 2. By the early 1990s, greater attention was paid to difference and diversity within girls. The influence of post-structuralist feminist theory also drew attention to the processes of individual gender identity construction for both sexes within and outside of school (Kamler et al., 1994; Kenway & Gough, 1998; Yates, 1993, 1998). The rise of the relative strength of post-structuralist theories in social theorising was influencing many social fields at this time. While this notion has informed other studies of the influence of school on masculinities, post-structuralist feminist understandings have built on it to describe the individual experiences and processes occurring in schools (Alloway, 1995; Davies, 1989b; Kamler, 1999; Kamler et al., 1994). Studies of the intersection of school environments and practices and the ways masculinities are enacted within different cultures draw on elements of structural and post-structural understandings of gender. Mac An Ghaill (1994) for example, suggested the need to address the oppositional culture and increasing alienation of English working class boys from school. Martino and Pallotta-Chiarolli drew attention to diversity and marginalisation related to sexualities and ethnicities (Martino, 1995; Pallotta-Chiarolli, 1994).

The focus on individual experiences of gender and on difference as an important aspect of gender identity opened the way to questions about boys’ experiences of education. Relational categories were being broadened to include an analysis of the experiences of certain social categories of boys already identified within the parallelist radical sociological traditions, those of class and race. Indigenous identity, ethnicity, sexuality and geographic location were also under scrutiny from both radical and mainstream educational researchers and the academic and social experiences of individual girls and boys were coming to the forefront (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003; Rowe & Rowe, 2002).

The 1995 conference and subsequent 1996 policy document could be seen as somewhat of a coup for post-structuralist and group specific gender theorists, who had a focus on individual or sexuality identities and a practice focus on literacy. They were to a certain extent supported by pedagogy theorists (Lingard, 2005). Yet structuralist accounts of gender imbalances continued to permeate discussions of boys’ education, particularly within ‘competing victims’ discourses
which warned against viewing all boys as victims, yet presumably certain categories of boys could be viewed as victims in this discourse (Kenway, 1995a; Lingard & Douglas, 1999).

The sudden change in the policy field and involvement by strategic actors in the social and intellectual field can be understood in multiple ways, illustrating the purposes of and opportunities for moves by different players with different cultural positions and standings in the field. Both established and newer feminist and pro-feminist field players were keen to maintain the strong doxa of feminist and pro-feminist theorising of gender relations in education policy. The moves made by these players in the field can be related to the relative capital of the various players in the field as described in my heuristic about field capital and positions in Figure 5 on p. 97 (Bourdieu, 1984). They can be seen as strategic moves to interact with the field of power, as attempts to use the field of power to build their own cultural capital and position in the field, and to stave off likely incursions by the field of power into the cultural doxa of the field, that may undermine or weaken their cultural and strategic positions. Yet the policy document produced in 1996 has met with mixed reaction from both advocates for a continuing explicitly feminist, social constructionist approach to girls’ strategies and those men’s movement advocates and others who advocated for a different approach to the needs of boys.

The hard won educational policies for girls represented the success of a wider social movement for the emancipation of women. These policies were not designed to answer the increasingly publicly asked question “What about the boys?” To those academics and bureaucrats embedded in these cultural struggles and seeking to influence programs about girls’ education taken up by government policies, the turn towards a focus on boys must have seemed like a hit and run by the field of power. In this context, the 1995 policy conference and 1996 policy documents can be seen as a clear attempt to continue the emphasis of feminist theoretical framing and intellectual focus into any gender in education policy and practice focus that included boys. It was an attempt to change the field by moving the focus of the field away from girls, not towards boys, but upwards through the layers of the field towards a discussion of gender in education. Gender studies traditionally focused on women. This was an attempted re-emphasis on the layers of the cultural field of education, equity in education, gender in education, and boys’ and girls’ education represented in Figure 2 on p.
86. It was an attempt to side-step any discussion of boys’ needs and girls’ needs that could both be considered as important. It was argued that the avoidance of any presumptive equality where boys and girls could be seen to be dichotomous but equal categories was crucial to a gender equity policy with a continued focus on girls (Kenway, 1995b).

Yet there were differences within the cultural positions in the field that made this attempt to stave off any men’s movement interpretations of the field difficult. In fact the discourses of feminist and men’s movement players in the field often intertwined in agreement and disagreement in confounding ways in the critiques of the 1996 policy documents. Many regarded the inclusion of boys into this framework as a watering down of the original intention to draw attention to structural inequalities experienced by girls, which would change the very nature and logic of the field (Daws, 1997; Yates, 1997, 1999). Some critics of the 1996 policy point to the lack of inclusion of a post-modernist theoretical perspective that would give more weight to an individual boy’s or girl’s experience of gender in their lives (Daws, 1997). Others argued that the focus only on structural inequalities did not do justice to the variety of issues facing boys in a world of changing gender relations and expectations (Alloway & Gilbert, 1996; Fletcher, 2000; Hartman, 1999; Plummer, 2001; Yates, 1997). Another criticism of the focus on structural factors in girls’ education is the inability of many of the educational programs and practices to move beyond a critique of society towards actions that support girls’ and boys’ educational and life choices in concrete ways, and also support teachers who are working with these individuals and social groups in a classroom or school setting (Alloway et al., 2002; Jackson, 2003; Rowe & Rowe, 2002).

The 1996 Policy Document included boys yet privileged post-structuralist feminist theoretical positions through the selection of feminist speakers and authors and academics with practice standing. This attempt to accommodate concerns about boys while retaining a specifically feminist theoretical stance by a conference and policy change did not stave off the moves by government, nor did it silence debates and struggles within the field. The focus on agency, habitus and cultural capital in post-structuralist accounts of educational experience opened up discussions among practitioners of the strengths that students brought to school and the ways schools could engage with students through partnerships with parents and communities. This practitioner approach to boys’
education, highlighted in the submissions to the Inquiry, included the beginnings of a theoretical position on boys, which was not well-articulated at the time.

However, in 2003, the federal government let a contract to recast the 1996 policy and attempted to enact a new policy, as it had signalled in its response to the recommendations of the inquiry. The contract went to Gai Sheridan International, a consortium of consultants including two consultants who had recently retired from or left senior public service positions and a team from the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, Richard Fletcher and Deborah Hartman. In awarding this contract, the government had clearly accepted the proposition put by Fletcher to the Inquiry that rather than only a policy on girls’ education a parallel policy on boys’ education was also needed. The contract was to draft a gender equity policy with parallel streams for boys and girls. The government also appeared to reject the 1996 policy framing that the way to include boys was through a policy framed around gender power relations, with a major focus on violence. The contract was to review the evidence on outcomes for boys and girls and to produce a draft policy document for consideration by MCEETYA. In the process of the consultations for this contract, many senior academics and state gender equity units were interviewed and consulted. A wide range of views were expressed with many academics suggesting the 1996 policy should be recast to better include the diverse educational and social needs of all boys and all girls, including the strengths of particular groups of girls and boys. Generally, bureaucrats expressed the view that the current policy was workable and fitted with their current state approaches. Both academics and public servants were clear that any policy should take a nuanced approach to evidence, and while including strengths-based approaches to diversity in boys’ education should also contain a critical perspective on the adverse effects of unequal power relations A very careful detailed and nuanced examination of the data was provided as background to the draft policy documents submitted to the government. Yet, it was the relationship between gender and practice in schools, not the analysis of data that was questioned by MCEETYA in examining the draft. (Personal communications, unpublished papers).

The dispositions of feminist bureaucrats and scholars who had largely focused on academic and policy work around the education of girls were to view the proposed shift with great suspicion. MCEETYA representatives of the state jurisdictions were representatives from the equity units of each jurisdiction.
MCEETYA rejected the draft policy produced by the consultants and the 1996 policy document has not been revised and remains current to this day. The Federal Liberal government was not successful in getting state jurisdictions, all with Labor governments at the time, to agree to a change in policy.

**Struggles over data interpretation**

In the previous chapter I described how the political field used the discourses around statistical evidence in submissions and recommendations in the Inquiry into the education of boys to institute reporting and accountability measures on the state and territory education jurisdictions. While a narrow focus on HSC results in the media became a matter for hot contestation within academic debates on boys’ education, it was the broader focus on accountability driven by the demands of government and education systems that was driving the turn towards detailed reporting of outcomes (Hattie, 2005). Yates (1997) has argued that the broad trends represented in statistical accounts of boys’ educational outcomes were always evident, even during the earlier period where policy focus was on girls. Yet the turn towards ‘evidence’ that coincided with concerns about boys’ education was one factor that shifted the ground in the strongly held doxas that positioned girls in general as disadvantaged in education and society. It seemed that struggles over interpretations of statistics became the discourse through which various theoretical positions vied for positions of ascendancy in the field. These struggles were occurring in the policy layer, the academic layer and the practice layer of the field.

While the government focus on evidence, accountability and outcomes was clear, there were contested positions within the policy field, even among employees of the department overseeing the changes in policy. While the state exercised enormous power over education, it was not a monolithic entity. I have chosen two articles written by employees of the Commonwealth to illustrate differences within the policy field which interacted with the academic and practice layers of the field.
Illustrative Examples 3 and 4:

These two texts are abstracts of papers both written in 2000 by authors employed by the then federal Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA). One was delivered at a conference. The other was not published but distributed to interested academics. All authors had positions in the section of the bureaucracy that had carriage of the government’s programs relating to gender in education. The papers represent the authors’ views about issues in their work that might inform government policy.

On the surface of it these two texts seem very similar. The authors of both papers are writing in an appropriate academic style for a journal article or conference paper. They are looking at similar issues using data gathered from similar sources. They use nominalisation such as this paper rather than referring to themselves in first person. They also use similar verbs such as considers, considering, examines when describing the actions they are prepared to commit to. They both present some information and then use the qualifying However to indicate where they see the problem in the field and how they differ from other positions.

Yet, the authors took quite different stances on a major contentious issue of the period – that of data gathering and data interpretation. I suggest the different authors used different models of academic writing and different theoretical frameworks to shape and inform their work. Cortis and Newmarch used a feminist sociological analysis of the social situation of boys and girls in schooling, and therefore suggested a particular reading of and analysis of some available data. Cumpston and Smith are using a scientific, mathematical analysis of specific data sets and extrapolated some possible social explanations for their interpretation of the evidence within the data sets. The resulting conclusions that the authors reach have much more to do with their original propositions, based on their implicit or explicit theories, than the data themselves. These texts are excellent illustrations of the ways data were used by various players, even within the department, to support preconceived positions.

Many have argued, with Bourdieu, that the state, as a player with high economic capital in the field of power cannot be seen as an homogenous block,
always doing the will of capital (Benson & Neveu, 2005). In this case it is clear that there was a cultural struggle within the department over contested ideas and over data interpretation to support those ideas, with the two women authors supporting a feminist position, using a feminist theoretical argument to interpret the data and the two younger male authors, relatively junior in the department, taking a men’s movement position and attempting to use a scientific ‘neutral’ examination of the data to support their position.

Text 1 is the abstract of the paper: Boys in Schools What’s Happening? (Cortis & Newmarch, 2000). It is a paper prepared for “Manning the Next Millennium” An International Interdisciplinary Masculinities Conference hosted by the School of Humanities and Social Science, Queensland University of Technology, in December of the year 2000.

Text 2 is the abstract for the unpublished paper: Year 12, What’s sex got to do with it? (Cumpston & Smith, 2000).

Table 9: Textual Features Cortis and Newmarch and Cumpston and Smith

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text 1 Cortis and Newmarch</th>
<th>Text 2 Cumpston and Smith</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>This paper considers</strong> current patterns of boys’ and girls’ participation and achievement in school. <strong>Evidence shows</strong> that boys have consistently poorer outcomes than girls on basic literacy tests, and are less likely to complete high school. While at school, boys tend to study a narrower range of subjects and their average Year 12 scores are lower than for girls. <strong>However</strong>, it is certain groups of boys rather than ‘all boys’ who are more likely to perform poorly or become disengaged with schooling. <strong>Oppositional and homogenous gender categories</strong> are therefore inadequate for understanding the education of boys and the complex social factors which impact upon it. In considering possible explanations for</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>This paper presents</strong> the relative performance of males and females in school, with a particular focus on the final year. The main area of focus are International Comparisons for students on Reading, Mathematical and Scientific literacy, School Retention Rates, Year 12 performance, Year 12 Subject Performance, Subject ‘Equilibrium’ and socio-economic status. It is now well documented that males are not performing as well as females in schooling. <strong>However</strong>, Australia’s state based education system has made it difficult to build a national picture of what is happening in schools. Part of the purpose of this paper is to provide a national picture of the differences and trends in gender</td>
<td></td>
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The use of nouns to describe the categories under investigation is revealing of the different frameworks the authors used in their work. Cortis and Newmarch (2000) consistently used the terms boys and girls to denote these social categories of gender, while Cumpston and Smith (2000) prefer the more biological and scientific categories of male and female. Their clever title “Year 12, what’s sex got to do with it?” only works as a double meaning play on the word sex, if the readers understand that sex, rather than gender is the biological category. This distinction harks back to earlier debates which pitted theories of biological determinism against those of social construction.

The first paragraph of each abstract outlined the data that the papers have drawn upon. Both pairs of authors are using literacy data, Year 12 completion and year 12 subject results as a basis for the arguments in their papers. Cortis and Newmarch do not describe this as data to be examined. Rather they present it merely as background information to their point that certain categories of boys are more likely to disengage and therefore boys cannot be considered a homogenous group. In this way they present their theoretical approach of ‘which boys, which girls’ as correct by appealing to ‘the evidence’ of the data. Interestingly, they do not argue for a nuanced analysis of the data that allows for targeting of specific groups in interventions to overcome specific problems. Rather they take up the theoretical argument that binary categories are not adequate to describe what is happening. They move from this point to policy initiatives and principles gleaned from overseas, asking readers to go with them in what appears to be a call for borrowing of policies from the UK and NZ, in effect the globalisation of Australian policies.
In Cortis and Newmarch’s argument, the proposition they asked readers to accept is that the difficulty to be overcome in boys’ education is the inadequacy of oppositional and homogenous gender categories, even though they used them themselves in describing the situation in their opening paragraph. In Cumpston and Smith’s paper, the proposition they asked the reader to accept is that the problem is a lack of a clear national picture of trends and differences in gendered patterns, due to the state system of education in Australia. They purport to gather and disaggregate data from multiple sources in order to give this clear picture. This was exactly what was argued for and given in more sophisticated feminist analyses of the issue (Collins et al., 2000a). Yet, reading the body of the article, quite different conclusions to those feminist analyses are reached by Cumpston and Smith.

Both of these papers by Cortis and Newmarch (2000) and Cumpston and Smith (2000) were intended for a wider audience, and sought to shed light on explanations for what both agree are gender differences that can be seen by an examination of data. Both were clearly trying to address issues that arose in their work for the federal department and both sought to influence national policy. Yet neither seemed willing to address the issue that their own explicit or implicit theoretical position led to certain interpretations of data, not the other way around. The unstated silence in these papers is the question of the legitimacy of a focus on boys’ education within equity frameworks. The underlying issue is whether a focus on boys is always in opposition to a focus on girls, even if categories of boys and girls are further fractured into other categories of boys and girls.

These abstracts illustrate that, although the field of power, in the form of a government department, sought to influence the field, workers in the government department were also players in the field, and were influenced by and part of the cultural struggles for legitimacy of theories and explanations that were being waged in the field. It is interesting that both papers bring gender, rather than indigenous background or class or socio-economic background to the forefront of their argument, and begin with accepting the premise that boys are not performing as well as girls. So in that sense, it is clear that boys’ education was certainly seen as a legitimate issue for consideration by all of these workers in the government agency. All authors, as workers within the state apparatus were influenced by and took up the concerns of the state at the time. They were also
grappling with notions of gender and equity and the dangers of all the possible categories within an equity framework, in this very active and contested time of change in the policy field.

**Government Programs for boys**

Despite these different interpretations and positions on boys’ education within the department, the government pressed on in making changes to the field which clearly moved the field towards a practice focus on the education of boys.

While the government failed in its attempt to change the national policy document, it was poised to act on other changes to the field over which it did have control. Barely a month after the report of the Inquiry was tabled, the Minister, Brendan Nelson convened a forum and announced the government intentions to instigate well-funded school based programs (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). The newly re-elected Liberal government intervened into the policy and practice field by first instigating the Boys Education Lighthouse Schools Programme (BELS) closely followed by the even more substantial Success for Boys Programme (S4B). Both BELS and S4B were administered by the Curriculum Corporation. They provided two application and funding rounds or stages where interested schools across Australia could apply for funds to conduct projects in individual schools or small clusters. Clusters were usually between five and seven schools in the same geographical area. Curriculum Corporation, program managers ensured that the clusters were representative of all states and territories and were a mix of urban, rural and remote schools. Some attention was also given to ensuring there were a number of schools in low SES areas.

**Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools**

Through BELS, schools could apply for funds to conduct their own ‘evidence-based’ school-based innovations to meet the needs of boys in their school. The first phase of the program involved 230 schools across Australia. The interim report on the BELS was published in 2003 and the final report in 2006 (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, 2007b; Department of Education Science and Training, 2003, 2004).

The 2003 summary report of the first phase of the program outlined ten guiding principles for success in educating boys (Department of Education Science and Training, 2003). The principles focused on the now common themes
evident in the submissions to the Inquiry that had been taken up in school programs: pedagogy, curriculum and assessment; literacy and communication skills; student engagement and motivation; behaviour management and positive role models for students. The final report on this program, produced by a team headed by Peter Cuttance (2006) a mainstream educational researcher who had been involved in the NSW Department of Education’s Quality Assurance Unit, was released in 2006. This was well after the next federal program supporting boys’ education S4B commenced in 2005, leaving little possibility that the findings of BELS could inform S4B. The report on BELS showed that 351 primary and secondary and other schools participated in the second phase of the program across all states and territories and from a variety of capital cities, regional centres and rural locations. It concluded that schools that were most successful in meeting the outcomes of the program conducted complex, integrated multi-faceted strategies that were supported at a whole school level. Yet, even in those schools that conducted multi-faceted programs, in an effort to conduct a manageable program in the timeframe, many schools focused only on a small sub-group of boys within the school or cluster. A difficulty for project schools was their capacity to collect, analyse and interpret data. Often the boys chosen for programs were those already identified as having specific difficulties such as behaviour or being at the bottom of reading levels for their age. The short time-frame of 18 months implementation which did not coincide with the normal school planning cycle was also a difficulty for project schools in demonstrating or achieving changes in academic outcomes that could be attributed to the programs implemented under BELS (Cuttance, 2006).

The report concluded that the program contributed greatly to evidence of successful approaches to educating boys, particularly in the area of developing activity-based learning environments to suit boys’ learning styles. The challenge, the report said, was to build this knowledge into the every-day practices of all schools. Interestingly, while there had been a focus on activity-based learning, the most significant outcome achieved in the project schools in the time-frame was improved outcomes in boys’ behaviour. The concept of different learning styles was extremely controversial in the academic literature and was largely regarded by established pro-feminist academics as an unsupported essentialist argument about differences between boys and girls (Mills & Keddie, 2005). However, the link between behaviour and pedagogy would later be pursued
through a research focus on boys’ engagement in schools in low-income areas (Munns et al., 2006).

**Success for Boys**
The S4B activities began in schools in 2006 and were completed by 2007. Through S4B, a model of application for funds by individual schools or clusters similar to BELS was used. Around 1,600 schools participated overall. A condition of the funding was a commitment to conduct professional development and targeted action research projects around identified and specific boys’ educational issues in their school.

The five modules in the professional development package for teachers included: A Planning Guide and Core module; Boys and Literacy, Mentoring for success; Boys and ITC and Indigenous Boys. The modules were based on the conceptual model called *Expanding Repertoires of Practice*, an ecological model originally developed by Nola Alloway and her team through the Boys’ Literacy research also funded by the federal government (Alloway et al., 2002; Alloway & Gilbert, 1996). The model and the modules supported identified concerns about literacy achievement, recognised that many boys used technology in ways that were ahead of school programs, highlighted that learning occurred in a context of positive relationships and that many boys needed mentoring for success and that teachers and students required a supportive school culture. The module on Indigenous boys emphasised the need to connect with local communities, elders and role models. In these modules with a focus on boys, there was a recognition that there were differences between the schooling experiences of girls and boys as well as differences between boys.
Figure 7: S4B Model of Boys’ Education

There is inter-textuality between the texts produced in these programs, research reports funded by government and other literacy research conducted by the same authors (Alloway, 1995). While the modules have a focus on boys as a universal category, the authors warn against essentialising in the caveats which state:

Caveat 1:
Success for boys is not just about gender
Caveat 2:
No one learning style suits all boys
Caveat 3:
A Success for Boys programme is not just about motivating boys
Caveat 4:
Schooling practices are not set in stone
Caveat 5:
Success for boys must mean success for girls

Caveat 1 can be read as a ‘which boys?’ approach and many schools used S4B funding to focus on a small group of disengaged boys or boys seen as having particular learning or behavioural issues. An important aspect of the implementation of this module by some consultants was to encourage schools to interrogate their own data to identify issues. Schools often did not gather any
differentiated data that identified gender or other factors in school-based reporting of literacy, behaviour, attendance, subject choice or final schooling outcomes. Often schools had previously relied upon anecdotal evidence or teacher impressions about the numbers of boys or girls in any category and were often surprised after undertaking more rigorous analysis of school-based data. This often led to a focus on leadership, when schools discovered how few boys undertook leadership activities (Tracey & Hartman, 2006b). It also often led to a recognition that a small number of individual boys were regularly in trouble for behavioural issues, rather than widespread misbehaviour of many boys.

Caveat 5 emphasised the position of the Inquiry that a focus on boys is not a competition with girls, and the position that boys’ learning should not be at the expense of girls. This caveat was a position that could be agreed to by the many men’s movement and feminist and pro-feminist consultants who contracted to work with schools to undertake professional development and action research. Agreement between many men’s movement and feminist players that boys’ learning should not be at the expense of girls was often under-stated or hidden in the adversarial discourses at the time.

The delivery of the modules was conducted by many different consultants. While schools were able to choose a consultant, a condition of consultancy arrangements with Curriculum Corp was that consultants undertook training by senior academics from the module development team. Nola Alloway the lead author of the modules conducted many training sessions herself. The consultants and participating schools could adapt the modules to suit their particular contexts. Action plans for school based activities were also tailored by each school. The degree to which schools participated in action research and documented the outcomes varied widely. While the variability in the competency of consultants or in-school trainers to effectively deliver the training was discussed at the time, the effect of this on the outcomes of the whole program has never been established.

The final report on this program was commissioned and undertaken in 2006 with the final report due in 2007. After the change of government in 2007, the newly elected Labor government did not publish the previously commissioned and almost completed final evaluation report of the S4B program. To date no comprehensive evaluation of this program costing $19,400,000 has ever been published.
While no evaluation report has ever been released, various participating schools have written about their projects and some consultants used data from school programs with permission to conduct analyses of outcomes. One such analysis concluded that there was great within-school and across-school variability in outcomes, particularly when affective as well as cognitive outcomes were investigated (Clay, 2007, 2008). This study concluded that there were significant gender differences in student self-concept about their abilities in the subject English in participating schools that interacted in complex ways with another important factor, relationships between students and teachers. These differences were significant whichever the school attended or the socio-economic area of the schools. The findings of this study recommended a deepening of ecological models when investigating student outcomes to include a more comprehensive bio-social ecological framework (Clay, 2008).

What changed in the field?

There is no doubt that the intellectual field was impacted upon by these incursions by the state that set the agenda for policy about gender in education for the next decade. The agenda clearly represented a shift from a policy and practice focus on the education of girls that had been continuous for over 30 years. It clearly shifted the cultural capital of feminist academics in the field whose cultural struggles were around theorising about gender and power, and whose social interests in education were largely about the relative positions and experiences of girls. The spaces and positions available in policy discourses about gender in education from 1996 to 2006 were for those who were willing to enter the discussion with a focus on boys rather than girls.

There were several recurring themes about the education of boys within program materials and reports on their outcomes, some of which can be seen as fitting in with the stated policy aims and systems concerns of government in the delivery of efficient, effective and equitable education and some which echo new discourses about boys' identities, learning and relationships:

- a move towards an evidence-base for identifying problem areas, particularly retention and achievement;
- curriculum issues, such as literacy;
• pedagogy issues, including quality teaching and teaching and learning styles;
• relationship issues, including peers, teachers, mentors and role models;
• identity issues, including masculinities, socio-economic status, Indigenous and rural location and sexuality;
• wider and longer-term health, identity and post-school employment issues.

While many of these issues are similar to issues raised in the field of girls’ education in the 1980s, the ways they were discussed in relation to boys raised some direct challenges to the long held doxas and cultural capital of the intellectual field built up over the previous 30 years when a focus on girls’ education.

In addition, there was a tautological relationship between the then current equity and social justice framings of government policies and critiques of those policies, where both discourses almost ensured the need to demonstrate a victim status of a group to be focused on. Over or under representation in measureable factors such as early school leaving or literacy give evidential weight to the focus on gender equity. All of the frameworks for government funded programs supported this kind of measurement which demonstrated ‘which boys or which girls’ could be considered worthy of victim status, rather than a focus on how all boys and girls could thrive within a school system.

In the actions contained in Table 5, the state clearly and definitively widened the field to include a focus on boys in different ways to the previous period when there was a focus on girls. Through this re-shaping of the field, discourses about boys in gender policy in education in this period, shifted away from a central concern about the negative impact of male behaviour and male dominance on girls, contained in the 1996 policy document, towards more general concerns about boys’ academic and social outcomes. The government changed its approach to equity away from group specific programs to outcomes measurements that tracked gaps in outcomes and policy foci that drives delivery of good outcomes for all, nationally and internationally reported, while still retaining a focus on groups with the worst outcomes. The government wanted to retain its international reputation as a high quality, high equity education system and jurisdiction. Yet it has not fostered ongoing longer-term nuanced applied research on the interaction between school structures and pedagogies and
individual students and the formation of gendered identities that foster equitable positive school and post-school outcomes. The structure/agency dichotomy has not yet been fully explored in ways that could fully inform this kind of nuanced locally-based practice. There was a missed opportunity in not evaluating or fully reporting on the outcomes of the well-funded government programs to fully investigate nuanced successful practice that took into account the complex interactions between individual psychological gender identities and the social ecologies of families, schools and communities of boys. Such an evaluation would have shed light on the important question raised by these programs about how gender equity in schools policies and practices could fully address equity issues in relation to the diverse experiences of boys and girls in schools. There was a missed opportunity to revisit policy documents in an endeavour to take a more inclusive approach to equity and difference. Unlike national health policies, which did recognise the need for a men’s health policy that could account for a universal need to address men’s health as in some ways distinct from women’s health and in some ways the same, as well as take a very nuanced approach to differences between men (Macdonald, 2006), the national education policy has not been adapted in this way. The attempt to develop dichotomous and parallel policies for girls and boys would in all likelihood not have achieved this either.

The most comprehensive attempt in Australia at an inclusive policy for both boys and girls since this time was the NSW policy document which was published in 2008 (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2008) without any implementation, professional development or funding provisions which would have connected it to the practice layers of the field. Policy in gender and education is clearly contested and unfinished business. In the next chapter on the academic layer of the field, I will continue to discuss these confounding complexities in both the discourses and strategic actions in every layer of the field.
Chapter 7
The academic corpus

The demands of a successful academic career place an emphasis on a given scholar having a unique empirical and conceptual program of research. This encourages scholars to fashion their own terms for phenomena, ignore similar work of others, and generally engage in conversation only with those in their own theoretical camp (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012, p. 208).

In this chapter, I focus on the layer of academic or intellectual activity in the field. I have conceptualised this layer in this study as an inner and more subservient layer to policy and politics described in the previous chapters. Therefore, in this chapter, I have only included the particular academic research commissioned or funded by the government. While I take note of and make reference to the robust discourses about the education of boys and critiques of policy and practice within social science literature in academic journals and other publications, I argue that in commissioning and funding specific research about boys’ education, the state exercised enormous power over the agenda of that research. In my model of boys’ education, I consider this commissioned research as different to other publications by these academic players in the field, such as journal articles, which could be conceptualised as texts produced within the more autonomous field of social science (Bourdieu, 2005). In this way, I emphasise again that intellectuals are dominated within the dominant class and that the state has overarching power over the somewhat autonomous field of education in different ways (Swartz & Zolberg, 2004b).
In executing the conceptualisation of this layer of the field, I first outline the texts included in the academic corpus. I briefly summarise each of the seven commissioned research reports produced during this period. I use CLA to illustrate the ways texts were used in the cultural struggles in the field by closely examining small sections of two of these reports, the 2000 DETYA report (Collins et al., 1996) and the 2002 DEST report (Lingard et al., 2002) by epistemic players with identified feminist and pro-feminist positions in the cultural and strategic struggles in the field. I investigate the nature, intention and impact of the textual moves made by these epistemic players to influence the field of power and to maintain or further their positions in the field (Albright, 2008; Fairclough, 2003). This fine grained analysis allows for some discussion of the intellectual habitus, dispositions and positions open to the players accepting these research contracts. In the final section of the chapter, I map the objective structure of the relations between the positions occupied by the agents or institutions who compete for legitimacy and specific authority in this field in relation to the field of power.

This chapter focuses on the events in the aqua sections of Table 3, on pages 101 and 102 and reproduced here as Table 6. This categorisation enables relationships between the political and policy texts discussed in the previous chapters, the commissioned academic texts included here and other texts produced by the same authors to be made explicit and available for interrogation.

In a large commitment to research into gender in education, providing a considerable boost to the academic field as well as shaping the research agenda at the time, seven government-commissioned and funded reports relating to gender in education were published between 1996 and 2006.

Table 10: The academic corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>ACER report published - <em>Gender and School Education</em> by Collins, C., Batten, M., Ainley, J., Getty, C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>DETYA report - <em>Factors influencing the educational performance of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school</em> By Collins, Kenway, and McLeod was published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>DETYA Report - <em>Declining rates of achievement and retention: The perceptions of adolescent males</em> By Trent and Slade was published.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>DEST Report: Boys, literacy and schooling: expanding the repertoires of practice by Alloway and Freebody was published</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the seven reports, five were authored by academics working in universities, yet were published under the auspices of the Commonwealth government department responsible for commissioning and funding them and the other two were authored by researchers from the Australian Council of Educational Research, the government funded education research body.

In the small and competitive field of Australian academic research in education, universities tend to specialise in certain themes or theoretical traditions in research, building research teams and research cultures that foster certain research positions and dispositions, particularly the tendency to collaborate with others in one’s own theoretical tradition and to capitalise on research grants to continue publishing together around a certain topic or theme. All the lead authors of these reports were well-established researchers who had published widely in their specific fields of educational research. Many of the researchers contracted to undertake research on boys’ education had also been active in the field of girls’ education. Some were from feminist or pro-feminist and from other critical research traditions labelled as Radical Sociology of School Knowledge by Ladwig (1996). Cherry Collins, Jane Kenway and Julie McLeod were well-known feminist scholars from Deakin University in Victoria who tended to cross the gender studies and gender in education divide (Gore, 1992; Lingard et al., 2002), collaborating with other feminist scholars with a focus on the experiences of young people in schools and wider society (McLeod & Yates, 2006). Faith Trent was also a feminist scholar, originally from the University of Newcastle, who moved to Flinders University to be part of the Institute for International Education. Her work often had a focus on social justice and equity issues in education, particularly indigenous education. Rather unusually, her collaboration with Malcolm Slade crossed the divide between educational philosophy and educational sociology, a discipline which tended to dominate Australian educational research on gender and other equity issues. Nola Alloway and Peter Freebody were feminist and pro-feminist critical literacy researchers.
Chapter 7: The academic corpus

from James Cook University in Townsville in North Queensland (Alloway, 1995; Freebody, 2005). Lingard and his team were pro-feminist pedagogy researchers from the University of Queensland who also had a focus on education policy (Lingard et al., 2001). While these authors had not published together, in the small Australian field, there were intersections between researchers with a broad pedagogy focus within the sociology of education and those working on critical literacy approaches and feminist cultural studies in education (Luke, Comber, & Grant, 2003). Ladwig (1996) has argued that researchers within these critical traditions often unnecessarily put themselves outside of mainstream research concerns, and by the very nature of their theoretical positions on race, sex and class, only speak to those already in agreement with the positions they are taking on groups they define as fitting equity categories. Yet, in the field of boys’ education, in being awarded and accepting these government-commissioned research projects, these researchers took opportunities offered by the state to enhance and maintain the influence of their own positions on the field.

In contrast to these critical sociological theorists, some authors (Cresswell et al., 2002) were from the more mainstream Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER), which largely conducted systems-level research addressing the concerns of government in developing universal educational systems and understanding factors influencing student outcomes. Authors from ACER, often working within educational psychology and measurement frameworks, collaborated together on many large-scale research projects related to the outcomes of education and literacy at both a national and international level (Ainley, 2004).

The contestation within the intellectual field, between the disciplines of sociology and psychology and between more radical and more mainstream researchers, can be seen to be played out over framings of equity within these commissioned reports in the field of boys’ education. Interestingly, the first report published in 1996, was a collaboration between authors in these two groups, with Cherry Collins, the lead author a well-known feminist and John Ainley a well-known mainstream quantitative educational researcher.

The final report, published in 2005, was by a team led by Geoff Munns from the University of Western Sydney, in NSW. Geoff Munns had always focused on how schools might ameliorate the negative effects of poverty. His research had also had an indigenous education focus. In this research, the team wrote from a
social psychology perspective with a focus on individual motivation linked to school and community-based interventions.

These various theoretical perspectives, positions and dispositions in the field shaped the ways these authors conceptualised the research tasks, wrote about the various categories and differences they found, and presented and weighted the findings of the projects commissioned by the government. In this intensely contested and active field, many of these reports were published at the same time as the hearings and findings of the Inquiry into boys’ education were being considered by the government. Many of these authors also presented to this inquiry or to conferences and government advisory committee meetings held around this time. These texts represent one strategic move and opportunity in the cultural and strategic struggles of the field.

Through the changing emphases and theoretical framings in these reports, it can be seen that, in this period, the commissioned research shifted from the previous focus mainly on girls, to a focus on girls and boys as two distinct groups in relation to each other, to a focus on boys’ outcomes in contrast to girls, then to a narrower focus on boys and girls who were not doing well, and finally to a focus on low-income boys and their schools and communities, who were over-represented in the group who were not doing well. In this way the research during this period actually led the field away from girls, away from gender and away from boys. The majority of the reports frame the issues within compensatory equity discourses, yet intersecting and sometimes conflicting conceptualisations of distinctions between boys and girls and differences within these categories can be seen within the reports as well as between accounts taking different theoretical perspectives. Under the auspices of gender equity and boys’ education, equity concerns during this period moved away from concerns about girls, boys or gender towards a focus on poverty or low-income students and communities. To illustrate these shifts, I examine each report in chronological order in some detail.

**Gender and school education**

In 1996, the same year as the change to include boys in a Gender Equity in Australian Schools Policy, a report on gender and school education was published under the auspices of MCEETYA and its state and territory Gender Equity Taskforces. While the purpose of the report was to provide information in
relation to the implementation of the National Policy for the Education of Girls, the research looked at girls and boys as two distinct categories (Collins et al., 1996). This was a comprehensive report on a large-scale qualitative and quantitative study involving 408 primary and secondary schools across capital and provincial cities and rural areas from government, Catholic and independent sectors. It involved separate questionnaires for system and sector authorities, principals, teachers and Year 6 and Year 10 male and female students. Data were analysed according to these sector and participant categories and at a national and state level. The returned sample size of teachers was 1,097 primary teachers and 1,465 secondary teachers. The student sample sizes were 4,969 Year 6 students and 4,855 Year 10 students.

The authors explicitly took a social construction of gender theoretical perspective in framing their analysis, which they described in the following ways:

Young people are put under a range of pressures to see themselves and their place in the world in certain ways because of their biological sex, and to acquire the attributes – demeanour, attitudes, behaviours – culturally associated with that sex. The twin process of external pressure together with the personal project of attempting to make oneself acceptable in gender terms is called ‘gender construction’ or ‘the construction of gender’. It is a process of learning and important aspects of it take place in schools. (Collins et al., 1996, p. ix)

They stated that the study primarily investigated this process. They discussed the experience of the social construction of gender at school as one experienced by all students. However, in exploring the experience of gender for both girls and boys, the authors of the report focused on the major areas in the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools: sex-based harassment; attending to bodily functions; disruptive and dominating behaviours in the classroom; equal access by girls to school resources; gender and subject choice; and gender and the extra-curriculum. This focus solely on the policy areas designed to address inequities for girls ensured the authors were focusing on boys only in relation to the concerns of girls’ schooling. Yet in investigating what schools were doing about gender they addressed: system attention to gender issues; staff development; appropriate provision at school level; provision for ‘Least Benefit’ and ‘At Risk’ girls and boys; developing higher quality interpersonal relations; working towards constructions of gender which do not constrict or diminish students as developing persons; and working towards constructions of gender
which lay the foundations for a more just adult society. This list of actions can be seen as a gender equity focus which could apply equally to all girls and boys as well as encompass the specific concerns of particular groups of girls and boys.

The authors asked the same questions of and about boys and girls. They found that sex-based harassment was a known part of school life for 90% of the surveyed students. The survey data indicated that there was widespread sex-based harassment in schools. Perhaps surprisingly, the authors indicated that both sexes were equally likely to be victims of verbal sex-based harassment and boys were even more likely to be victims of physical bullying based on sex. Perpetrators of sex-based harassment were more likely to be boys. Yet significant numbers of girls perpetrated harassment on others as well. Interestingly, the student survey results reported higher levels of bullying and harassment of boys in high socio-economic groups than middle or lower socio-economic groups. Calling for further research, the authors concluded that the behaviours they identified as sex-based harassment seemed to be part of establishing dominance relations among males as well as putting girls as a group in a less dominant position in a gender system. The authors also interpreted disruptive behaviour in the classroom such as ‘mucking around’ in class, ridiculing answers and deriding those who wanted to work, as part of a gender-based dominance pattern, with boys reported two to three times more often than girls as perpetrators of such behaviour.

The authors drew attention to areas of successful policy implementation, concluding that 70% of students have been taught to recognise sex-based harassment and 75% of students had been taught that it was fine not to conform to gender stereotypes. They also drew attention to the gaps in policy implementation, reporting that very low numbers of students (40%) reported spending any class time on developing mutual and self-understanding of ‘what it is like to be a boy or a girl’. Only 50% of girls and 35% of secondary boys had been taught anything about parenting. They also reported that boys were much less likely to be challenged to broaden their curriculum experiences and to receive teaching about strategies for developing positive interpersonal relationships.

Identifying issues of concern, they noted a developing anti-school and anti-achievement pattern of behaviour among some boys, which they hypothesised, was a response to being challenged by the increasing success of girls in schools
and boys’ inability to cope with a gender order in which they were not on top, rather than any inadequacies in school programs, implying that the onus for change should be on boys and boys’ cultures.

In discussion of teachers’ survey responses, the authors noted that most teachers who had undergone professional development about the social construction of gender rated it as only moderately useful or of little use. In discussing this, the authors stated:

Underlying these ratings are challenges to teachers’ personal constructions of gender, on the one hand and, on the other, the puzzling real difficulties for all of us in translating the strongest gender consciousness into good teaching practice (Collins et al., 1996, p. 169).

Teachers’ own gendered identities were seen an important part of their professional roles. The authors concluded that gender policies and procedures do make a difference to the gendered experiences of students and that most states had gender policies. About half of Australian schools had taken up gender issues under the National Action Plan for Girls. The authors also concluded that surprisingly little attention was paid to monitoring and developing specific supports for ‘least benefit’ and ‘at risk’ students.

The authors of the report also noted that boys’ education was raised by many principals and teachers as an ongoing concern not currently adequately addressed under the current policy and plan directed towards girls. In discussing this, the authors suggested two major issues were raised by teachers and principals: less certain career paths and work patterns for many boys and whether the focus on girls had impacted negatively on boys. Suggesting that these teachers and principals misunderstood the issues and were influenced by popular cultural myths about boys and girls, they theorised these concerns as ‘an indicator of how gender is untruthfully and destructively construed in popular culture as an either-or matter, a zero-sum game between the sexes rather than as a mutual benefit matter’ (Collins et al., 1996, p. 176). These interpretations and dismissals of widespread concern by practitioners to both understand and address boys’ educational issues so that all students could be successful at school underscore the dissonances between the purposes of the academic layer and practice layer of the field. It seems that these researchers were unwilling to address the fact that theoretical approaches to gender construction were not resonating with practitioners who were faced with the task of transformational
learning that would lead to successful futures for all students, yet were well aware that schools did not seem to be able to equip many boys for the changing economic and social situations they would face.

Factors influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females

In the report *Factors influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after leaving School* (Collins et al., 2000a) by some of the same authors as the 1996 report above, the emphasis of study had clearly shifted towards outcomes, and was framed in terms of disadvantage. There was a move away from an approach to all girls’ experiences of schooling, towards a much stronger emphasis on ‘which boys and which girls’ were most disadvantaged. This included propositions about ways that gender difference intersected with other social and cultural differences to create educational disadvantage. The authors attempted to link individual gendered experiences of schooling with bigger picture numerical analyses of post school outcomes. They gave a very detailed account of participation, performance and post-school outcomes measures across Australia and they framed gender as significant in relation to the subtle ways that difference may become disadvantage. They characterised first and second order disadvantages affecting student outcomes. Of the seven first order disadvantages listed, five related to the student and their personal, family and social circumstances; one to the school environment; and one to the learning environment. The first listed first order disadvantage was “being locked into a traditional and narrow gender identity and peer group” As suggested by Skelton (Skelton, 2001) educational discourses were moving towards a focus on vocationalism and marketisation can be seen in the authors’ focus on differences in post-school outcomes in jobs and earnings and an emphasis on ways subject choice influenced these outcomes.

With competition in a stratified and shrinking labour market an issue, the authors highlighted post-school disadvantages for girls, despite the measurable increase in-school performance by many girls (Collins et al, 2000, p 5).

The authors made seven recommendations for recognising the issues and redistributing resources to areas of most need. In suggesting a continued focus on a more nuanced ‘which boys, which girls’ approach to gender in education, they concluded that addressing inequalities arising from the unequal distribution
of resources, recognition and respect both within and beyond education is the core business of gender equity policies and programs in education.

Interestingly, the statistical turn required by government, and investigated and theorised thoroughly in this report, supported the re-turn towards curriculum as an important site for struggle about gender. Literacy, as both an indicator of current school achievement and a predictor of further academic engagement, retention and success, was seen as a vital area of research in this report, as well as others. The emphasis on post-school outcomes in this report, identified literacy as a significant area of difference in the set of factors that resulted in early-school leaving for both male and female early-school leavers (ACER, 1999; Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs: Analysis and Equity Branch, 2000).

While these two reports are very different in methodology and focus, they share the stated theoretical framing of the social construction of gender and of the need for boys and girls to change their own performance and construction of gendered identities. Whether the categories are the universal categories of boys and girls or more specific categories of particular groups of boys and girls, the equity discourses are framed in terms of compensation for disadvantage and in terms of girls as victims of individual behaviour or social discrimination. When boys are positioned as disadvantaged, their gendered identities and peer groups are framed as the main causal factor in that disadvantage. Yet, the failure of schools to explicitly allow exploration of and to teach about identities, social skills and relationships under compensatory policies for girls was not regarded as a causal factor. Instead, boys’ behaviours and teachers’ difficulties with understanding gender construction and translating it into the classroom was suggested as the problem. This interpretation of causal factors and the dismissal of short and long-term impacts of early school leaving for boys, in making a case for the impacts on girls was criticised in the final report of the Inquiry into the education of boys. The tone of blame for either boys or teachers and framing of girls or particular groups as ‘victims’ in these reports amounts to a logical inconsistency in that these authors had condemned the notion of ‘competing victims’, yet in the framing of girls and specific groups of girls as well as specific groups of boys as disadvantaged, the authors are defining and redefining disadvantaged subjects in terms of categories of victims.
Declining rates of achievement and retention: The perceptions of adolescent males

In a project funded by the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs and led by Faith Trent from Flinders University, Malcolm Slade (Trent & Slade, 2001) surveyed and interviewed 1800 boys and a much smaller sample of girls in Year 9 and 11 in 60 South Australian government, independent and Catholic schools about their views on the well-established declining achievement and retention rates for boys as a gender group. Boys as a group were the main focus of this research, which was methodologically similar to the 1996 report (Collins et al., 1996), yet the authors reached very different conclusions. Their findings were that the boys’ views were clear and largely uniform in their perspective that the adult world is ‘not listening’ and ‘not really interested’. They were supported in these views by the girls interviewed.

The authors reported that even boys who were well aware of both the expectations and rewards of remaining at school understood the school system as demanding the kind of personal sacrifice and general disempowerment that makes the hazy promise of long term rewards simply ‘not enough’ for many of them. The boys who were surveyed and contributed to focus groups suggested that the disruptive behaviour of many boys was a logical response to many aspects of the school curriculum and pedagogy that were boring, inconsistent, not culturally up-to-date and did not draw in students or draw on their outside of school knowledge and interests. They and the girls surveyed suggested this boredom and disaffection with school was also shared by girls, yet not so manifested in girls’ disruptive behaviour. The responses also suggested a uniformity of views about this aspect of school that cut across other differences such as socio-economic groupings, identified trouble-making, levels of academic success and gender. Many boys and the small number of girls in the study uniformly rejected many of the academic and policy explanations for the identified lack of school achievement and retention amongst some boys. Isolated and fragmented issues and categories of students suggested by academics, media commentators and policy makers and politicians were all rejected as unsatisfactory explanations of low retention rates. Versions of masculinity, poor early-literacy, power-play behaviour in the classroom, and low-socio economic status were either not important or a mere fragment or symptom of the real issues, according to the boys and to Slade and Trent.
In summarising the participants’ views, Slade and Trent suggested that the fundamental task in dealing with declining rates of achievement and retention involved a cultural and philosophical catch-up in the education system from the top-down. They suggested academics, policy makers and school-decision makers needed to recognise the cultural paradox of western thinking, of a self-referentially inconsistent commitment to both fragmentation and certainty, in contrast to the stated aim of education of equipping students to cope with constant change. The most dangerous cultural paradox causing disaffection for students, they suggested, is that the education system ostensibly geared towards equipping students for the constant change and contextualisation of skills that increasingly characterises social and work relations on an individual, social and global scale, actually rewards conformity and compliance rather than creative adaption to change. They suggested an appropriate philosophical approach to education would be a recognition that everything needs to be contextualised and connected – from individual experiences, to the experiences of any particular group, to the work and out-side of work experiences of teachers and students. The young participants’ tendency to coalesce the range of boys’ educational issues into defining ‘bad teachers’ as the problem, and ‘good teachers’ as the solution, was not merely teacher-bashing, according to the authors. They suggested that the boys and girls recognised the interconnectedness of their experiences far more profoundly than the adult researchers, policy-makers and decision-makers responsible for educational policy and practice, and they contextualised it in the immediate people and relationships in their school environment. Further, the authors suggested that the cultural logic of dichotomous categories such as boys and girls, low and high socio-economic status and other fragmentations evident in curriculum and pedagogy, which are useful and somewhat necessary, were also false and well out of date. They argued that most educational theorising un-knowingly or deliberately resorts to the kind of fragmentation that prevents real solutions through connecting and contextualising the issues. The inability of the school system to address disaffection of many boys and the confusion in theorising about boys’ education, they suggested, is an example and manifestation of the current cultural paradox of fragmentation and lack of contextualisation.

The authors’ focus on philosophy rather than sociology of education or curriculum and pedagogy were certainly challenging to adults, teachers,
researchers and the government. In this report, boys and girls are presented initially as distinct categories, yet the authors put the proposition that their status of being young and school students in a system not catering to their current interests and future needs, yet purporting to do so, is the most salient category of distinction. While students suggest ‘bad teachers’ are to blame, they insist they have and want good relationships with ‘good teachers’. The authors refrain from blaming teachers, instead calling for an overhaul of the system that is difficult for teachers and stultifying for students. In this discourse the interests of boys and girls and teachers are positioned as unified and the problem is the fragmentation and lack of reflexivity and self-referential inconsistency of many who are attempting to overcome the problems of disengagement and under-achievement currently exhibited by many boys. The familiar parallel equity categories of race, sex and class are not evoked in the distinctions made by these authors. In terms of equity discourses, they are strongly arguing for a system of education that is transformational for all students as well as cognizant of any salient difference.

Interestingly, this challenge to prevailing discourses from both feminist and men’s movement players was largely ignored or given little weight. Three other reports published in the next year continued the contestation over literacy and pedagogy evident in much of the literature that this report and the authors’ conclusions had so soundly criticised.

**Boys, literacy and schooling**

In *Boys, literacy and schooling – expanding the repertoires of practice* (Alloway et al., 2002), the authors took up the notion of ‘which boys’ are underachieving in literacy and investigated explanations for this underachievement and effective strategies for improving literacy outcomes for boys.

The authors’ focus was on performance of and achievement in school based literacy. The research was conducted in two phases, with Phase One gathering qualitative and quantitative data of the views of primary school teachers, parents and students from 24 varied school contexts, describing the discourses about boys’ literacy commonly available for teachers and parents to draw upon. Phase Two, used an action research approach to intervention research, planning, implementing and evaluating classroom strategies in literacy in 12 of the original schools. The authors, clearly informed by post-structuralist gender theory and critical literacy theory, developed a model of three intersecting
Chapter 7: The academic corpus

‘repertoires’ to be investigated, repertoires for: (re)presenting the self; for relating; and for engaging with and negotiating the culture. This approach echoed other ecological models of practice found in social services which nested an individual in spheres of influencing factors, either protective or contributing to risk for that individual. The repertoires of practice model of individual practices included a post-structuralist feminist analysis of the positions of males in society. It spoke to teachers in that its practice focus offered multiple ways of addressing boys’ education issues within the literacy classroom context.

The study identified two trends in the participating teachers’ estimates of changes in the performance of their students. First, the teachers reported the code-breaking aspects of literacy changed the least in the students’ literacy practices in the study. While not explicitly supporting more time spent on code-breaking aspects, such as phonemic awareness, this could be seen to support the argument that this is a neglected area of literacy education. Second, the teachers felt that boys’ gains were generally more substantial than those of girls as a result of the interventions specifically targeted towards boys. The authors made eight recommendations about boys’ education and literacy, including: advocating for attention to the constructions of masculinity that boys bring to the classroom; developing pedagogical strategies that promote an active purposeful and democratic learning environment; maximising hands on experiences; sharing authority and agency; and engaging with real-life, popular cultures, and literacy technologies.

A significant recommendation in the report was the need for professional development and further research based on the model developed. Two years later the government announced its second program for the education of boys: Success for Boys (S4B). Curriculum Corp was awarded the contract for administering this program that had a significant professional development and action research component. In a further collaboration with Curriculum Corp, Nola Alloway’s team at James Cook University developed and trained consultants to deliver the modules in this program based on the ecological model developed in this government funded literacy research. Researchers who could bridge the gap between the academic and practice layers of the field were very successful in this period of privileging practice. The models developed in this project could address the daily concerns of teachers in connecting to the ‘life-worlds’ and identities of boys and girls and allowed for explorations of differences in specific contexts.
The fact that the units developed raised the literacy achievements of boys to a greater extent than girls, would not be regarded as a problem in a compensatory equity framework. The danger of a seesawing approach to girls’ and boys’ interests and learning would be that over time it could lead to a disengagement of girls, requiring further compensatory measures for girls. The focus on boys’ literacy has been criticised in many academic writings of this era, and at this time approaches to literacy were also hotly contested, so the focus on boys and the finding that phonemic awareness was the area of least improvement in the critical literacy models used in this study were both controversial, highlighting the difficulty in negotiating boundaries across layers and positions within discourses in a contested field.

**Boys in school and society**

*Boys in school and society* written by Cresswell, Rowe and Withers (2002) was published by ACER. While using a different framework to the social construction of gender, the authors of this report attempted to bridge differences between sociological and psychological explanations of disparities in educational and social outcomes by taking what they called an ‘evidence-based’ approach to boys’ educational issues. They examined the over or under-representation of boys in categories of achievement measured in national and international data gathering activities. Summarising this data by gender categories, they concluded that boys as a gender group were significantly more disengaged with school and more likely to be at risk of underachievement. Boys exhibited more externalising behaviour problems at home and in school and were subject to more disciplinary actions during school. They were more likely to participate in delinquent behaviours, alcohol and substance abuse during adolescence and 4-5 times more likely than girls to suffer from depression and commit suicide.

However, the authors put forward a very different interpretation of in-class disruptive behaviour to the two earlier reports (Collins et al., 1996; Collins et al., 2000a) and to that suggested by Trent and Slade (2001). Their argument was based in physiological and psychological accounts of learning. They suggested a close and causal relationship between inattentiveness related to a lack of mastery of the literacy requirements and/or clearly hearing and understanding teacher instructions. In further exploring inattentiveness, they highlighted that over 50% of consultations from paediatricians were related to behavioural
problems including ADD and AD/HD with a ratio of 9:1 boys to girls. Boys also had a higher prevalence of auditory processing problems. Boys were over-represented in remedial literacy classes. They suggested that boys with low socio-economic background were most at risk with regard to this combination of factors that might affect their literacy outcomes. Supporting some findings by Slade (2002), they suggested that boys also reported significantly less positive enjoyment, perceived curriculum usefulness and positive teacher responsiveness in school. Beyond school, a smaller percentage of boys went on to tertiary education but a higher percentage participated in vocational education and training. They were more likely to drop out of school, resulting in less employment and quality of life opportunities.

The authors noted that Australia was one of the few countries where gender differences in mathematics were not significantly in favour of boys. Differences in primary and early secondary were not significant with boys over-represented in the top and bottom achievement levels in later secondary schooling. In proficiency with computers, more boys than girls met all 13 proficiency standards.

The authors suggested that the accumulative and compounding relationship between inattentive behaviour and lack of or late development of early-literacy skills impacted upon the later educational and social outcomes of many boys. The report concluded with a discussion of implications and some suggested strategies available to teachers. The authors noted that teacher factors have strong positive effects on students' attitudes, behaviours in the classroom and educational achievement outcomes, and that teacher factors can ameliorate negative gender and socio-economic factors. Drawing on authors from pedagogical and social construction of gender theoretical positions, they quote Macdonald, Bleach and Gilbert and Gilbert in suggesting strategies to overcome these differences raised as major concerns in boys' education. The authors use terms such as social development rather than social construction, indicating they were working from a psychological or medical model rather than a sociological one. Yet they also point to good teacher relationships, school structures and the development of social skills and programs for boys to support positive male identities, relationships and academic success, including approaches to male identities identified as missing in earlier reports, yet compatible with the social construction of masculinity theoretical position (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998b). This
research report which attempts to build bridges between psychological and sociological explanations of differences and disparities and concerns for boys' overall with school contexts focusing on the teacher is very different to the style of the submission to the Inquiry by Rowe and Rowe, which presented much the same information. It seems to be supporting the need for teachers to be aware of possible physiological difficulties in many boys leading to a lack of literacy attainment that compounds disadvantage.

**Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys**

Another report on boys' education also focusing on pedagogical processes was published in 2002. The *Research Report: Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys* (Lingard et al., 2002) was based on a pedagogical framework developed in Queensland known as Productive Pedagogies (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003). This pedagogical model and a similar one developed later in NSW by some of the same team were strongly supported by state systems as a way to improve outcomes for all students (Education Queensland, 2002; New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2003). In Australia, these models were not specifically linked to an analysis of gender differentiated or further disaggregated statistical data. The UK took a different approach to gender that systematically analysed national and school-based data and investigated school cultures more broadly in relation to this data (Sukhnandan, 1999; Sukhnandan, Lee, & Kelleher, 2000, 2002). This partly explains why data gathering and interpreting became such an issue in Australian boys' education as the commonwealth government used girls' and boys' education funding to move state jurisdictions towards nationally consistent reporting of outcomes.

Lingard et al found strong evidence that the quality of teacher-student relationships and the quality of the classroom pedagogies were the central school-based factors for good educational outcomes for both boys and girls. They suggested that a focus on these aspects of schooling was likely to be more successful than strategies that were explicitly gender specific. It suggested schools align effective pedagogies with curriculum purposes and assessment practices. It recommended that pedagogy in schools be developed to be more intellectually demanding, more connected to the students’ lives and the world beyond the classroom, and more socially supportive. In keeping with gender theories that took cognizance of individual differences, it recommended greater
recognition of differences within the student body. It also recommended teacher professional development as a very important strategy for addressing the educational needs of boys. The report contained a critique of *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* (Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, 1996) as having little salience or impact at either systemic or school levels. In contrast to earlier reports, it noted that, at that time, apart from the New South Wales government system, which had a specific gender policy, there appeared to be a policy vacuum in relation to gender and boys. As this is different to what was reported by Collins et al (1996) it appears that there was less commitment by states to their own gender policies under the 1996 policy than under previous polices and action plans for girls. The authors suggested that the lack of an accompanying action plan in the 1996 policy made it difficult to implement. While arguing for a social construction approach to boys behaviour, and a ‘which boys, which girls’ approach to disadvantage, in arguing for a universal pedagogical model, this report also seems to argue for a nurturing of transformation for all students approach to equity and difference.

**Motivation and Engagement of Boys: Evidence-based teaching practices**

The final report on boys’ education commissioned by the government while the liberals were in power was published in 2006. The report’s focus was the motivation and engagement of boys (Munns et al., 2006). The focus and stances of the authors of this report show how the interactions between the cultural field and the field of power influenced and shifted the cultural field.

The authors of this report were established players in the field of educational research, particularly in relation to creating successful strategies and outcomes for low-income and indigenous students. None of the authors had previously written specifically about boys’ education. In contrast to Alloway et al, Cresswell, Rowe and Withers and Trent and Slade, the report clearly frames itself in compensatory equity discourses in its focus on low SES, rural and Indigenous boys, rather than boys as a group. It also draws on evidence of academic underachievement as a justification for this focus rather than on sociological theories of power imbalances that may lead to discussions of ‘competing victims’.
The aim of the report was to examine the motivation and engagement of boys, in particular those from Indigenous, low-socioeconomic, rural and isolated backgrounds. These boys have historically been over-represented among those students who are under-achieving academically and/or experiencing social difficulties. (Munns et al., 2006, p. 7)

Another stated aim of the research was also to address a common critique in the intellectual field that practice around boys’ education was not grounded in research. In relation to the ‘which boys, which girls?’ discussion, the authors state that:

Second, boys’ motivation, engagement and socio-academic outcomes were recognised as being related to, if not inseparable from, boys’ socioeconomic status (SES), and/or geographical location and/or cultural factors. Methodologically, this suggests that there is no unified sense of ‘boyhood’ in relation to motivation, engagement and social and academic performance. A focus on ‘boys’ as a single, unified category would conceal more than it would reveal. For the purposes of this project then, the data on boys’ motivation, engagement, social and academic performance were disaggregated according to factors – SES, geographical (urban, rural/regional) and cultural (Indigenous) factors. The project describes how these intersect and interact and investigates how schools generate and support the conditions that reinforce the motivation, engagement, and social and academic performance of certain groups of boys. (Munns et al., 2006, p. 7)

This framing of the focus on certain groups of boys as a methodological issue rather than an ideological or cultural or theoretical one has the effect of allowing the researchers to appear neutral in the cultural contests in the field at the time as appealing to the accountability logic and rhetoric of government and focusing on boys rather than girls in the identified groups.

A corollary of the report’s concern to ground practice in research as well as evidence, was the concern of practitioners that a lot of educational research did not address the practical concerns of what teachers could do about the identified issues. This report did represent a turn that addressed a growing call in the practice literature for taking a holistic rather than a fragmented approach to boys’ experiences in schools (Munns et al., 2006). The schism between curriculum and pedagogy aspects of schooling and the welfare aspects was an issue highlighted in the intersecting discourses around boys’ education and middle schooling (Hattam & Prosser, 2008).
The research used a conceptual model (MeE framework) that enabled teachers to work with both the individual and the contextual issues in engagement and therefore simultaneously at micro and macro levels, or the psychological and the socio-cultural. The M (Motivation) in the framework addresses individual student motivation through reference to educational psychology framings. The ‘e’ explores engagement from an educational sociology perspective – addressing whole classroom practices. The ‘E’ brings these together to describe aspects of Engagement at school. It can be seen as an ecological model, similar to that developed in the earlier report on literacy by Alloway et al and used in the Success for Boys modules, (Alloway et al., 2002; Curriculum Corporation, 2006) in that it nested individual boys in their personal, cultural and social surroundings to discuss how these interact to impact upon motivation and engagement. It could also be considered grounded in contextualised post-structural theoretical concerns about the ways factors intersect to create unique dispositions and experiences rather than pre-determine outcomes. Not surprisingly, given the report conducted a number of case studies in schools that had developed successful boys’ education strategies, its conclusions mirrored many of the approaches recommended in the practice literature. The authors suggested five principles and numerous strategies to give practical meaning to the theoretical MeE framework. The principles were: focus on student outcomes; select contextually relevant starting points; generate pathways that build a coherent and multifaceted approach; and develop professional leadership and learning. This report represents a move towards both contextualising and nesting individual boys’ identities, gendered identities and family, community and school strategies for success in school that had the potential to bring together pedagogical, psychological and sociological explanations and understandings of boys’ education in productive ways. It was released during the final funding period of the Success for Boys program. The author’s insights may well have informed the school-based research and practice experimentation being conducted in many schools across Australia. We will never know whether this was the case.

In these seven very different reports commissioned by the government in a very short space of time, intersecting with other events such as the submissions and report on the Inquiry and advice from its own department, the government had much information on which to base its interventions in the field. It had
canvassed differences in the field and it had clearly supported the position that the evidence about boys’ over-representation in low achievement bands in literacy and early school leaving warranted a turn towards boys’ education. In this turn, players within the field put their propositions to the government, attempted to win the government to their arguments and thereby enhance their valued capital within the field. Their interests in the cultural struggles in the field intersected with their strategic interests in the small field of education research in Australia and in the positions they had carved out for themselves. The academic field of educational research was never highly autonomous, having always intersected with the political and policy layers. Yet, what was at stake in this layer of the field was the ability to exercise the symbolic violence of visions, positions and propositions about gender and equity in this new context of a focus on boys rather than girls. While some teams include relatively new players with very established players as lead authors there are no new players represented as authors in these commissioned reports. Yet, the field has been opened to different and intersecting discourses. The established ACER researchers with a previous focus on literacy learning through psychological traditions are now entering gender discourses to contest social construction discourses within literacy. Established theoretical sociologists working with social construction theories are now commissioned to analyse and interpret large data sets. Established social psychologists with reputations for work on indigenous and low-socio-economic disadvantage are now investigating gender and the ways schools interact with boys in these groups. Established researchers in universal pedagogy and equity policy for girls now find themselves investigating how pedagogy relates to boys’ outcomes. The field of gender and equity was disturbed and disrupted in this period and the autonomous pole of gender theorising where the long held doxa of the social construction of gender and girls as disadvantaged subjects was strong, was challenged. In some ways the academic layer of the field moved towards more inter-connected and contextualised understandings of the ways gender and schooling interact, through a connection with the importance of the teacher in developing relationships and pedagogies that motivate and inspire boys to remain at school and achieve academic success. It was clear that all of these players in the field thought that boys’ education was a game worth playing, yet the different approaches and interpretations evident in these reports and the continued
contestation over the positioning of boys or categories of boys in equity discussions conducted outside these reports did not create a field united by a common purpose. When government funding and intervention in the field abruptly ceased with the change of government, the field that was left behind was fragmented and largely deflated. I now turn to some analysis of the academic field itself in an attempt to understand this.

**Texts at work in the field – Illustrative Examples**

These examples of the operation of texts in the field are small sections of texts by epistemic players in the field. I chose these authors because of their prominent positions, as well-known advocates of particular feminist and pro-feminist cultural or ideological positions in the field and because of their prolific writing and high standing in the autonomous academic field of educational research. I use the analysis of these texts to illustrate the ways texts were used strategically and knowingly by players in the field. I undertake a Critical Language Analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Wallace, 1992) of the ways language features create meaning, enabling these authors to make their propositional claims in powerful ways through skilful use of textual features and conventions of the genres they are using. I also analyse how textual features enable authors to simultaneously make their cultural and strategic moves in the field through the production and positioning of an ideal consumption and consumer of the texts.

I colour code the features in the same ways as I have previously defined in other chapters:

- **Features signifying Agency**
- **Features signifying Action**
- **Features signifying Co-location**
- **Features signifying Modality**

**Illustrative Example 5: CLA Lingard, Martino, Martin and Bahr (2002)**

In this section, I analyse the opening three paragraphs of the Executive Summary of the report by Lingard, Martino, Mills and Bahr (2002). This particular grouping of well-established male authors, led by Bob Lingard, self-represented as taking
particular pro-feminist stances on both pedagogy and male identities (Lingard, 2013). The analysis illustrates how the text simultaneously served several purposes for these writers. I chose the first three paragraphs as those paragraphs clearly provide an introduction and overview and could be expected to set the scene by highlighting what is important in the text to come.

**Authors and Title**

The convention in academic writing in social sciences is to name all contributing authors with the order of authors usually denoting the magnitude and significance of the intellectual and writing contribution to the work. Lingard is named as the first author of the report, followed by Martino, then Mills and finally Bahr. The second named author Wayne Martino was a more recently established pro-feminist male researcher in education, pedagogy and male identities, particularly gay identities. Wayne Martino was employed by the University of Western Australia, Perth. While he began writing about boys’ education from a practitioner stance as an English teacher, he explicitly identified as a feminist-supporting man interested in sexuality issues in his interventions into discourses about boys’ education (Martino & Mellor, 1995). Martino had earlier written a paper for the 1996 policy conference when the policy changed from girls’ education to gender and a contribution to the book edited by Browne and Fletcher aimed at practitioners (Martino, 1995). Mills and Bahr had both worked with Lingard on a the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study and had together written about pedagogy from a pro-feminist point of view (Mills & Lingard, 2002). In other work, they undertook research on pedagogy from a critical stance, being well aware of the potential dangers of drawing attention to teachers work, in that it could be used against the interests of some teachers in the turn towards performance in governance and against the economic interests of teachers in labour disputes (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003). However, they were willing to enter the mainstream by accepting the government contract to investigate the educational needs of boys, despite their opposition to this turn towards boys clearly articulated in other work (Lingard & Douglas, 1999; Lingard et al., 2012). In fact, Lingard has described the deliberate intent of these authors in taking this contract ‘as a way of balancing and countering right wing, anti-feminist, men’s rights masculinity politics groups which appeared to be in the ascendancy in
gender policy debates at the time and encouraged by governments of the day’ (Lingard, 2013, p. 139)

The title chosen by this research team for this report was *Research Report, Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys*. The order of the two phrases in the title chosen by the authors is significant in itself, foregrounding by placing it first in the title, that this piece of writing is a research report, not, as is more common, foregrounding the content topic of the report, addressing boys’ needs. This is in contrast to other reports produced in 2002 which foreground the topic of the report in the title: *Boys, Literacy and Schooling*, *Boys, Schooling and Society* all implying that the particular issues about boys they were reporting on were legitimate and important topics for research.

Fairclough (2003) argues that the first task of a critical researcher is to choose a social issue where important changes could occur. While cultural struggles over theoretical positions in the field were important to these authors, their ‘principled pragmatism’ (Lingard, 2013, p. 137) in relation to engagement with the state led them to accept this contract. Yet if addressing the educational needs of boys was not seen as important by these authors, then the acceptance of this research contract could be read as an opportunistic intervention into the field with a primary purpose of furthering the research reputation of the authors and focusing the debate on to the research interests of the authors of productive pedagogies or policy analysis.

One reading of this decision about word order is that the authors did not accept the premise, implied in the subtitle, that boys’ needs should be addressed and that schools could develop strategies aimed specifically at this. Another reading is that the authors are positioning their work as research in contrast to other un-named authors who they are positioning as anti-feminist. What was important to the authors of *Research Report, Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys*, signified by the first order placement, was their own research. We could infer from the title that their idealised readers were not those primarily interested in the topic of the educational needs of boys. They were addressing those in the research community who supported their position and the government who commissioned the research. In the cultural contests of the field at the time, these authors were appealing to, or calling on, the field of power to support their positions in the cultural struggles by carefully stressing their research credentials.
The opening paragraphs of the report signal the intentions of the authors and the propositions they are prepared to commit to. The language features denote the field (in the linguistic rather than social sense), tenor and mode of the text. These particular choices of language features have effects on the meanings produced in the text in attempting to position the reader in certain ways.

Table 11: Textual Features Lingard, Martino, Mills and Bahr

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language Features highlighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys – Strategies for Schools and Teachers research project was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to investigate how systemic factors impact on the educational performance and outcomes of boys and how these can be addressed in the school context. The commissioning of the study was prompted by contemporary concerns about boys’ schooling. This report draws on both quantitative and qualitative data to look at the relative importance of family, school and community environments, peer culture, student teacher relationships and teacher classroom practices, in order to examine the behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of boys’ educational engagement. Research conducted for the project included a survey of 641 boys and girls, combined with extensive interviews and focus groups from 19 schools across Australia. The research has contributed to a greater understanding of how these influences</td>
<td>Colocation of adjectives and nouns, linking of main and subordinate clause in implied causal relationship. Colocation of adjectives and nouns, Cohesive relations of equivalence - list Colocation of adjectives and nouns, Cohesive relations of equivalence - Eliding by use of descriptor and linking nouns by and Colocation of adjectives and nouns, Cohesive relations of equivalence Colocation of adjectives and nouns, Cohesive relations of equivalence - and.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Chapter 7: The academic corpus

affect the educational experiences and achievement of boys and girls from different socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. Of particular interest are the differences in educational attitudes, expectations and post-school aspirations of students from different backgrounds and how they impact on educational outcomes. 

The objective of the project was to identify key points for intervention to address the issues identified from the research and to determine which strategies are effective in producing enhanced academic and social outcomes for all students.

**Strategic or political work**

The order of clauses in sentences implies what the writer is inviting readers to think of as most important. The content of the first clause in a sentence is foregrounded as most important. In these paragraphs, the nominalised research is foregrounded in every sentence by the opening phrases: *The …project; this report; research conducted; the research; the objective of the project.*

Nominalisation like this is common in academic writing as a device that removes the authors’ agency or responsibility for actions. In academic writing it is often used as a linguistic device to imply objectivity by removing personal pronouns, such as *I* or *we*, and therefore reducing the implication that the authors’ opinions or choices are represented rather than ‘objective’ undisputable evidence.

In this case, foregrounding the research as the topic of the first clause in each sentence shows that the most the authors are prepared to commit to are the findings of their own research. It establishes the authority, importance and supposed objectivity of the report by disguising the actions of the unknown authors and foregrounding the product of their work as the most important.
While the research, the methods and the researchers are foregrounded, the researchers as implicit agents /actors are both absent and yet by implication their actions in conducting the research are most important. This has the effect of establishing the authority and legitimacy of the work and by implication the authors in the field. In these opening paragraphs, this strategic or political work seems to be the main purpose of the authors.

Tenor denotes interpersonal meanings, or how writers indicate attitudes to themselves, their subject and reader. The mood selected in these paragraphs is all affirmative. The writers do not engage their readers by any imperative calls to action or interrogative questioning of any topics or stances. They do not refer to themselves in the first person but their agency and actions are implied through using the noun report. The modality of the verbs is mainly descriptive, describing the processes of the research. The descriptive verbs, to investigate, to look at, in order to examine, link the foregrounded beginning clause, which is always the report or the research, to the actions taken or propositions being made by the authors.

Cultural or Ideological Work

The cultural or ideological work in texts can be seen in the propositions to which the authors are prepared to commit. It is quite hard to track and identify the propositions about the topic of the research project in these paragraphs. The topic of research is never foregrounded in a sentence. It is always the last clause in often very long, dense and complex sentences. Academic writing is sometimes dense, because many ideas are packed into each sentence. It need not be unnecessarily dense if there is a logical flow from one concept to another linked in cohesive ways.

Fairclough (2000, 2003, 2006) argues that colocation is an extremely important linguistic feature in the representation of social events. He suggests that the linguistic devises of colocation and cohesion can be used to deliberately link unrelated ideas with each other in order to lead a reader to an illogical ideological proposition. Colocations and cohesive relations are recurring features of these three paragraphs. It is though the colocation choices that writers re-contextualise the events for the reader in relation to other texts they may have read. Adjectives collocated with nouns, such as systemic factors, or adverbs collated with verbs suggest readers should interpret the relationships as
meaningful, natural, or causal. Colocation can reveal the topics to which the writer is prepared to commit. These features often carry the cultural or ideological work of a text and serve this purpose for the authors.

Cohesive relations are textual features that orient readers to seeing issues as linked in some way. Cohesive relations of equivalence, donated by lists of words separated by commas or by conjunctions such as and, suggest that the two features being linked are the same or equivalent value. Fairclough suggests that lists are a very important feature of the kinds of government reports or press releases used in neo-liberal discourses that seek to convince readers of particular ways of seeing the world in current global economic systems.

In these opening paragraphs the writers use colocations to move the focus of the topic several times. The topic moved from systemic factors influencing educational performance and outcomes of boys in the first paragraph, to behavioural and attitudinal dimensions of boys’ educational engagement in the second paragraph to educational experiences and achievement of boys and girls from different socio-economic status backgrounds in the third paragraph.

Colocations link the systemic factors phrase about the purpose of the research in Paragraph One to a list: the relative importance of family, school and community environments, peer culture, student teacher relationships and teacher classroom practices. This directs the reader to fill in the gaps and infer that this list represents these systemic factors. The colocation of relative with importance also invites the reader to choose which factors in the list might be more significant.

Many readers would have intertextual understandings of the parallel list position that emphasises class, race, and gender (Apple, 2004), as well as the then current debates about the importance of the teacher. This list links all of these factors in a colocation that seems to give them equivalence, yet invites readers to make choices as to which is most important. Rather than infer the inter-relationship of these factors, the authors list them as items that have to be chosen between. The effect of this is to imply causality or responsibility for the problem. However as the topic keeps moving, it is not clear which problem the authors mean (Lingard et al., 2002).

The conjunction and links boys and girls in a cohesive relationship of equivalence, inviting readers to the proposition that the social issue to be addressed is not the educational needs of boys but of both boys and girls
equally. However the final clause *from different socio-economic backgrounds* implies that not all boys and girls are the same. Any reader familiar with the discussions about schooling outcomes would be able to fill in the gaps to reach the conclusion that these authors mean the focus should be on the educational experiences and achievements of boys and girls from low socioeconomic status.

Following the chain of colocations and cohesive relations in the paragraphs, the choices of these authors have systematically shifted the topic in each paragraph to invite particular understandings of the original topic – the educational needs of boys. It seems that when positioning agency or causality for the social problem of the educational needs of boys, these authors are only willing to commit to the behaviour and attitude of boys in their engagement with education as problematic. When discussing boys’ needs, they squarely put the responsibility on boys’ behaviours and attitudes as a reason for lack of engagement. However, using nominalisation disguises this intention.

The use of the plural noun *boys* with no adjectives denoting the particular boys they mean, so therefore implying all boys, is important. In the debates of the 2000s and ongoing, where these same authors label other writers as recuperatively masculinist, anti-feminist and essentialist for suggesting all boys had academic and social needs that should be addressed, this commitment to suggesting the problem was the behaviour and attitudes of all boys is significant (Lingard, 2003). When discussing boys, the problem is not described as any systemic factors within society, or the school system, or pedagogy of teachers. It is the behaviour and attitudes of boys. It could be implied from this that the authors support a radical feminist position that all boys are beneficiaries of patriarchal power relations and their behaviour is mainly directed to maintaining these power relations. However, it seems they are not particularly interested in addressing these issues. They carefully use colocations to move away from this reading of the problem.

In the final paragraph, they shift the topic to *educational experiences and achievement of boys and girls* from different socioeconomic backgrounds and one of particular interest – *differences in educational attitudes, expectations and post-school aspirations of students from different backgrounds*. In this move away from boys, to boys and girls of different socioeconomic backgrounds, the implied problem to be addressed then becomes the attitudes, expectations and aspirations of boys and girls from low socio-economic backgrounds.
The agency and responsibility for actions of other people, (boys, girls, parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers, politicians) and of government or private agencies (schools, departments of education, media), are disguised and implied by nominalised words such as influences, attitudes, expectations. Unlike the discussion of boys’ behaviour, this has the effect of softening the writers’ stances on the topic by not fully committing to suggesting any people or institutions are responsible for the problems of boys and girls from low-socio-economic backgrounds, but the responsibility remains with the vague un-named influences.

However the logic of the choices and moves of the authors in these paragraphs in positioning who or what is implicated in or responsible for the educational performance and outcomes of boys is that the attitudes, behaviours and aspirations of working class students, particularly boys, are responsible. By implication, it is these implied deficits in educational attitudes, expectations and post-school aspirations of low SES students that schools and teachers need to find effective strategies to address.

The reader is invited to imply, fill in the gaps or reorient the problem in a causal way, implying that there is a causal relationship between the educational performance and outcomes of boys and their behaviours and attitudes to school engagement. So the problem is shifted from performance and outcomes – which could have many causal factors that would justifiably be investigated in the research, to the problem being boys’ attitudes and behaviours – something which the authors position as only the responsibility of boys themselves. For readers already knowledgeable about the ‘which girls, which boys’ discourses in boys’ education the two concepts are drawn together for them in the clause of boys and girls from different socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. The reader is invited to fill in the gaps in the text and reach two conclusions.

The reader is invited to position boys’ behaviours and attitudes as the problem that needs to be addressed, not boys’ performance and outcomes. The reader is then oriented to the position that in particular it is the behaviour and attitudes of boys from low SES backgrounds that are of particular concern. The solutions shift from the first paragraph where they were how the performance and outcomes of boys can be addressed in the school context, to strategies effective in producing effective outcomes for all students. This has the effect of reorienting the reader from boys’ education to productive pedagogies. In the logic of the
moves within the text, the reader is led to the conclusion that the solution to the behaviour and attitudes of low SES boys lies in productive pedagogies not specifically addressed to them but to all students.

In these opening paragraphs, the authors carefully position readers towards a sociological position on boys’ education. It seems the main intent of the authors is strategic and cultural or ideological, to position this piece of research as credible and to position themselves in the cultural struggles of the field, as supportive of critical sociological and feminist positions on boys’ education.

After positioning the reader to accept the proposition, that the attitudes, expectations and post-school aspirations of low SES students are the problem, in the final paragraph, all the authors are then prepared to commit to about the contribution of their research to this problem is greater understanding.

Yet the topic of the research was not about low SES students. In Paragraph 1, it was

*to investigate how systemic factors impact on the educational performance and outcomes of boys and how these can be addressed in the school context.*

The final sentence of Paragraph 3 reorients the objectives of the research to determine which strategies are effective in producing enhanced academic and social outcomes for all students.

Later in the summary, the finding is that schools who have had the benefit of considerable effort towards a universal raising of teacher quality through productive pedagogies, as part of another research project conducted by the same authors, have had greater success with boys’ outcomes than other schools who have commenced projects addressing boys’ needs directly.

The reader is invited to accept the proposition that productive pedagogies are more effective at addressing boys’ needs than any other intervention. Systemic factors in parallelist positions are often confined to race, gender and class (Apple, 2004). In this research, the authors explicitly exclude race, specifically indigenous boys and girls. They focus on boys and girls or all students, rather than boys. The focus on the attitudes behaviours and aspirations of working class boys and girls implies a class deficit rather than a systemic failure in which schools are implicated. Yet by careful colocation they orient the reader to a position that the solution to these factors lies in productive pedagogies for all.
Utilising the linguistic devices within the text described above, Bob Lingard and his research team used their report on Boys in Education to further advance their research on productive pedagogies while simultaneously distancing themselves as authors from government policy making about boys. In other academic writings they clearly criticise the policy-making they were contributing to at the time as a backlash against previous policies directed towards girls (Lingard et al., 2012).

The text operated to direct all readers to a certain position in the cultural struggles – that of support for productive pedagogies as a way to improve student outcomes. It operated to present the authors as authoritative credible and reliable researchers. It also operated to move the agenda of the commissioning agency towards the agenda of the researchers. One sentence in the first paragraph is very revealing of the way these authors position others in the field. *The commissioning of the study was prompted by contemporary concerns about boys’ schooling.* This sentence positions any concerns about boys’ education as being in the public domain and responded to by government. It could be read as not being regarded as the concern of the research or researchers.

It has been argued that both the left and right of the political spectrum in politics and educational research has a tendency to blame working class children and their communities for their relatively poor outcomes (Hattam & Prosser, 2008). The logic of this text shows how texts, through the logic of their arguments and the colocations of key words can inadvertently have this effect and can led readers to deficit conclusions by linking a universal argument about poor behaviour of boys with poor outcomes for SES boys and girls. There are dangers in this discourse that simultaneously takes a parallelist position to difference and poses a universal pedagogical approach applicable to all. This confusion in the discourses of the academic community at the time contributed to the difficulties experienced in creating a coherent doxa and an autonomous and bounded field of boys’ education.


In this section, I analyse the opening two paragraphs of the Executive Summary of the report *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School* (Collins et
al., 2000a). In addition, I analyse Recommendation 1 in this report and the rationale for this recommendation. These authors are part of a group of Australian feminist scholars with a long history of individual work and collaboration on various feminist projects which draw together their different feminist theoretical and research interests (Collins, Kenway, & McLeod, 2000b; Kenway & McLeod, 2004). The writing team was led by Cherry Collins, a well-known feminist academic. Jane Kenway, the second author, is an equally well-known feminist academic who has written that ‘a defiant response to dominant practices of thought’ including ‘certain feminist orthodoxies’ has been her approach to research in both girls’ and boys’ education (Kenway, 2013, p. 103). The third author, Julie McLeod, a relatively new feminist scholar at the time, is now well-known for her work in socio-cultural studies about young people’s identities and the ways those identities intersect with their educational experiences (McLeod & Yates, 2006). Jane Kenway describes the commissioning of their team to undertake the research on post-school outcomes in these terms:

We were commissioned by the Commonwealth government to inject some sanity into a debate that had become ridiculously polarised (Kenway, 2013, p. 107).

In accepting the government commission to undertake this research, the report served to increase their capital in the field as academics of high intellectual standing. The authors use the report to make specific propositions that invited readers to accept their then current position in the cultural struggles in the field, which they saw as a struggle over ways gender in education could be characterised, rather than as an issue about boys’ education per se (Kenway, 2013). This analysis illustrates how the text simultaneously served different purposes for these writers.

As long-standing advocates of strategies for girls and for feminist informed gender policies, and as well-established researchers in the very small Australian educational research community, they hold particular places in the discourses and social space in the field, and therefore are in an epistemic position in the field (Kenway, 1995a, 1995b, 1997a, 1997b; Kenway & Gough, 1998). Cherry Collins, the principal author of this report, was principal author of another government commissioned report published by ACER, described earlier in this chapter. That 1996 report focused on the understandings of and implementation of policies and strategies about teaching the social construction of gender for both boys and
girls, not about educational or social outcomes. In that report, the authors took the approach of categorising boys and girls as two distinct groups. It seems likely that this systematic investigation of the experience of gender for both boys and girls, by leading feminist and other academics, published in June, 1996, was influential in the changes to the policy later in the same year which expanded the policy focus on girls’ education to one of gender in education.

Four years later, in this 2000 report, the authors strongly argue for a different approach to research on gender in education and argue, as they did then, that some of the concerns and understandings by teachers and principals that were carefully documented in the 1996 report were largely constructed by the media. The proposition that the concern over boys’ education that lead to this policy change was largely a ‘media-driven’ crisis was an important theme in some feminist and critical policy theorists’ analysis of boys’ education. It was often used to discredit or downplay the concerns and in an attempt to temper government responses, particularly in the allocation of resources to boys’ education, which was seen as necessarily taking away resources from girls’ education (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Kenway, 1995b; Yates, 1997).

In a recent intellectual self-portrait, Kenway (2013) suggests that the intention of the authors in the 2000 report was to move the debate about boys and girls education towards an understanding of a ‘gender jigsaw’ of multiple differences characterised by the ‘which girls, which boys’ slogan rather than a ‘gender seesaw’ of a focus on either girls or boys. Interestingly, she suggests they were not successful in this aim and the education of boys, as a single category, remains to this day in Australian school gender reform programs. She argues that previous essentialist positioning of girls in feminist gender reforms for girls, as much as the then current positioning of boys, created difficulties for winning the ‘which girls, which boys’ argument.

The ‘which boys, which girls’ argument mounted in this report largely rested on an interpretation of data about boys’ and girls’ academic and social outcomes, in that it used data contrasting post-school outcomes of male and female early school leavers and those remaining on at school to construct an argument about the ongoing disadvantage of girls. The debate over evidence or data and the interpretation of data was seen as crucial in the field as it had profound implications for the allocation of resources towards policy and practice directions around gender in schools. The empirical basis for concern over boys’ educational
Educating boys: What's your problem?: Deborah Hartman

and social outcomes was hotly contested. As education systems world-wide moved towards accountability measures generally, the gathering and interpretation of data was a central theme also dominating discourses about boys’ education at the time. This report was published in the same year as the government announced an inquiry into the education of boys and received 231 written submissions and 235 people appeared in person at the hearings of the national inquiry. I have chosen these two paragraphs and one recommendation as illustrations of the cultural struggles within the field and the ways players in the field sought to influence the government, as part of the field of power, to support their feminist positions in the cultural struggles that I have described in Chapter 3. The example also illustrates changes in feminist positions occurring in research over the time period that exacerbated tensions and confusions in the field and weakened the field in relation to the field of power.

The selection of texts below illustrates the ways these authors constructed the ‘which boys, which girls’ argument by relating it to particular interpretations of empirical data. I examine the language features that denote the field, tenor and mode of the text in some detail and reach conclusions about the effects of these particular choices of language features have on the meanings produced in the text in attempting to position the reader in certain ways.

Table 12: Textual Features Collins et al

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Language Features Highlighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening 2 paragraphs of the Executive Summary and (p1) and Recommendation 1 and Rationale (p9)</td>
<td>Predicates – adjective/noun colocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For some time there has been widespread concern in Australia over gender patterns in educational performance. Recently, this concern has focused on the perception that girls are now doing better than boys in a number of key areas, most notably retention to Year 12, end-of-school results and competence in literacy. This concern is not isolated to Australia. Similar gender</td>
<td>Agency - No agent. Use of Quotation marks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Predicates – adjective/noun colocations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cohesive relation - noun/verb/object - agent, action and purpose. Embedded clauses linked by and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
disparities in educational performance have been the subject of major reports in England, New Zealand and Scotland. One key task for this report was to assess the available data and research on these and other related matters in Australia and to identify areas of under-performance and disadvantage with a view to informing future policy and research.

This Report was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs to investigate the patterns of males’ and females’ educational participation and performance at school and their initial destinations after leaving school, the key influencing factors and the disadvantages that arise from them. While gender was the major factor under consideration, the research brief also required an examination of the relative impact of other independent variables on participation, performance and post-school destinations including geographic, demographic and socio-economic factors.

The community – recognition

Recommendation 1: A ‘which boys which girls?’ approach

It is recommended that DETYA incorporate a ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach as a fundamental element in consideration of further research and policy development in relation to educational performance and outcomes. It is also recommended that DETYA consider ways in which this approach could be brought to the attention of teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

Cohesive relation - embedded clauses and lists linked by commas and and

Tenor

Predicates – adjective/noun collocations.

Colocation - list

Theme

Imperative mood

Predicates – adjective/noun colocations

Proposition. Cultural struggles and positions outlined. Field struggles between journalistic field and social science field.

Tenor and mode

Proposition. Field struggles between journalistic field and social science field.

Tenor, modal verbs
in order to provide a greater understanding within the community and to refocus the public debate away from the ‘boy versus girl’ approach.

Rationale

The ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach to understanding differences in outcomes is an important development in thinking about difference. Over the last decade, the media has been influential in focusing the debate on gender and in particular, on boys’ education. Such media coverage was important in alerting the education profession and parents to an important set of issues. However, a side effect has been a focus in the press on ‘gender wars/gaps/quakes’ in schools.

During the 1990s, educational researchers examined in detail the issues raised by the press and identified some limitations and popular confusions around key concepts. However, more recent research concepts and findings have not filtered easily into the press and thus many of the early naïve conceptions have remained.

This Report identifies factors influencing the educational performance of boys and girls at various stages of their education and beyond. In fact the differences within groups of boys and girls rather than across gender appear to be more significant than has usually been acknowledged.

In general, the main challenges now are to explain to teachers and parents the gender jigsaw rather than the gender gap and the new patterns which emerge once the pieces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colocation, adjective/noun</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency of the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality, indicating tempering of claim of responsibility by the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality, indicating less effect of feminist analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modality, in fact, indicating readers should consider this interpretation indisputable, yet then tempered by modal verb construction appear to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action words indicating ideal reading position - what readers should do in relation to the text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
are put together. The second challenge is to demonstrate the importance of addressing the pressing needs of the most disadvantaged boys and girls.

**Cultural or Ideological Work**

As a research report commissioned by and directed to the government as the audience of the report by naming DEETYA as the agent of recommended actions, the report follows the conventions of academic writing, using a considered tone and suggesting findings and recommendations in conditional and polite language. The authors do not refer to themselves in the first person anywhere. References to the research are nominalised by using the term *the report*. This has the effect of appearing dispassionate, factual and devoid of personal opinion.

While nominalisation has the effect of strengthening the propositions suggested by the authors by couching them in impersonal academic language, rather than drawing attention to their own agency and opinions as writers of the report, other nominalisations in the opening sentences have the opposite effect. When describing concern over gender patterns in educational outcomes, no agents are named by the authors as having the concerns, even though the colocation of *widespread* and *concern* implies that many agents – possibly individual people, parents, teachers or schools or school systems, all share the concern. This lack of agency, constructed by the nominalisation, has the effect of disembodied and diminishing the concern. The authors are distancing themselves from the concerns and from any people who might have them. The use of the word *perception* and the vague ‘doing better’ in inverted commas in the following sentence further reinforces this, indicating that the authors believe the concerns are not justified, and as articulated in other commissioned reports and academic work, a misguided and inaccurate perception (Collins et al., 1996; Kenway, 1997b). The use of inverted commas in an academic report is interesting. Usually these denote direct quotes from a source. In this case, describing a perception girls are now ‘doing better’ than boys in certain key areas, the authors are inviting the readers to share the knowing insider joke that such phrases are common fuzzy language used for common fuzzy perceptions of
data, where much more nuanced interpretations of data are used by intellectual readers and writers of this report.

Interestingly the next sentence uses a much more definite phrase, *similar gender disparities in educational outcomes*, to describe the same concerns when reported by intellectuals in other countries. So a reader may now be confused about whether the concern and the perception is in any way justified, as it seems overseas academic reports confirm the fact that there are gender disparities. The final sentence in this opening paragraph is intended to resolve this confusion. It is the task of the report, in other words of the authors, to *assess, to identify, with a view to informing*. This sentence invokes the doxa from within the academic field, that the job of sociologists is to uncover hidden knowledge, not obvious to the untrained layperson. It has the effect of setting the authors of the report up as experts who will be able to discern what data and evidence is relevant and ‘true’ compared to the mere perceptions that are currently widely held.

The second paragraph sets out the parameters for the study commissioned by DETYA. Interestingly, any factors influencing participation and outcomes are couched in terms of disadvantages arising from them, rather than as enabling factors that support students to have positive outcomes. These factors are described as independent variables as if they are not related to a gendered experience of the world.

In Recommendation 1, the first, and therefore foregrounded as the most important recommendation, we can clearly see the cultural propositions the authors are willing to commit to and the ways the authors assert the primacy of their position in the cultural struggles in the field. The ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach is foregrounded as key finding of the research. The report recommends that DETYA take up the ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach and explain the ‘gender jigsaw’ of ‘new’ patterns of differences within gender. DETYA is asked to only give support to researchers who can explain this position to parents and practitioners. The authors are calling on this government department to support the authors’ position in the cultural struggles within and external to the academic field. DETYA is positioned as having the power to change the field.

In the proposition that the field needs to change, the authors depict the cultural struggles as a clear dichotomy between two opposing positions and readers are invited to choose between them. In these paragraphs the authors use the modal verbs *could* and *seem* and another stronger modal construction *In*
fact to direct an ideal reading position towards specific feminist positions and to elicit government actions to promote these positions to teachers, parents and other stakeholders. The sophisticated, well-investigated ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach is set in opposition to the naïve ‘boys vs girls’ approach. The readers are invited to fill in the gaps in the unstated proposition of this recommendation and rationale. Following the logic of the text, the proposition is that parents and educational professionals have concerns over boys’ education but these concerns are the result of naïve perceptions created by the media that there are ‘gender wars/gaps quakes’ going on in schools. The call to action in the recommendation is that DETYA refocus attention away from boys’ education characterised as the ‘boys vs girls’ approach. The 1996 report highlighted that, far from the clear dichotomies depicted in the paragraphs analysed above, there was both widespread concern about a range of boys’ education issues by teachers and principals, including discussion about specific groups of boys, as well as a great diversity of views about the construction of gender and appropriate responses to gender issues in gender in schools (Collins et al., 1996, pp 133,134, 155,156). Yet, by eliding the position of practitioners with those of the headlines in newspapers, the authors frame their own position in the cultural struggles as the only sensible option. This is affected by the choices they offer readers in overstating the differences between positions and misinterpreting the lack of sophistication within the practitioner debates.

The authors appeal to several unstated assumptions and field structures within the doxa of the education research field and the research report genre to mount the argument for a ‘which boys, which girls’ approach. Players in this autonomous field usually work within these structures and these experienced players with high cultural capital in the field, play the game well. A nuanced reading of these paragraphs can identify ways this text uses textual features, particularly those of colocation, to position the reader to accept and not question the primacy of the cultural propositions they present and to simultaneously make textual moves to advance their strategic claim on a high status position in the field.

As social scientists, they make claims to being impersonal and detailed, appealing to research rigor rather than personal opinion. They claim to have uncovered new concepts, appealing to an old/new dichotomy in an academic field where newer is always more privileged than older. They are sophisticated,
not naïve, appealing to the intellectual/emotional and high-brow/low-brow dichotomies in discourses in the field.

**Strategic or political work**
The rationale for Recommendation 1 outlines the truth claims the authors are making in the political struggles within the field and in power struggles across fields. A careful analysis of the colocations of adjectives and nouns and the cohesive relations between clauses, shows how the authors position the reader to see the various players in the field of boys’ education. The ways the authors represent the primacy of their own position can be seen in the ways the agency and actions of various players are described. There are no agents, real people or organisations, represented as having concerns about boys’ education, calling into question whether there are or should be any genuine concerns. In careful tempered language, the media, as a monolithic institution, rather than as particular journalists or newspapers or television stations, is depicted as an agent that has been influential, focusing, and alerting. It has raised issues. There are two times in these paragraphs that the conditional however is used by the authors, signalling a disagreement with distancing from or difference from what follows. Both of these are about actions the authors suggest are brought about by the agency of the media. The first, a focus on ‘gender wars/gaps/quakes, that readers can infer through intertextuality is a reference to the general tone of newspaper headlines particularly those reporting HSC results. The second is the authors’ claim that the media does not report their more recent research concepts and therefore contributes to ‘naïve’ concepts. This is again appealing to the doxa within research traditions that new is better.

The authors themselves are only represented through their work, the report. The report investigates, identifies and recommends. Readers are invited, through intertextuality, in knowing that the authors of this report are also prolific publishers of other research and social scientists of some standing in the field, to also include these authors in the group of educational researchers named as agents who examine in detail.

Through these textual features, while maintaining a professional, disinterested tone, the authors juxtapose the media and educational researchers against one another – the media are depicted as raising the issues, yet not taking up the recent findings of researchers and therefore contributing to continuation of
‘naïve’ ideas. In the authors’ representation of the players, educational researchers are favoured, the media are outsiders and disruptors, either misrepresenting or ignoring research and parents and educational professionals concerned about boys’ education are naïve. The educational researchers are depicted as identifying confusions and establishing ‘new’ concepts and findings. The reader is invited to side with the knowing educational researchers in these inter-field struggles.

In fact the state is asked to support these researchers in getting across their message to practitioners and parents, as the media cannot be relied upon to do so and they have not been able to do so themselves. In making this claim, the authors are both calling on understandings from within their field of social science and enlisting the state as a more powerful agent. Bourdieu (2005) argues that the political field, the social science field and journalistic field exert effects on each other through the invisible structures of the relationships between them as well as adhering to the internal logic of their own autonomous fields.

The ‘which boys, which girls?’ approach is clearly favoured and pitted against the ‘naïve’ ‘boys versus girls’ approach. In the cultural and strategic battles across journalistic and academic fields, these authors are attempting through this text to have their own position in the cultural struggles taken up by public – parents and professional educators. They are appealing to the commissioning agency, the state, to support them in the cultural and strategic struggles and to exert influence over their own social science field and the journalistic field in order to convince parents and practitioners. It is interesting that in this cultural struggle the views of the usually dominated practitioners, are what is at stake.

**A small sub-field**

As discussed earlier, in Australia, education research is conducted through a small number of university schools of education and education research centres. There are also two main educational research bodies in Australia. The Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) and Curriculum Corporation (Curriculum Corp) are dominant in the education research field in Australia. The links between these bodies are numerous and complex and can be shown by tracing the funding and administration of the commissioned research in this period.
Two of the three funded research reports were conducted through grants awarded to ACER. ACER can certainly be considered central to the mainstream of education research in Australia. An overarching concern linking ACER research topics directly to the needs of government and to influencing government policy related to practice is the focus of gaining evidence about ‘what works’ and ‘what makes a difference’ to student outcomes. ACER research interests cover all of the major education issues considered relevant for the functioning of effective education systems. Their research is often based on large scale national or international studies analysing large quantitative data sets. Their research has been instrumental in producing the ‘evidence base’ underlying much government policy making and education program decisions. They conduct two major studies, the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and the Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth, which provide an enormous quantity of data. Researchers at ACER produce analytical reports on many aspects of these studies regularly. They have also been significant players in research around equity in education, how social characteristics might be measured, which ones are significant to educational outcomes and what factors both within and outside of schools are significant in reproducing inequity (Ainley, 2004; Ainley & Gebhardt, 2013; Ainley & McKenzie, 1999; Hattie, 2005; Marks, Cresswell, & Ainley, 2006). ACER runs conferences where many of its researchers publicise the conclusions of their research. ACER researchers used this vehicle to frame issues in boys’ education on the national and international scale (Rowe, 2003, 2005).

Curriculum Corp, at one time an arm of ACER, has a focus on applied research and the practice of teaching. It was responsible for the selection, administration and reporting processes of schools funded through both the government funded programs: Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools (BELS) and Success for Boys (S4B). Through it, funding was provided to the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle to promote these programs at practitioner conferences. Curriculum Corp also produced the BELS program interim report entitled Success for Boys. Nola Alloway and her team at James Cook University were responsible for producing the commissioned research report on boys and literacy in 2002 and the subsequent modules for the professional development of teachers in the Success for Boys Program in 2005.
The concentration of these organisations in policy research about boys’ education during this period is evident. These reports have profoundly shaped the policy and practice discussion of gender in education and boys’ education in this decade. The extensive government commissioned research within the field of boys’ education in this time period gave opportunities to several established academics. The moves by these authors to accept these commissions from the government can be seen as moves in the cultural field to advance particular positions and as strategic decisions in the social field to enhance their economic and social capital. The intertextuality, intersections between authors, and continuation or contestation within the themes and discourses in these reports illustrate the impact of state intervention in the field by commissioning these research topics and employing these authors. These interventions by the state changed the nature of the field in Australia. From an initial promising collaboration across methodological and theoretical approaches in the first report in this period (Collins et al., 1996), the reports from 2000 to 2002 were from specific yet different theoretical traditions, each attempting to frame the government concern about boys’ education within its own theoretical framework, contributing to the combative contestation over cultural or ideological positions about gender and practices in schools. The final 2005 report, from yet another theoretical tradition attempts to side-step altogether the issue of gender for low-income boys. The field of boys’ education and the related girls’ education and encompassing gender in education were considerably weakened during this period of intense government intervention into research, setting research topics and appointing specific research teams, pitting researchers and theoretical positions against each other in a bid to be useful to a government agenda.

**Understanding the field, the players and the moves**

The changing emphasis from girls to boys and then the further fragmentation of categories towards a focus on boys in low-income schools in commissioned research during this period is clear. Moves by academic players in this field can be seen as both a response to the framing of boys’ education by the field of power and as contributions to this framing within the field. The moves of the government in commissioning research fuelled ongoing contestation over positions and some hardening of positions in the cultural field related to how authors within certain theoretical positions depicted the other players in the field,
boys and groups of boys and boys’ education issues. The moves open to players depended on the cultural and economic capital they held in the intellectual field. The effect of these moves was either towards changing the field or towards creating stability within the field.

Some researchers, such as the Cherry Collins and Jane Kenway, while undertaking the commissioned research, and thereby moving towards the more commercial pole in the field, enhancing both their cultural and economic capital, have stated that they were unsuccessful in their aim of enlisting the field of power to stabilise around a continuing focus on girls in education (Kenway, 2013). There is no doubt that, in similar ways to the position of boys’ education within the previous focus on girls’ education, there was little space in this period for those who wanted to focus on girls themselves rather than girls in contrast to or in relation to boys. The ongoing discussion of how the relationship between boys and girls and schooling can be characterised is still very much unfinished business in the field. The Collins, Kenway and McLeod group were however able to enhance their cultural capital in the field of boys’ education and in the social science field of gender studies by this much read and cited report, even though the government rejected some of their views (Minister for Education Science and Training, 2003).

Others, such as Bob Lingard, were able to simultaneously use the concerns of power to undertake commissioned research as well as critique the moves by the field of power in journal articles analysing the policy debates (Lingard, 2003), thereby shifting their research emphasis away from pedagogy concerns that are very relevant to practitioners towards policy concerns, which is a growing area of research in social science at a national and international scale. Many of the critical pedagogy and gender theorist successfully moved towards policy research during this period, using boys’ education as an example of national and international policy to be theorised (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Kenway, 1997a; Lingard, 2003) The effect of this move was to enhance the cultural capital of this research team at the autonomous pole of the social science field.

In the move away from gender towards socio-economic factors or class, and away from identity towards individual motivation and behaviour, the doxa of the field stabilised around the attributes of individual students as a central concern, with a focus on poverty. In this way, the cultural capital of some players was enhanced and they were in strong positions when the government changed
and the Labor Government came into power. The Labor Party, at least in principle, had a strong focus on education policies and practices that would enhance outcomes of low-income students. In some ways, this focus on individual motivational factors linked to family, community and school practices contributed to a useful discussion of the inter-related and sometimes confounding complexities of schooling that is a good starting point for a reinvigorated field. The removal of gender as an important aspect of these complexities was one of the most disappointing aspects of this report that undermined the contribution of the field of boys’ education to equity debates.

Positions and Dispositions in the Field

In the context of a small educational field, dominated by a few major research institutions, and a commissioned research agenda clearly aligned to the then-current government policy agendas about the functioning and reporting of outcomes of educational systems, there were limited options open to players. As texts in the discourses of the field, the commissioned reports are illustrative of the political, cultural and strategic moves various players made to position themselves within this field context. Players positioned themselves to respond to or pre-empt incursions into the field from the field of power and to events happening in the wider public, practice and journalistic field that they saw as impacting on the field. The academic and policy field was not then and never is a level playing field.

The struggles over doxa or authoritative orthodoxy in the field around the enduring dichotomies of male and female can be seen played out in the discourses and themes in the texts produced about girls in education and in the reports about boys produced in this time period. The discourses in these reports either privilege the parallelist positions of race, sex and class, in arguments about which social phenomena was most significant to educational outcomes, entrenching discourses about disadvantaged subjects, or the more post-structuralist positions that foreground how these social phenomena are linked in multiple ways within individual experiences. With the ascendancy of post-structuralist theories, agency was increasingly foregrounded in theorising of gender in education during this time period (Kenway & Willis, 1997; Yates, 1999).

Ladwig’s analysis of a similar radical sociology of education intellectual field in the USA contends that the rise of post-structuralist theories contributed to a
fracturing of the field. It can be seen in the debates and positions in the reports analysed in this chapter that the rise of post-structuralist theories in feminist discourse and the continuing struggles within those taking parallelist positions both contributed to fracturing the field and opened space for newer men’s movement discourses at the very time when the field of girls’ education was under threat from new practice discourses and from incursions from the field of power.

There is unresolved tension between parallelist positions and post-structuralist positions on gender, evident in previous theorising around girls’ policy and still evident in the differing emphases in these reports about boys. The following decade of policy and practice continued to focus on boys. And, while the theoretical position of social construction of gender remains entrenched in the still current policy document, there is now little traction in the field of gender in education, with little current research with an explicit focus on gender relating to either boys or girls. Prior to 1996, the academic field researching and theorising about gender in education was robust with some cultural struggles over legitimacy, or for doxa, conducted between players within the field. All players in the intellectual field of gender in education agreed on the importance of these struggles and about the importance of their work to policy about girls in education.

Unlike the field of radical sociology of education in the USA (Ladwig, 1996), the small Australian feminist and pro-feminist group may have felt that their influence with the field of power was relatively strong and the differences among them as relatively insignificant (Daws, 1997; Yates, 1999). The field was dominated by feminist theories of gender and by some contestation over structuralist and post-structuralist theories of gender inequity in relation to girls. While there were differences between educational sociologists taking parallelist structural positions and those taking post-structural feminist stances, particularly about group specific interests such as ethnicity or sexuality, there was no dispute that gender in education was important work clearly related to the points emphasised in the National Action Plan for the Education of Girls.

Prior to 1996, the academic field researching and theorising about gender in education was robust with some cultural struggles over legitimacy, or for doxa, conducted between players within the field. All players in the intellectual field of sociology of gender in education agreed on the importance of these struggles
and about the importance of their work to policy about girls in education. The slippage between categories and the sometimes illogical arguments about boys, many boys, some boys or particular boys, in the discourses about boys in relation to their impact on girls’ education was disguised in the commitment to the doxa of the field, which positioned all boys in relation to their impact on girls. There was not the same commitment to the field of boys’ education. The position that boys could not be treated as a single category, while an important aspect of a well-developed cultural debate within the field of boys’ education, was used to undermine this field. This is well illustrated by the use of the words boy and boys in the literature. The position that boys could not be treated as a single category, argued by well-established authors with relatively large amounts of cultural capital amassed in the field of girls’ education, and from relatively powerful positions in the field, had a major impact on the field. It contributed to quashing the field of boys’ education as a legitimate field of academic study and to the demise of boys’ education as a policy focus. It left a very unclear, un-resourced policy focus on gender in education and little continuing research on boys in education.

The tendency for the majority of these commissioned reports to conclude that boys and girls could not be treated as single categories had a major impact on the depletion of boys’ education as a field and therefore of gender in education as a field. In arguing that boys’ education advocates’ arguments about the need for attention on boys’ education were ‘essentialist’, these commissioned researchers, operating from relatively powerful positions in the field, contributed to the quashing of boys’ education as a legitimate field of study. Most of the government funded research reports supported the government program focus which included measurement which demonstrated ‘which boys’ could be considered worthy of disadvantaged status, rather than a focus on how all boys and girls could thrive within a school system. Even in later reports, where the links between individual psychology and school practices is emphasised, there is no analysis of the dispositions of these groups of boys and how they differ from other groups of boys and whether these differences could be regarded as strengths to be utilised for educational success.

This social analysis sought to explain how the habitus and capitals available to players in the field are determined by the strength of the field and its interactions with the field of power (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). There are close
relationships between the cultural struggles and the political and economic struggles in the context of this small and not very autonomous field. Relative positions in relation to the field of power became very important for any player in a field such as this. While the incursion of the state into the autonomous field is obvious, in that the state clearly supported attention towards boys’ education, the seeds of the weakening of the field can also be found in this incursion and in the ensuing cultural struggles over positions in the academic field.

Within the field, the tendency of academics to only cooperate and engage with those of the same theoretical traditions and to fiercely fortify their strategic positions in this very small field led to a weakening of the field, as state concerns moved on, leaving the field of gender in education, girls’ education and boys’ education depleted of funds and intellectual energy. The positioning of all intellectual or practitioner players who did not have a clearly defined pro-feminist position on boys as anti-feminist and recuperative masculinist prevented collaborations that could have led to a sophisticated analysis of what was described at the time as ‘the gender jigsaw’ from multiple perspectives. The divisions in the field prevented a robust autonomous field from developing.

All of the commissioned research came to the conclusion that the teacher and pedagogy was critical to successful outcomes for all students, for boys as a whole and for any group of boys currently disadvantaged in the school system. Relationships with teachers and mentors are highlighted in both the reports on curriculum practices, emphasising that an intimate understanding of the dispositions of these boys is required for any relationship that would bring about changed circumstances. Teachers and teacher practices are seen as critical to these kinds of appropriate relationships, yet the dispositions of teachers who can work with different kinds of boys is not explored. Rather, broad universal models of pedagogy are suggested as the solution to the disengagement of certain students. There has been a missed opportunity in these reports to fully investigate positions on gender and equity in relation to all boys and different groups and individual boys.

In Chapter 8, I continue the forensic examination of the field, with a focus on the specific actions in the practice field, the inner-most layer of the doll depicted in the heuristic in Figure 3 on Page 89, showing the moves the players made, within their relative positions, as new players in this subfield and their
positions and dispositions which in part were formed in the cultural struggles within the field.
Chapter 8
The Practice Corpus

They understand the most important task in education to be that of building relationships with students upon which they might establish trust and mutual respect, rather than relying on authoritarian structures and practices supported by self-referentially inconsistent reasoning (Slade, 2002, p. 276).

In this chapter on the practice layer of the field, I examine two national practitioner professional journals, *Teacher* and the *Boys in Schools Bulletin (BinSB)*, using the argument catalogue approach to large bodies of texts that I developed to examine submissions to the public Inquiry into the Education of Boys and also use in the next chapter on the journalistic corpus. I categorise the articles into catalogues based on relevance, genre, authorship, and year published. I then undertake a thematic analysis of the articles in order to trace the discourses, propositions and positions taken by authors. I investigate the content of the articles in these journals to analyse the cultural capital valued in the practice layer of the field. I argue that, while there are some important thematic overlaps between all layers of the field, the cultural capital of practitioners in the field of boys’ education, with its emphasis on the performance or doing of education, is of a different nature to the valued cultural capital of academics, policy makers or politicians in analysing and theorising education. Translational or applied research, which explicitly examines or links findings to practices in the school setting, is valued by practitioners. Practitioner discourses privilege the performance of education by teachers and those in leadership in schools. In this period, the performance of schools was increasingly under scrutiny by systems and the differences between individual teachers were considered to be crucial to
outcomes. At stake in this field for schools and teachers in this era, was the ability to produce demonstrated improved outcomes for boys in particular school and community situations. In this context, the production and performance of solutions to perceived problems with boys in education were important. There is always a tension in school performance between the extent to which schools can achieve good outcomes for all students as well as ameliorate disadvantage for those in need. Teachers, as practitioners are charged with balancing these two equity concerns in relation to specific classes or subjects, and students and communities with whom they have relationships. They work creatively within constraints of curriculums, pedagogies and systems, and their daily work is face to face with real people, as well as meeting the increasing accountability demands of systems. Yet practitioner discourses are often dominated, marginalised or criticised in policy and academic discourses as being too narrow, technocratic and pragmatic. As Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and others have established, education as a social system can perpetuate social inequalities. In equity and social justice discourses in education, teachers are called upon to simultaneously transform students and society, while also ensuring all students learn effectively (Gore, 1992). This places teachers in the specific situation of wanting to know and do ‘what works’ and attempting to make it work for a range of diverse students. They can only do this by developing a ‘feel for the game’ that allows them to juggle competing discourses and purposes in education. In this thematic analysis, I investigate the range of concerns, explanations and solutions to these boys’ educational issues through a thematic analysis of the articles on boys’ education in these two practitioner journals.

The journals

*Teacher* was initially *Educare News* and from 1987, it was published monthly as a magazine for the non-government educational sector. From August 2004 it was taken over and published by the Australian Council for Educational Research as a national journal of broad appeal to teachers from all sectors. The *Boys in Schools Bulletin (BinSB)* was the only Australian practitioner journal dedicated exclusively to the topic of educating boys, set up to promote and disseminate information on boys’ education issues. Three or four editions a year were published by the Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle from late 1997 to the end of 2009.
I chose these two quite different journals to illustrate the intertextuality in the field between and amongst layers, the intersections of the multiple discourses and the range and scope of perceptions of the practice of boys’ education in the profession.

**Teacher, the national education magazine**

As a national practitioner journal, *Teacher* published by ACER, which, as discussed in previous chapters also had a strong research focus as an organisation, was neither curriculum specific, nor single issue focused and it encompassed all sectors, state, Catholic and private. As such, for the purposes of this analysis of how boys’ education was presented and discussed as an issue for practitioners, it could be said to encompass a broad range of views indicative of the concerns of practitioners during this period. The ACER website provided the following description of the journal’s purpose.

*Teacher* publishes content about education for the profession that aims to answer two questions at the philosophical and practical extremes: as an educator, why do I do what I do; and what should I do first thing of a Monday morning?

*Teacher* was well regarded as a professional, non-peer reviewed journal by teachers and school executive staff and had won awards for educational journalism. It applied conventions in publishing that indicate this professionalism. There was a disclaimer that stated that the views included in articles are not necessarily those of the publisher. Almost all articles with the exception of those in the *News* section are attributed to a particular author and that author’s affiliations with a school or organisation are made explicit, so that statements in articles could be checked with the author.

*Teacher* journalistic staff included the editor and one journalist. Steve Holden was the editor for the entire period. He was responsible for many of the articles that included analysis of issues. The journal includes Letters to the editor, a Feature article, Grapevine, where events can be promoted, National News, several articles of about 4 to 5 pages, and shorter reviews, short opinion pieces, teaching tips or comments. It had paid advertisements. The thematic content analysis was restricted to feature and longer articles as they are the most likely to
pertain to the topic and be of sufficient length and depth to contain a specific point of view or argument.

Not all back issues of Educare News/Teacher were available. Therefore the analysis of that journal only includes editions from 2000 to 2006. Available editions were manually searched. The title and opener of every article in the available editions of Teacher were read for references to gender in education, and boys or girls and education. The quantitative analysis of articles in Teacher shows that over a seven year period of monthly editions, 42 articles addressed the education of boys in an explicit way, as indicated by its title specifically referring to boys or gender in education or its content specifically mentioning boys or particular groups of boys as a theme. Of the 42 relevant articles written during this period, 13 of them were written by staff of the journal, with 9 of those attributed to Steve Holden the editor. Interestingly, over this period, 4 articles were reproduced from the Boys in School Bulletin, 1 article from Teacher was reproduced in the BinSB, and 2 articles in Teacher were written by Boys in Schools Bulletin staff. Some included reference to both boys and girls. Only four were about girls alone.

The table below illustrates the numbers of articles included for further analysis in each year of publication. The largest number of articles on the subject occurred in 2002, the year that the report on the findings of the Inquiry into boys’ education was released and funding for schools wanting to address their local concerns was announced. In the years 2000, when the Inquiry was called, and in 2004 and 2006 there are relatively high numbers of articles about boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority (N26) of the articles in Teacher were written by practitioners, usually a head of a curriculum area or a principal or deputy principal in a school often describing a particular program or initiative in their school. It is not clear whether these articles were commissioned by the editor or whether the author offered their article for publishing. Often articles were descriptive and did not
include any specific evaluation or critique of the initiative described. Some articles include a reference list or links to references.

A small number of articles (N4) were written by an academic with specific expertise on a particular topic. The small number of academics quoted in both of these journals illustrates the small Australian field of boys’ education. It also points to academic positions favoured in these journals. The relatively high number of articles on boys’ education in this journal of broad relevance to teachers and school leaders seems to indicate that over this time period, educating boys was a significant and continuing issue amongst practitioners that warranted regular articles. It also clearly shows that girls’ education was not considered a priority during this period.

The Boys in Schools Bulletin

The BinSB was published by Family Action Centre at The University of Newcastle, well known for its advocacy for boys’ education initiatives through conferences, books and practical resources, professional development, post graduate courses and the publication of the journal. The inside cover of each edition of the journal provided the following information about the journal for readers and contributors.

The Boys in Schools Bulletin focuses on practical initiatives in schools; puts teachers in touch with others who are trialling new approaches to boys’ education; supports and encourages a constructive debate on boys’ education issues; develops materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys; provides information on new resources directed at boys.

Guidelines for contributors

The Boys in Schools Bulletin is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content should motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including of course, the girls).

It can be seen that BinSB positioned itself within the new/old dichotomy as a leader in the field of boys’ education and as a champion of practitioner initiatives and information sharing. The journal actively promoted Family Action Centre conferences on Boys’ Education, publications and resources for teachers and its professional development and action research programs. It also published
information about funding provided through federal government programs, encouraging interested schools to apply for funding through these programs and promoted Family Action Centre staff as available for consultancies to these school or cluster based programs. In addition it supported professional development in specific boys’ programs including the Rock and Water Program from the Netherlands. It did not include any paid advertising.

As well as several articles of from 3 to 5 pages long in sections on Primary and Secondary Practice and one or two articles of 5 to 10 pages long in the Research section, the journal also included an Editorial, a section on Resources and promotion of Professional Development opportunities provided by the Family Action Centre, the publisher. Only the articles in the practice, research and review sections are included for the purposes of the thematic analysis as the other sections were promotional material often repeated in each edition. For the purposes of this research, all of these longer articles in the Boys in Schools Bulletin were considered relevant to the analysis, so no further numerical analysis of relevance was undertaken.

In the first three years of the BinSB most articles were transcripts of interviews with practitioners by the editors Richard Fletcher, who I have described as an epistemic player in the field in Chapter 5, and Rollo Browne, a pro-feminist educator and trainer who collaborated with Fletcher on publications, professional development programs and conferences. They documented school-based initiatives as they travelled the country conducting invited staff development sessions on engaging boys and advocating for boys’ educational issues to be addressed. As the journal grew, practitioners were encouraged to write and submit their own accounts to the journal under specific guidelines that included a description of the school, the program or innovation that was implemented, the target group, the activities, the lessons learnt and any advice to others attempting to implement a similar initiative.

Deborah Hartman joined Richard Fletcher and Rollo Browne on the editorial team in 2001 and led the small team from 2002 until 2009. Maureen Beckett was employed as a coordinator of the BinSB from 2003 to 2005. Richard Fletcher left the team in 2004. Rollo Browne left in 2007 and was replaced by Victoria Clay who was on the team until the last eBulletin was produced in 2009.

The overwhelming majority of articles in the BinSB were from staff currently working in a school setting. Over the years, academics on the editorial
board at the Family Action Centre also contributed several articles, Richard Fletcher, the founder of the journal, contributed nine articles in total, Victoria Clay contributed five and Deborah Hartman, four, one of these co-authored with a Deputy Principal from a school where collaborative action research was occurring; and another from interviews with people involved in a specific program.

Editions of the journal often focused on a specific theme such as boys and literacy or boys and social and emotional intelligences. A special edition on research was published in 2000 and from 2001 onwards, the format of the journal included a dedicated research section, as well as articles relevant to primary and secondary schools.

The journal has a distinctly narrative approach designed to develop and foster a sense of a community of interest, of peers talking to peers, as well as an activist stance advocating for attention to boys’ educational issues. It encouraged contributors to provide photographs of the initiatives described, and provided author details and often contact phone numbers for interested readers to follow up published articles. It also encouraged contributors to include evidence of the effects of programs described or results of and evaluations conducted. The research articles provided reference lists and links to published reports or academic journal articles. This journal also acknowledged author affiliations and from 2002 contained a disclaimer.

Articles in the *BinSB* were actively sought across geographical, social and cultural divisions. Of the total number of articles published, 128 were about urban settings and 66 were from regional or rural schools. Table 14, below indicates the range across the states and territories of Australia.

**Table 14: BinSB authors by State and Territory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QLD</th>
<th>NSW</th>
<th>VIC</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>WA</th>
<th>NT</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>TAS</th>
<th>Overseas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest number of articles came from NSW, where the journal was located. It is one of the largest and most active states in educational issues. There were a mix of articles specifically addressing issues for particular groups of boys including indigenous boys (N14), boys from low socio-economic areas (N24) and CALD families (N8). By far the largest number of articles came from practitioners in state systems (N143) with private (N27) and Catholic (N20)
systems also represented. The Boys in Schools Program also championed particular programs for boys (and girls) that took a bio-social approach to academic, emotional and social development, such as the Rock and Water Program, developed by Freerk Ykema, from the Netherlands (Ykema, Imms, & Hartman, 2006).

While the issues addressed in different locations were often similar and there were many common approaches to the identified issues, there was also a very strong flavour to the articles that local evidence and local solutions were required to make any difference in outcomes for the particular boys under discussion. However, in large numbers of articles about initiatives from overseas (N25), the BinSB often alerted readers to research or practice in other countries particularly in the UK, where a more systematic evidence-based approach was being taken in schools, yet issues and structures were more similar to Australia than the USA.

The editorial positions
There are differences in the ways the journals present themselves and their stances on the education of boys through their editorial and other staff writers. Teacher has a journalistic style purporting to be objective. Two articles by Steve Holden, the editor of Teacher, about boys’ education exemplify this style. In December 2000, he wrote an article discussing a range of positions on boys’ education and gender policy in submissions to the Inquiry into boys’ education. He outlined some areas of disagreement amongst academics, including assumptions about the role of the school and classroom environment in the performance of boys. He specifically drew attention to differences between those who lay the problems of boys at the feet of ‘gender construction’ and those who suggested that classroom environments compounded boys’ disadvantage. Those basing strategies on gender construction theories recommended explicit teaching about gender construction, and those advocating for change in classrooms suggested that teachers and classrooms that did not take into account boys’ maturational, developmental and social interests and circumstances could compound the problems of boys from an early age, actively contributing to their disadvantage in academic achievement. He does not take a stance on these two positions that he presents as dichotomous and intractable. He does however take a stand on the issue of funding for equity programs. Discussing the position of the
Australian Education Union, he notes that they support initiatives consistent with the government policy document, *Gender Equity: a framework for Australian schools*, which is based on social construction models. He argues

But the AEU position still appears to respond to boys’ and girls’ schooling in terms of an equity model in which limited funding is the key factor, where more for boys means less for girls. Depending on the government’s response in financial terms, the union may be right (Holden, 2000, p. 30).

This position about funding proved to be very salient, as interventions by the government that injected almost 30 million dollars towards boys’ education led to a seesaw in funding where any initiatives in girls’ education were conducted in terms of boys’ education strategies in this period, in similar ways to the previous period where boys’ initiatives were in terms of girls’ education strategies.

In 2004, Steve Holden wrote again about positions in the debates about boys’ education (Holden, 2004). This time, while still maintaining his ostensibly objective journalistic stance, he was less equivocal about the positions and the need for action on boys’ education.

While debate continues about the problem of poor educational outcomes for boys – which problem, which boys, and what about the girls? – there appears to be some common ground. There is a problem for some boys, and some optimism that strategies that underpin improved outcomes for boys also work for girls. With three recent investigations, the ‘What about the boys?’ question has been hard to dismiss (Holden, 2004, p. 26).

In this article he extensively discusses the findings of a study on motivation commissioned by the ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services and conducted by Dr Andrew Martin (2002) in which data from 1,930 Year Seven and Nine boys and girls was analysed and focus groups and interviews were also conducted with 97 Year 8 and 10 students. Contrary to commonly held beliefs about boys and peer group pressure at the time, the study found that boys in the study reported that teachers have the greatest influence on their motivation, followed by parent and then friends. Findings from this report indicated that pedagogy and relationships with teachers were important factors in improved outcomes for boys, as well as the need to address unhelpful, ‘cool to be a fool’ attitudes to masculinity among boys, opening up the field to an explicit linking of Identity, Learning and Relationship issues with the teacher and their practices at
the centre (Martin, 2002). Systems remained a key component linking older and newer discourses on difference in ways that emphasised the dangers of essentialism for many academic commentators on the practice layer of the field.

In taking a more activist approach to issues of boys’ education than that of Teacher, The BinSB particularly Richard Fletcher, was often positioned as a leading protagonist supporting an essentialist position. The editorial committee unequivocally advocated for attention to a range of boys’ education issues through the production of this journal dedicated to the issues. They authoritatively positioned their own views, research and programs in specific articles written by them as well as including articles by students in the Masters courses that specialised in teaching about educating boys. In favouring ecological models of spheres of influence on student outcomes, and in privileging practitioner approaches, they attempted to overcome differences between social construction of identities and classroom accounts of differentiated boys’ outcomes.

There were, however, differences in the positions of the editorial staff of the BinSB and incremental changes in the emphasis and focus of articles during this 10 year period. A strengths-based approach to practitioners and to all boys and their diverse communities united this team across differences of gender, explicitly pro-feminist stances, education or health focus, and sociological, psychological or educational pedagogy discipline focus.

Richard Fletcher continued some involvement throughout the life of the journal writing a total of nine articles over the ten year period, often in collaboration with others, or reporting on boys’ initiatives overseas. His interests in male health and well-being, the link between the biological, physical and the social, and the importance of fathers in the academic and emotional development of children have been a strong influence on the bulletin and are a continuous theme throughout Fletcher’s writing.

In an article suggesting there is a strong case for educators to pay attention to biological as well as social differences between boys and girls he states there are three important reasons for this attention.

Twenty years of research on brain development has given us some important pointers for fostering boys’ development. The first is the primacy of relationships in brain patterning; the second is the unmistakable biological differences between males and females; the third is the importance of emotional regulation for economic and academic outcomes (Fletcher, 2006b, p. 35).
The two other academic staff members involved in the BinSB for several years took somewhat different positions to Fletcher, focusing more on the specific contexts of groups of boys, practices in schools and the effects of school-based programs. Findings and outputs from applied research and action learning projects with schools were reported on by both Victoria Clay (2004) and Deborah Hartman (Tracey & Hartman, 2006a). Through these projects, models of strengths-based practice in literacy, behaviour and in particular subject areas were developed in conjunction with teachers.

The number of articles in Teacher and the success of the BinSB, a journal dedicated to boys’ education suggest that there was widespread practitioner interest in educating boys. An analysis of the themes and positions of the range of authors in both of these journals is revealing of practitioner concerns and positions at the time.

Qualitative Thematic Analysis: Categories and Coding

In developing an argument catalogue of the themes in the articles, I applied the coding process and thematic categories developed in an analysis of submissions to the public inquiry, and described in Chapter 5, to articles from both practitioner journals. The major themes identified in both the submissions to the Inquiry and the practitioner journals were: Identities, Learning, Relationships and Systems. (For details of these categories, please refer to Table 5, pgs. 137-138). Interestingly, the thematic coding categories were consistently found to apply to the articles in both the practitioner journals, indicating a large degree of overlap between the concerns expressed about educating boys in the 2000 public Inquiry and those being raised and addressed by practitioners in these journals. Also evident was the intertextuality between commissioned government reports and journal articles as many epistemic players from mainstream research and many government program initiatives feature in these practice journals.

Research of an applied nature was privileged in the practitioner discourse in both of these journals. Examples of this category are Ken Rigby (Rigby, 2001; 2003), a well-known academic in the field writing about bullying in schools and Ken and Kathy Rowe (2006a, 2006c), writing about auditory processing and boys’ literacy and attentiveness. Ken Rowe was a researcher with ACER at this time. Other examples are: literacy research by Kevin Wheldall (Wheldall & Beaman, 2002) and Canadian literacy researchers Blair and Sanford on boys’
reading activities not valued in school (Blair & Sanford, 2003); David Plummer on homophobia (Plummer, 2000); Don Weatherburn (Weatherburn, 2003b) on crime prevention; Malcolm Slade on boys’ views of disengagement (Slade, 2001) and Geoff Munns on Motivation and engagement (Munns et al., 2007). Research from Catholic and State departments was also featured.

While there were similarities between the journals, with numerous articles focused on each of the themes of Identity, Learning, Relationships and Systems in both *Teacher* and the *BinSB*, there were also some interesting differences in emphasis and inter-connection. Many authors of articles either implicitly or explicitly linked these themes in ways that allowed them to develop coherent strategies for dealing with the identified issues for boys in their particular location, circumstance or system. The following table indicates the number of articles in *Teacher* predominantly about each theme and the linkages between themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Relationships</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Identity</em>/</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Learning</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td><em>Relationships</em>/</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Identity</em>/</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Learning</em>/</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Relationships</em>/</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Particularly noticeable was an implied linkage between one theme as the issue to be addressed, and another theme in the program that was to address the issue. While this occurred in many articles, some articles explicitly and coherently linked themes, suggesting that issues of boys’ education could only be tackled in a holistic manner. An example of this is Professor Shirley Grundy, writing about quality learning in *Teacher* in 2002, she says:

> Consider the difficult time teachers have engaging boys in education. Boys are turning their back on school, because they find it irrelevant and of no personal interest. That issue spreads into valuing what students bring to school – the social context of schooling. We now understand that students vary enormously in their learning styles, and that individual learning styles are strongly influenced by social and ethnic backgrounds. We also understand that students construct their knowledge on the basis of what they already know. Very often what students bring to school has been ignored in the classroom. Take the case of adolescent boys, who can be very difficult to engage in schooling, especially in the middle years of secondary school. By understanding the child in a more holistic way, we can provide a solid foundation for learning. This means that learning is as much a social as a cognitive art (Grundy, 2002, p.38-39).

While she used the universal category of boys to frame her discussion on engagement, and did not take a theoretical position on gender, she argued for students’ personal interests, learning styles and cultural and social backgrounds to be taken into account as a resource for engagement and to ensure quality teaching for boys occurs. Evoking learning style differences, she was also assuming that readers will be familiar with the widespread evidence of disengagement of many boys, the then current reforms to create middle school structures and models of quality teaching. While using the universal category of boys, she argued for a further differentiation and investigation of individual differences.
Learning and Systems were the two most significant linked themes in *Teacher*. Articles written by authors from a particular school or sector usually emphasised the strengths or the program successes within their particular sector. It is clear that, while *Teacher* was promoted as a journal for all sectors after ACER took over publishing it, many writers were still writing from a position within a particular sector, and were speaking about and to that sector, such as Catholic or other private school systems. The high number (13) of articles about systems – single-sex classes, single-sex schools and selective schools in *Teacher* is also in line with this strong theme evident in the Sydney Morning Herald articles discussed in the next chapter, Chapter 9. This seems to indicate that both a mainstream practitioner journal and a mainstream newspaper framed their discourses about boys’ education in this era around ongoing discourses of differences between boys and girls that had shaped differentiated provision of education from earlier eras and continued to privilege these differentiated systems.

In contrast, Table 16 below showing the thematic categories of articles in the *BinSB* indicates that Relationships and Learning were the most linked themes by authors submitting articles to this journal.

**Table 16: Boys in Schools Bulletin Themes by Number and Year** (*Clearly linked themes*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Identity/Relationships</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Identity/Learning</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Relationships/Learning</td>
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While there were many articles from the non-government sector in the BinSB, the preponderance of articles from the public school sector has the effect of a slightly different type of Systems focus in this theme in the articles in this journal, compared to Teacher. There was an emphasis on single-sex classes in the BinSB as well, indicating the predominance of discourses about gender differences between universal categories of boys and girls at the time. Yet the decisions to trial single-sex classes were complex. Many articles in this theme are about trials of single-sex classes, either in particular subject areas especially English, in co-educational situations in state schools, to address a perceived deficit of boys or of an identified low-achieving group of boys in English. Some articles were about single-sex classes or special programs with a focus on learning and behaviour of small groups of at-risk students. Sometimes schools trialled single-sex classes with the specific aim of removing identified trouble makers from mainstream classes. The BinSB dedicated an edition to single-sex classes, Vol. 4, No 3, 2001, in an attempt to dispel some myths, present some evidence as well as some case studies of when this strategy may be successful.

This is how it was presented in the editorial:

The theme this issue is single sex classes. The central piece by Barbara Watterston is a review of the literature on single sex and co-ed research and a summary of the trends she has found in her own research into single sex classes in co-educational schools. Many of the Western Australian schools she has interviewed have stories in this edition. The introduction of single sex classes has become popular as one way of responding to boys’ education issues. While not all such classes are successful (see for example ‘Lessons from an all-boys Year 8 class’ in
Vol2 No 3 1999) schools are less interested in writing them up even though it is valuable learning. The companion stories from WA are all cases where single sex classes are successful but a careful reading will show that in itself such classes are only one of a range of things that support improved outcomes. Each offers an insight into how single sex classes can be structured to better suit the needs of their students (Browne, Fletcher, & Hartman, 2001).

The case studies ranged from single-sex sessions about sex and relationships conducted for boys and girls, to conducting parallel upper primary school single sex classes for Year 6, to single-sex camps, sports or specific interest classes designed to encourage greater motivation and participation.

**Identities and Relationships**

The smaller number of articles about identities alone in both journals illustrates the practitioner concern with the primary purpose of education as learning. While gender and sexuality issues were addressed by authors in both journals, they were not of primary concern unless linked to other educational issues. Practitioners attempting this work were very aware that identity work is challenging for students and of the negative implications of value judgements about identities. Practitioner articles often highlighted the implementation difficulties and the incremental nature of changes that are possible in deliberate interventions attempting to interrogate, broaden or transform identities. They were also often aware that maintaining a good relationship with the boys and working within the context of community values is important in a strengths-based approach that attempts change. When Greg Woodrow (2000) developed a program exploring masculinity for his Year 9 boys and girls at West Morton Anglican College in Ipswich, Queensland, he was very aware of the importance of consulting with the group concerned, recognising their ability to make decisions and change with a positive orientation to future.

I was particularly careful not to discredit any narrow stereotypical models out of hand. Many of these working class students had never been exposed to alternative models beyond these definitions. ... To devalue these as outdated and irrelevant to modern philosophies would do little other than discredit their parents and their own beliefs.

What this unit was designed to do was to expose students to alternatives. No model would ever be presented as the ‘most applicable ... or the most legitimate (Woodrow, 2000, p. 17).
He was also aware that positive change does not happen overnight and that small successes can be very significant later in life. In this program the girls’ openness to change and broader versions of masculinity was very useful information for the boys in considering possibilities for the future.

Whereas before students would identify a male who did not exhibit the same values and characteristics as their own as a person to be ridiculed or devalued, the groups were now at the very least able to able to appreciate the validity of difference. There were no great surprises with the models that the boys chose to reflect on as being worthy or valid. The list offered up was quite narrow and did not deviate greatly from the typical models that they displayed at school. On the other hand the girls were far more prepared to discuss a wider range of alternative models in greater detail (Woodrow, 2000, p. 19).

Insightfully addressing a then current stumbling point in the discussion of boys’ programs, he articulates his own views of how programs can encompass a critical analysis and explore this through a strengths-based practice that starts with the students’ own experiences and views.

I firmly believe that any significant work on these issues must address the diversities of masculinities and not fall into a sterile choice between celebration and negation of masculinity in general (Woodrow, 2000, p. 21).

This concern for sensitivity around identity issues was also evident in articles addressing issues for indigenous or CALD groups. A large number of articles in the *BinSB* in particular were about working with low socio-economic groups, disadvantaged students, indigenous boys and girls, and rural students. The framing of many of these articles, that often described programs for both boys and girls, was that both the experiences of and the outcomes for boys and girls in these groups were significantly different to each other, warranting a different approach for boys in these groups. The authors were suggesting that these students needed a gendered approach to improving their outcomes as well as an approach that took into account their cultural, socio-economic and geographical circumstances. Describing the development of an indigenous boys’ program in Dubbo, NSW, Greg Griffith (1998) states:

The intervention arose from concerns about social problems in the community. There had been a number of male suicides and there was a high rate of domestic violence.....
The concern of the community wasn’t particularly about boys at that stage. There were concerns about self-esteem, social skills, cultural identity and problem resolution by violence or threat of violence. In the discussion during the meeting, however, the community particularly targeted the Years 5 to 8 boys (9 to 12 year olds), as being the group most lacking the ability to resolve conflict (Griffith, 1998, p. 17).

A school and community partnership approach to identity issues is evident in many articles, as teachers seemed to recognise that the community were experts in the identities of their children and also that sustainable change would not occur without community involvement. The school as a resource for the community was a common theme in articles about these groups.

Identity issues were also important as a conduit to engagement in learning or to address a specific behavioural or learning issue. The large number of articles about relationships in both journals suggests a practice focus at the time on linking the affective (social and emotional) aspects and the effective (cognitive) aspects of learning. There was an ongoing practice discussion about the unhelpful dichotomy that splits these domains in policy discussions about pedagogy and in school structural organisation, yet teachers clearly need to deal with both in classroom settings. Practitioners often said that this structural, policy and funding dichotomy made developing effective classroom learning cultures more difficult for the teacher. Programs reported in these journals were often designed to overcome a lack in explicit teaching of emotional and relationship skills or to explicitly link behavioural and pedagogical strategies. Teachers simultaneously have to manage behaviour, develop relationships, and ensure key concepts and skills in all curriculum areas were taught to students with a wide range of abilities and backgrounds.

In this example, linking boys’ identities, relationships and literacy, Barb Christie, for example, in the BinSB, describes a program at a high school in Maryborough, Queensland where older boys mentored younger ones in reading. It seems the aims of this program were to expand the boys’ sense of masculine identities as well as their repertoires of practice in reading. This was done by linking older and younger boys in a mentoring relationship.

We decided to involve our junior high school boys in a reading program with the local primary school for two reasons.
It was a way of involving them in extra-curricular non-sporting activities and also we wanted to do something about the lower literacy levels of boys at both schools. (Christie, 1998, p. 7)

While literacy was a key theme and many articles and editions were dedicated to it, in another example in the Bulletin, Kevin Wheldall and Robyn Beaman (2002) suggest a link between learning and behaviour management when commenting on the fact that boys made up the vast majority (over 75%) of clients in the highly successful MULTI-LIT program. This program was designed for students whose reading was between 2 to 3 years behind their chronological age.

Why so many more boys than girls are clinically referred is open to debate but one obvious possibility is that boys are simply more likely to draw attention to their difficulties by their behaviour in class than are girls. However, with the specific literacy teaching and behaviour management techniques in the program, students in the program made mean gains five times the rate of progress they would have made without Multi-lit and three times the average rate of progression of students progressing as expected in schools (Wheldall & Beaman, 2002, p. 14).

Describing an innovative Structured Workplace Learning program at Margaret River Senior High, WA, designed to get boys out of the classroom, and motivated to connect to work and the community, Jim Gorham (2000) says

Boys don’t need to be harped at or have grudges held against them, they need to be given the opportunity to fix things and resume. They are apprentice adults after all (Gorham, 2000, p. 4).

He implies that many of the boys in the program did not have good relationships with teachers. He also seems to be implying that the largely verbal strategies used by many teachers were not useful to many of the boys in the program. Linking identities, attitudes and learning, the program focused on students developing a skills base attractive to employers, especially a work ethic, in a region with 26% youth unemployment. This award winning program encouraged students to ‘find a job with a heart’.

Other articles challenged the often suggested notion that sport is a fool-proof way to engage boys. At the time, fears had been raised about ‘dumbing down’ the curriculum by quick fix solutions relying on essentialist notions of boys’ interests. Discussing his own research on boys who avoid sport, Drummond (2000) suggests that sport need not rely on narrow versions of masculinity and he
has plenty of suggestions for how to make sport a more affirming experience for boys who avoid it, including playing a game each lesson, rather than skill development; and providing a variety of sports games and activities, particularly non-competitive ones. He links diverse male identities, role modelling and sport in the following way:

Sport has an emotional affirming power upon boys when they experience the euphoria of achieving a personal goal. At the same time boys are growing up in a society that is very critical of men, therefore focusing on how they fail to measure up to a social ideal and fault-finding is a real concern for boys. In this way, sport also has the capacity to produce anxiety, ridicule and humiliation.

PE teachers are easily accepted as role models. However, they are more than role models in sport but also in a healthy masculinity. This means using physical activity for fun, to be inclusive, not just to value the winners (Drummond, 2000, p. 25).

**Learning**

Learning, as expected in journals with an audience of practicing educators, was a very predominant theme, accounting for the second highest number of articles in each journal as well as a significant number of articles that linked learning with other themes. The discourses in these articles suggested that teachers were asking themselves deep questions about the learning of boys. These concerns about the extent to which boys’ learning may be different to that of girls, and which teaching approaches were likely to have the most success with boys in general or boys in particular groups, drew on various notions of difference and disadvantage. Broader discourses about individual learning styles and learning strengths which were very prevalent in practitioner discourses were drawn on extensively in this discussion about boys and difference, as were the results of experimentation based on knowledge of the particular groups of boys in question. Many teaching approaches and teachers had observed that boys tended to favour activity, leading to a revisiting of discussions about the possibility of innate and essential differences between boys and girls. While discourses about differences between boys and girls were rather strong in the practitioner articles, the authors of many articles in these journals tested these assumptions in their specific contexts.

An example of this interest in learning styles is the practitioner research of Tony Butz (2003b), an educational consultant in the Blue Mountains, NSW, who
Educating boys: What’s your problem?: Deborah Hartman

attempted to investigate whether there were identified learning differences between boys and girls in this area. He summarised the main tools for identifying learning preferences and conducted research with several Blue Mountain schools to ascertain the student learning styles and differences. He concluded

But it is of concern that over two-thirds of boys (but less than half of all girls) were very dependent on visual information. These children would be considerably disadvantaged by tasks and tests that were highly verbal (in either printed material or the spoken word) yet this is by far the most common sort of exercise even in primary schools, and gets even ‘worse’ in secondary and tertiary education. While ‘chalk and talk’ or the printed worksheet remain the mainstay of education, the very high proportion of boys who are visual/spacial learners are distinctly disadvantaged, as they are not being taught in ways that suit their dominant learning style. Too much frustration from being unable to learn in boy-friendly ways causes disaffection with the schooling process” (Butz, 2003a, p. 14).

There were concerns that these measures of preference were not validated and did not indicate cognitive ability. Yet many teachers found that an emphasis on learning styles allowed them to expand their teaching repertoires and include more variety in their lessons and assessment items. Often teachers reported that this attention to differences improved the engagement and motivation of many students, boys and girls and those who had been disengaged, confounding notions of essential differences. In controversial research reported in Teacher in November, 2004 which was reprinted in the BinSB in 2005, Michael Nagel suggested that the recent overlap between neuro-science and education was providing a better understanding of how students learn.

A teacher who is unaware of the neurological necessity for boys to use space or one who is working in the midst of an undersized or over-populated classroom could innocently assume the behaviours he or she sees are those of boys being impolite or out of control. …. It also seems that, while girls do not need to move around as much in the learning environment, research suggests that movement appears to stimulate learning and unites all brain levels while engaging both the right and left brain hemispheres of all young learners. Planning for and accommodating movement can stimulate not only male and female brains but can also be used to manage and relieve the impulsive and fidgety behaviour noted above. This is surely food for thought as all school systems struggle to find the best ways to work with boys and to enhance learning environments for all children. (Nagel, 2004).

One concern about practitioner discourses is that in their search for strategies that will provide extra interest, engagement and excitement in their classes,
teachers are vulnerable to untested fads. Very little cross-disciplinary research on the links between neuroscience, cognitive science and teaching and learning had been conducted and this is still the case. The applicability or efficacy of neuroscience to learning in classrooms was not clear or well established. Successful learning is a very complex enterprise, yet it was at the heart of practitioner concerns about difference.

Many authors also described innovative programs that connected the curriculum to the lives and interests of boys outside of school and brought popular culture, technology and community expertise into learning activities. Enthusiastic teachers went to great lengths to ensure their lessons were of high quality and engaging. While quality teaching models were established as evidence-based, and were used, they were often not well established in schools with professional development that would provide teachers with strategies to meet the widely diverse needs of their students. These models also did not seem to effectively address relationship issues that pointed to the disposition of the teacher as an important factor.

As well as utilising quality teaching models in improving boys’ outcomes, some teachers experimented with teaching strategies based on accounts of biological or brain differences which were labelled as essentialist. Richard Fletcher specifically advocated for more attention to research that might establish the link between hormonal, brain and learning differences in ways that could support an evidence base for learning differences (Fletcher, 2006a, 2006b). Other articles in the BinSB also explored cognitive and learning differences from this perspective (Delfos, 2005).

Often these accounts of difference were linked to discussions of the need for more male role models in schools, with Fletcher suggesting the link between emotional regulation, identity scaffolding and father’s involvement in schools (Fletcher, 2005c). Yet, it was also well recognised in many articles that both men and women could exhibit the enthusiasm for learning and the empathetic connection with the situation of the boys in their care that was required to improve both learning and behavioural outcomes.

Describing the transformation and regeneration of interest in school of a group of disaffected boys from Darwin who were persuaded to join the Boys’ Business music group, Liz Veel articulates the deliberately shared responsibility and relationship building between her and a male colleague and the boys in the
They employed explicit cooperative strategies to ensure that personal, friendly, respectful, supportive and collaborative relationships between the boys and with the teachers were at the heart of the program (Veel, 2002). This highly successful music program succeeded in motivating, engaging and transforming the boys into successful students and highly accomplished performers on the national stage.

We quickly spent a session establishing the rules democratically, with the boys thinking out the rules and a dominant student acting as chairperson. A consensus of the peer group was that cooperation and care was needed for the group to reach its full potential.

I initiated a weekly compliment session in which half the boys engaged as an audience whilst the other half sang.

A variety of songs and chants have been learnt that relate to many cultural and diverse backgrounds. Some songs were chosen because they affirm self-image.

The outcomes of our musical endeavours have been wide-reaching. In the school, teachers have happily reported that formerly non-compliant boys are working more cooperatively in classrooms (Veel, 2002, p. 2-5).

In many articles, there was strong evidence of elements of strengths-based practice in education, a model I adapted from social work to describe submissions to the Inquiry into boys’ education. (See Appendix 1 for details). In an example of this approach to utilising the strengths of the community by involving fathers as role models, Wendie Hirsch (2001) describes her innovative program with an experimental all boys Year 3 class at Rainworth State School in Queensland. Her pedagogical approach explicitly recognises and builds on existing capacities of individuals, families and communities, including school communities.

Wanting to provide enrichment for the bright boys and to involve parents, particularly dads in their son’s education, I started a Parent Speaker Program. I wanted to introduce a variety of topics that would not normally be studied in Year 3. A number of mothers collaborated with me in getting busy dads to come. For these talks, I encouraged a practical, hands-on approach by providing advice to have some activities and some reading included where possible. The sessions were usually about half an hour in length. They went longer when activities created especially high interest. The speakers went to a lot of trouble to prepare wonderful talks. Once a number of exciting talks were completed, the
boys themselves, encouraged by me, put pressure on their parents to join in and name a date. One father told me his son said ‘Dad you’ve got to come next week’ (Hirsch, 2001, p. 4).

The mothers actively encouraged the dads to be involved in the school program and in the learning of their children, as they saw it in the interests of the school, their own relationships with their partners and their children.

**Discussion of Emerging Thematic Patterns**

Over the period of this analysis there are some commonly reoccurring patterns in the practitioner discourse in these two journals. My thematic analysis of the articles in these journals indicates that the overall tone of the articles and the discourses in them seems to privilege applied research, psychological accounts of learning, behaviours and identities, specific practice-based programs and men’s movement accounts of difference and disadvantage. Practitioners and researchers in the field of educating boys enthusiastically embraced the idea that there was a demonstrated need for schools and particularly teachers to deal with issues specific to the education of boys. Significantly, in most articles in both the journals, there is either clear evidence of some disadvantage or an underlying assumption supported by some local evidence that boys in the groups described in the articles are not doing as well as girls, or other boys, or as well as the school and parents expect or desire, in the area described in the articles.

However, the range, scope and content of these articles seem to indicate that articles published in these journals were about identified issues and programs for a wide variety of boys, in a wide variety of settings. They were described by teachers who were implementing programs that were often specifically developed locally for a particular group and situation. The authors were also clearly grappling with the need to improve boys’ outcomes in learning without being detrimental to the learning of girls or ignoring ongoing issues in the education of girls. Many of the articles explicitly described how the boys’ strategies connected with equivalent girls’ strategies, or were also beneficial to girls.

The emphasis on relationships, as they related to learning illustrates that, while the unifying purpose in this practice layer of the field was teaching and learning, there was recognition that this could only be achieved through the interconnections between identities, learning and relationships. While often not
explicitly pro-feminist or explicitly based on any social theory, the focus on
behaviour and relationships in many initiatives described in these journals could
be seen to in some ways address feminist concerns about violence and
harassment in their approaches to creating fair and friendly relationships. The
emphasis on the experiences and cultures of boys themselves and on the need
for schools and systems to change to accommodate boys seems to fit more
closely to bio-ecological models of human interaction rather than critical theories
of gender relations such as feminism. There were a few articles that explicitly
adopted feminist or pro-feminist theoretical frameworks and none that appear to
base their work on the 1996 policy.

The themes in these practitioner journals seem to point to a focus on
applied research, inequities and differences in outcomes, ecological thinking and
strengths-based practice, as underpinning the approaches and priorities in this
layer of the field. Teaching and learning were seen as the main priorities and
purpose of the field and the ways identities, relationships and systems
intersected with these priorities were of interest. While boys as a group were
often the focus, many authors focused on these intersections in ways that drew
on specific factors of individuals and their community contexts.

Professional development and practice journals, such as these, are at the
more commercial pole of the relatively autonomous field. They rely on individuals
and institutions to purchase their products, rather than grants to produce them.
The practice magazine *Teacher* was not published after 2011 as changes in
technology and approaches to advertising made it too expensive to produce.
Similarly, the *BinSB* was unable to continue past 2009 as universities privilege
peer reviewed research grants rather than dissemination of information to
practitioners and the journal was unable to sustain its journalistic and production
team.

The genres and styles privileged in these journals borrowed more from the
narrative descriptions and recounts of events favoured in journalism than from
academic research. These magazines attempted to weave different theoretical
and practice understandings together to translate into information that was useful
to the practice or performance of education. The practice literature indicates that
schools are very interested in information that would help them inter-connect their
responsibilities and structures for the affective domains of students’
psychological, social, and welfare needs with attention to the cognitive domains through pedagogies in the classroom that can take account of all differences.

The Men’s Movement approach to boys’ education has been characterised as both narrow appealing to hegemonic views of masculinity and treating all boys the same (Keddie & Mills, 2007; Kenway, 1997b; Mills & Lingard, 2002). The BinSB was extremely effective in advocacy for boys’ education and for practitioner innovation. Its universal focus on boys as a category was influential in framing differences between boys and girls as important and often authors positioned the particular boys they were describing as disadvantaged. The thematic analysis of both of these journals however, does not indicate narrowness. The authors demonstrated great diversity in their approaches to disadvantages experienced by some boys. The revisiting of discourses about biological and brain differences when linked to discourses of disadvantage for boys or girls is fraught with danger in equity discourses. Attempts to explain patterns of difference in learning and behavioural preferences and choices as purely driven by physical or hormonal differences or attempts to focus solely on differences rather than on human similarities are dangerous. Yet, we are physical beings with social distinctions inscribed on our developing and changing bodies. A more sophisticated multi-disciplinary investigation of physical, physiological, developmental, cognitive and social differences may in the future escape the dangers of essentialist positioning of any group. Discussions of differences and their implications are never finished.

The interpretations of the universal category of boys by practitioners to mean the real people that they worked with in their classrooms, rather than a sociological, universal or essentialist category meant that men’s movement concerns about the well-being of boys were compelling to practitioners and explorations of differences within boys and between boys and girls were wide. A recognition that those same explorations and explanations about difference had been made about girls in the recent past only added weight to their appeal for many teachers who had participated in these explorations.

The challenge for the field is to struggle against divisions and structures within the field where practitioner concerns for doing education are pitted against research in education, where psychology is pitted against sociology and attention to either boys’ and girls’ education vie for valued capital, rather than collaborate to produce it together.
This chapter concludes my forensic exploration of the layers of the field from the political, the policy, the academic and the practice layer. In the next chapter, I investigate interventions by the journalistic field.
Chapter 9

The journalistic corpus – interventions by the field of journalism

The media are both a production process with specific internal characteristics (possibly a field of such processes) and a source of taken-for-granted frameworks for understanding the reality they represent (an influence, potentially, on action in all fields. (Couldry, 2004, p. 165)

In this chapter I discuss the journalistic field in relation to the field of boys’ education. In previous chapters, the moves by players in the academic and practice sub-fields in relation to the state and the political field were analysed. Bourdieu suggests that there are homologies between fields that mean that the structures of fields are similar and that those who are in subordinate positions in one field are likely to also be subordinated in others. He also argues that the journalistic field and the social science field are relatively lacking in autonomy and subject to the field of power compared to the political field. Yet, he also suggests the journalistic field is increasingly important as it has a strong tendency towards its heteronomous or commercial pole, and this tendency is influencing other fields in the same direction (Bourdieu, 2005; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Further, each of these fields, political, journalistic and social science, has a similar aim. Bourdieu suggests that each lays claim to the imposition of the legitimate vision and division of the social world (Bourdieu, 2005). Those who
deal professionally in making things explicit have two things in common. First they strive to set out explicitly practical principles of vision and division. Second they struggle, each within their own field, to impose these and have them recognised as legitimate categories of construction of the social world. Yet, in every field, the implicit pre-suppositions of players in each field, that make up the doxa of the field, are not completely known or explicit to the players. The dispositions of the players, shaped in some ways by the doxa of the field, ensure that all players see the game as important and worth playing (Bourdieu, 2005).

These similar aims across the three fields, and the different doxas of each field, may account for a consistent theme in both the academic and practitioner discourses on boys’ education that is highly critical of media reporting of the issues to do with boys’ education. Leading academic authors in the field of boys’ education have repeatedly accused the media of misrepresenting the issues, simplifying the issues, and of creating a ‘moral panic’ about boys in the eyes of the public in ways that did not take into account the research or practice knowledge existing in the field (Hartman, 2008a; Lingard et al., 2005; Mills & Lingard, 2002). Moreover, in discussions about global and national policy issues, the representation of boys’ education in the media is often cited as evidence of the ways public opinion can be manipulated and issues can become mis-recognised by the wider public (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Lingard et al., 2005). However, often the evidence for this mis-representation or manipulation by the media is confined to citing small numbers of articles or headlines.

My field analysis suggests that the struggles to impose a particular vision and way of categorising gender in education issues and portray this vision as legitimate are deeply rooted within the field of boys’ education and also cut across the political, journalistic and social science fields. In this analysis, criticisms of the media from the social sciences can be examined as cultural struggles between proximal fields and can also indicate homologies between fields and the structures of fields.

Showing the mechanisms by which this happens requires a level of analysis that is rare in many social science critiques of the media. From a Bourdieusian perspective, Couldry (2004) identifies differences between, and problems with, both structuralist and post-structuralist approaches to critical media sociology. He argues that structuralist accounts, particularly Marxist accounts of media power argue that the media reproduces and disseminates
ideological content produced elsewhere, but these accounts are unable to show the causal link between media-channelled ideology and people’s beliefs. Post-structuralist accounts do address the impacts of media institutions on social structure, but have not often developed empirically grounded detail, relying on suggestive pronouncements, as the critiques of the media’s impact on boys’ education above illustrate. Couldry (2004) suggests that because of the tensions between both of these accounts and Bourdieusian field analysis, there is no immediate or simple basis for exchange between Bourdieusian inspired work on the media and either of these theorisations of media and media power.

The methodological technologies of Bourdieusian field theory means that researchers in this tradition examine specific cases within a field rather than adopting grand general theorising of social space. Bourdieusian field theory has contributed to understandings of the growing influence of a generalist, economically driven journalism on other specific fields of cultural production, the reduction of autonomy in the journalistic field and to understandings of journalistic story-telling practices (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Bourdieu, 1998b). These technologies allow an analysis of the specific factors that make media coverage more important to players in a field, such as pressures from the state to make education services more politically accountable. This type of account of media power necessarily involves an analysis of pressures from within and from outside of a specific field.

Couldry further suggests that an understanding of the media in terms of its own symbolic capital or power, in that it has the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others, to create events by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms. This is the power the journalistic field shares and vies for with the proximal fields of social science and politics. The media, through concentration of power in media institutions also has the capacity to exercise a form of meta-capital over other specific fields, in a similar fashion to the ways the state operates to impose external power on autonomous fields. It has the power to construct social reality. This stronger definition of symbolic power is crucial to an understanding of the ways the media may distort the capital of any field (Bourdieu, 2005; Couldry, 2004).

In this chapter I describe and analyse the data gathered from applying an argument catalogue methodology to articles related to boys’ education published in the Sydney Morning Herald from 1996 to 2006. I forensically examine
representations of boys’ education in one example of the print media, the Sydney Morning Herald, in the period of the study. I am interested in comparing how the different voices in the boys’ education discussion were represented by the journalistic field.

I take the Sydney Morning Herald as an example of print media and a well-respected broadsheet publication (even though it is now in tabloid format) with a wide readership in the state of New South Wales and elsewhere. In doing this I am cognisant of the concentration of media ownership in Australia, with just two companies News Limited and Fairfax controlling 88% of print media. The Fairfax Company, owners the Sydney Morning Herald, is one of the most diversified media companies in Australia with large print, radio and digital interests in all states. They have newspapers and radio stations in all capital cities and also run many local, regional and rural radio stations and newspapers. It has been suggested that despite the rise of television and the internet, print media is still the main source of news for these other media services (Dwyer, 2013). This economic and cultural concentration clearly speaks to the capacity to influence and exert meta-capital over proximal fields, such as education. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine exactly what influence this company was able to exert over the state and also which readers from which fields were convinced by the views put forward in the newspaper. Claims of the hegemonic impact of the press that suggest that journalists are most powerful when they speak to the public about what they want to hear and things they already believe cannot be tested by a field analysis, as an examination of content cannot fully examine the impacts on readers nor can we know the variety of fields of the readers (Couldry, 2004).

I am interested here in how the structures of the journalistic field influenced what was written about issues in a proximal field, and how they were written about in news articles. The structures of the field suggest that the field of journalism is divided into hierarchical sub fields – with designated journalists and editors assigned to education – a proximal field. The structures of the field would also suggest that journalists writing for this paper would be subject to professional ethical standards of journalism, would be accountable to their sub-editors and editors and that industry standards of accuracy, acknowledgement of and protection of sources and a privileging of objectivity over opinion in certain types of articles would be adhered to. Homologies between fields would suggest
that journalists as practitioners in the field are both bound by their field specific ‘rules of the game’ within their field and are also in contestation over field specific cultural and economic capital, such as journalism prizes, the opportunities to have regular bi-lined columns or become promoted to editorial positions. How these constraints within their bounded field could influence the content of the articles and interact with the meta-capital and enactment of symbolic power over the field of boys’ education will be examined. What can be said in this analysis is which players in the proximal field of education were given space, which players from the field engaged with the journalistic field, which views were represented and which aspects of boys’ education were widely reported.

Creating categories of articles

I used Argument Catalogue methodology of code book creation to transparently and rigorously examine and categorise the data gathered from the Sydney Morning Herald. The data was analysed in increasing detail at each level of coding. The initial coding was to gather a relevant data set from all articles published in the Sydney Morning Herald from 1996 to 2006. Initially, I conducted a quantitative analysis to ascertain the overall numbers of articles published about the topic within the relevant time period. I conducted a data base search of the Sydney Morning Herald using Proquest Database, a respected academic data base of published news media. Proquest data base contained all articles published from July 1996 onwards. A manual search of the Sydney Morning Herald News Archives from January 1995 to December 2006 was then conducted as a way of validating this data and to gather the additional data from 1995 and 1996 not available in Proquest.

The search terms applied in both searches were ‘education’ linked with ‘boys’ by ‘and’. Three hundred and seventy (370) articles were uncovered by these initial searches. These articles were categorised into the year of publication. A bibliography of all articles published in each year was developed to assist further coding.
Coding for Relevance

Subsequent careful reading of every article provided by these searches showed that the majority of articles were indeed either directly relevant to the topic or were very indicative of the broader educational and gender discussions relating to educating boys at the time. This analysis revealed a total of 340 articles of some relevance to the topic with only 30 articles deemed irrelevant. The criteria for the ‘Directly relevant’ category was that articles contained direct information about boys, groups of boys or individual boys related to education or schooling. Articles that predominantly discussed girls in contrast to boys were also included. The criteria for the ‘broadly relevant’ category was that it contained information about boys, groups of boys or individual boys and their behaviour or circumstances that informed the discussion about education and boys; or that it contained references to boys in relation to information about schooling such as private and public schools; single sex schools, or selective schools that informed the discussion about education and boys; or that it contained information about male health or male identity that directly informed the discussion about education and boys. Some articles were categorised as irrelevant. Examples of articles deemed irrelevant were book reviews, reports of sporting, cultural or political activities that used the word ‘boy’ in a context not relevant to boys and education or were about individuals retiring from education positions with no specific relevance to boys.
In the next step of the analysis, I calculated the numbers of articles in each category and developed further codebooks for each year between 1996 and 2006. From 2000 onwards there was a sustained high interest in boys and education, with over 30 relevant articles per year published on the topic. Additionally, there were four major spikes of interest in the field of boys’ education in this 12 year period. Compared to subsequent years, 1996 was high with thirty-five articles published. In 2000 and 2002, there were forty articles each and in 2004, there was the highest number of all the years, with fifty relevant articles.

These spikes coincide with, rather than precede, events in the real world instigated by government. In 1996 the NSW department of Education instigated an inquiry into the education of boys. As well, the federally funded report on boys and literacy was released. There was also a federal policy change that saw the Girls in Schooling policy replaced by a Gender Equity in Schooling policy that included both girls and boys.

In 2000, the Federal government announced and conducted an Inquiry into the Education of Boys. In 2002 the report of that inquiry was released. In 2004, the government announced a new round of funding for schools to investigate local solutions to issues in the education of boys called Success for Boys. The strong relationship between the number of articles about the education of boys and these actions by government seems to contradict the much stated academic...
and popular position that the discussion about boys and education was a media-driven beat-up. In contrast to this view, it appears from the data that the media were largely following and reporting on actions within the field of state power – actions by government and by the state and federal bureaucracies responsible for education. In the years between these government actions: 1997; 1998; 1999; 2001 and 2003, there is a relative drop in the numbers of articles published. Further investigation of the genre and content of the articles confirms this trend of the media tending to report and comment on issues surrounding the policy and funding interventions by government, rather than initiate debates. This calls for a more nuanced investigation of the relationship between the media, the state and the academic and practice field of boys’ education.

Coding for genre

A further categorisation of the total number of directly and broadly relevant articles was undertaken, categorising articles by time and genre. All articles were sorted by year and month published. The initial genre categories were: news article, feature article, book review and letter to the editor. News and feature articles were also analysed to determine those with and without a named author biline. All letters to the editor had named authors, as this is the policy of the SMH. Articles by regular named opinion writers such as Adele Horin and Bettina Arndt were considered feature articles for the purposes of this analysis as, although they may have been linked to a current event, they were explicitly commentary, analysis and opinion on the issues surrounding the event. Eventually all book reviews were discarded as not being directly or broadly relevant to the topic.

Table 17: SMH Relevant Articles by Number and Genre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>News Story With biline</th>
<th>News Story No biline</th>
<th>Feature Article With biline</th>
<th>Feature Article with no biline</th>
<th>Letter to editor named</th>
<th>Total numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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It can be seen from this table that News stories were the most prevalent genre, being 56.1% of all articles on boys and education. News stories are almost always linked to an event in the real world, such as the annual Higher School Certificate results, the release of a report on the education of boys, or a particular incident at a school. The overwhelming majority of news stories were attributed to a specific writer.

Feature articles are also often linked to an event in the real world but often discuss the issues more broadly, bringing in a range of evidence or opinions. Feature articles represented 35.8% of the total number of articles.

The Sydney Morning Herald employs writers and editors specifically designated to writing about education. These writers could be described as players in a sub field of education journalism. Both News and Feature articles were usually attributed to an individual writer employed for the specific purpose of reporting on education issues. Only 8 news and 19 feature articles had no bi-line. Attribution and specialisation of journalists are ways that the media signify professionalism and purport a lack of bias. However, it is interesting to note that features with no bi-line often contain an analysis of an issue concluding with a strong position on the topic. A higher proportion of feature articles were not attributed to a particular author compared to news articles. In 2000, a year where

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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>183</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>103</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>340</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Educating boys: What’s your problem?: Deborah Hartman

the debate on boys’ education was particularly contested and heated, there were 5 articles with no biline attributed. This issue will be taken up later in the section on content analysis.

There were 27 letters to the editor over the time period. The Sydney Morning Herald has a policy that it will not publish anonymous letters, so all letters had named authors. There were a large number of letters to the editor in 1996, another year of contention. The content of some of these letters will be further analysed later.

Coding for authorship

As the majority of news and feature articles were written under the bi-line of individual authors, an author code book was developed to analyse the extent of the impact of individual authors. Some interesting patterns of authorship emerged from the author code book analysis.

The majority of news and feature articles are by paid, on-staff journalists. Articles by SMH staff accounted for 65% of articles written. Over the period in question, there were several main education writers and editors who reported directly and indirectly on the topic of boys’ education. In particular years, large numbers of articles were written by a very small number of these designated writers, who clearly shaped and informed the public discourse at the time by the numbers of articles they wrote. The most prolific SMH writer on the topic was Linda Doherty, who first appeared under her name bi-line in 2001, then became Education Writer, and later Education Editor. She wrote a total of 46 articles relevant to boys and education in the period from 2001 to 2005. Gerard Noonan was Education Editor from 1999 to 2003 and wrote a total of 22 articles on the topic. Stephanie Raethel (1995-1999) and Kelly Burke (2003-2005) were also significant, each writing 22 and 20 articles respectively. These writers all wrote both news and feature articles and sourced information from a range of academics, teacher and parent organisations and government sources.

As well as the designated SMH education writers, there were news or feature articles by SMH writers from different fields, such as economics or social commentary and opinion pieces by regular SMH commentators. Occasional freelance journalists authored a lengthy feature article.

There were also articles authored by well-known public commentators from other fields and from academics, politicians and people who were recognised in
their titles as representing teacher or parent organisations. Most academics rarely directly enter the public discourse by writing newspaper articles, even though they have opportunities through feature articles or opinion pieces. There is a notable absence of academics who were then well known in the field of gender and education writing media articles. Yet the products of academic work, particularly reports are often the events reported on by journalists and the catalyst for a public discussion on the issues they have raised. They are often quoted by journalists on these issues. Politicians have a similar relationship to the press. The letters to the editor are the main ways other members of the public can comment. It is known that only highly motivated individuals comment on any particular issue. Academics can also enter public debate by writing letters to the editor.

Thematic Analysis: Categories and Coding

Further codebooks were created to analyse the content of articles deemed directly and broadly relevant to the topic. The specific code books created were based on a thematic analysis of the main topic of the article. Coding of all articles was done manually by the author and each article was carefully read and analysed in some detail. As each article was read in full, key words and concepts were noted and a thematic coding category system devised as similarities and frequencies in the words and concepts emerged. This is known as ‘emergent coding’. The advantage of emergent coding is that it represents what actually exists in the literature, not just what was predicted to exist. A disadvantage is that it can be idiosyncratic and subject to coder bias (Abrami, Bernard and Wade, 2006). Another disadvantage of this methodology is that the emergent coding can become difficult to deal with in the analysis, as there is almost no limit to the categories that can be discerned. This issue emerged in this study, as several different codes were needed to adequately capture the depth of content to enable comparison across author categories. However, the process of developing the coding categories ensured that a fuller appreciation and analysis of the themes from all author categories became possible. The rigorously systematic and transparent numerical, time related, relevance and author code books supported the content coding, as all processes can be followed and replicated.

In the case of the SMH articles, the synopsis provided by ProQuest always identified the main themes, and this was verified by the author’s full reading and
thematic analysis of each article. It is worth noting that headlines were often not helpful in identifying the theme of an article. Most of the articles deemed as irrelevant contained the word ‘boy’ in the headline in phrases such as ‘old boys’ network’ referring to fields outside of education.

**Emerging Thematic Patterns**

Two strong and intersecting patterns emerged in the thematic analysis of articles across the period. One pattern was that there are a number of reoccurring, consistent themes highlighted by education journalists that link the discussion about educating boys with broader educational debates. The second pattern that emerged was that in certain individual years, a major issue arose, often a real-world event specifically about educating boys, with many articles around a similar theme. Significantly, in those years, there was also an upsurge in articles about the regular recurring themes that linked the two strands together. There were four major recurring themes emerging from the first pattern.

**Schooling systems**

The most consistent of these was the perennial discussion about the most appropriate system for educating boys and girls: single sex or co-educational settings. This issue was the subject of articles in ten out of the twelve years analysed, in a total of twenty-nine articles over the period. Closely related to this ongoing debate were other discussions about education systems, such as public and private education, selective and comprehensive schools, academic and vocational streams. These accounted for another thirteen articles.

Every time an issue arose in boys’ education, there was also an increase in articles about the merits of single-sex or co-education. For example, in 2000, when there were large numbers of articles about the federal inquiry into boys’ education, there were also six articles about this issue. Another illustration of how the two patterns intersect is 2004, when there were many articles about the Success 4 Boys Program, there were also fourteen articles about vocational education, which many schools saw as a solution to retaining boys from low income families.

**Exam and testing results**

Results in the HSC or Tertiary entrance scores was the next most prevalent theme, occurring in articles in eight out of the twelve years. This theme has been
commented on by many academics who saw this as a very narrow focus and one of the main ways the media contributed to a ‘competing victim’ syndrome that pitted boys’ interests against those of girls (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003; Kenway, Willis, Blackmore, & Rennie, 1994; Lingard et al., 2012). While this can be seen in the articles, it is also worth mentioning that, as the major event in the education calendar and one that is structured as a competitive examination with significant consequences for students’ subsequent choices and opportunities, it is not surprising that it is reported in terms of those who did well and those who did not. In reporting the HSC results every year, the top students in various subjects are considered noteworthy, as the winners of the system. As well as gender, the school attended and the ethnicity of the students is deemed relevant. In this way the HSC results are linked with those other prevalent themes about public/private; selective/non-selective and single sex or comprehensive. The underlying motif of all of these articles is the competitive nature of schooling and the implication that there are winners and losers in this system. It is interesting that the SMH’s constant framing of the HSC results in terms of winners and losers set the tone for this battle in the academic field. In an exchange that opened up the issues there were three articles and nine letters on HSC results and different theoretical stances to them in 1996. Stephanie Raethel wrote an article on 15th January that analysed the different positions that were becoming evident in this spate of articles and letters by academics in January of 1996.

School violence
School violence was a recurring theme in six out of the twelve years, with nine articles in total and four in 2002 when there was an incident of street fight amongst a group of school boys that was reported in one article and followed up in more detail in another.

Male identities and cultures
There was a definite change in the latter half of the period with the nature and scope of the debate broadening to encompass a much wider range of issues and themes, with smaller numbers of articles on each theme. A broader theme about male identity, sexuality and culture recurred in various ways in the latter half of the period analysed. Articles around this theme occurred in six out of the twelve years. The importance of male teachers or male role models was an important element in this theme, with seven articles devoted to it from 2003 onwards, after
the Catholic system unsuccessfully attempted to have provisions under the sex discrimination act waived so it could offer scholarships to male teaching students. Interestingly, very few articles about homophobia emerged during this period.

Other recurrent themes

Other themes reoccurred in five out of the twelve years, indicating that the paper considered them continuingly topical over this period. Literacy was a significant issue with five articles in 1996, four articles 2003, and one article each in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Child Abuse including sexual abuse of boys appeared as a theme in four of the twelve years. In the latter half of the period, sexual abuse by boys became an issue. Articles on this theme included four articles in 2000 about a nine year old boy controversially suspended from school for sexual harassment.

Themes linked to events in real world

There is no doubt that boys and education was a significant issue taken up and reported widely by the SMH, with 340 articles on the topic during the period. Over the period of the study, there were clear periods of intensification of the public discussion about the education of boys. These tended to be linked to events and concerns evident in the wider world. For example, boys and literacy was a prominent theme twice in the period: once in 1996 upon the release of a report of research into boys and literacy practices and attitudes, funded by ACER and led by Professor Nola Alloway; and a second time in 2003 when the federal government convened an inquiry into the teaching of literacy.

In 2000, when the federal government conducted an inquiry into the education of boys, there was a clear intensification of articles on boys’ education, including a lively debate on particular stances to boys’ education. There was also a broadening of the topics and themes reported on. Prior to 2000, apart from literacy, differences in boys’ and girls’ HSC results and debates about the benefits of single sex or coeducational schools for boys and girls were the most prominent themes. After 2000, the themes broadened significantly to encompass a range of academic and social issues effecting boys and girls. From 2002-2005, when many schools received federal government funding through the BELS and S4B programs, the themes of articles often reflected strategies and programs for boys being implemented in schools.
The changes in interest and emphasis in the content seem to coincide with the public policy direction taken by the federal government. It can be seen that in 1996, literacy was a major theme in the content of articles, coinciding with the release of the report on literacy. There was also a significant policy change in 1996, with the federal government changing direction from a policy about girls and schooling to a gender education in education policy.

It seems that the notion that interest in boys’ education was largely a media-driven crisis cannot be supported by this thematic analysis. On the contrary, the media seems to largely be following the impact of government policy changes or system direction changes in the themes it takes up about boys’ education. However, this does not mean that the media was a neutral player in the public discourse. There are distinct patterns to the ways the boys and education debate was framed and taken up by the SMH.

Themes linked to changes in the field

There is an interesting juxtaposition of topics and tones in the articles over the twelve year span. New entries into the field emerge, such as journalist Bettina Arndt, who takes a sympathetic approach towards the need for attention to boys’ education, and academic writers in the field, Peter West and Victoria Foster who take different positions in the debate about boys. There seems to be a deliberate balancing of positions by the SMH, with articles that seem positive or sympathetic to the educational needs of boys, being balanced by similar articles about girls, or by a differing view about the issues. This is evident in the clear positioning of the different viewpoints of Bettina Arndt and Adele Horin, who often have articles on the same topic, on the same days, a few pages apart. While reporting widely on the education of boys, the SMH did not seem to be running a particularly consistent campaign to raise the specific issue of boys or support particular initiatives suggested by any position in the academic discourse on boys or gender. For example, the issue of male teachers was taken up in several articles in response to the Catholic System’s attempt to offer designated scholarships to men in an attempt to increase the number of male teachers. There had been no articles on the need for male teachers prior to this event.

In another more subtle trend, it seems that when there have been a series of articles sympathetic to boys’ educational and social needs, there is an upsurge in unrelated negative articles about boys, particularly about boys violent or
inappropriate sexual behaviour. There are an increasing number of articles that take a negative tone towards men and boys more generally in the later years of the period. For example, there is an increase in numbers of articles about young boys and sexual misconduct in the years 2004 to 2006, where previously most articles on this theme had been about boys as victims of sexual abuse.

However, while there did not seem to be a consistent tone to articles, it is interesting to note that many journalists, academics and commentators find it hard to write about boys’ and girls’ education without pitting them against each other, resulting in a constant positioning of girls’ interests and gains against boys by some commentators and by the tone of the paper more generally. Towards the latter half of the period there are more articles that take up the issue of differences amongst boys. This change is also reflected in academic discourses. This theme intersects with the interest in public/private/selective schools discussion. An example of this is a very interesting series of articles about Sydney Boys High’s embarrassing defeats in the GPS school rugby competition which then became characterised as an issue of racism against Chinese students, who were over-represented in this academically selective school. The issue is couched as the school's discrimination against Asians in its campaign to recruit upcoming rugby sporting stars who were usually not Asian.

**Relationships between fields**

The analysis of themes across the years shows patterns of intersection between discussion about boys’ education and the ongoing educational issues the SMH regularly took up. This can be read in a number of ways. It can be seen in terms of inter-field struggles for dominance, with the journalistic field vying with the political and education field over the power to exercise symbolic violence in representing the world. It can also be read through an analysis of the interests served by the ways the SMH was able to intersect boys’ education issues with its ongoing concerns through its approach to reporting events in the real world. An example illustrating this is the way the SMH was able to incorporate emerging debates about boys’ education into its ongoing reporting about education in general. The debate about the relative advantages of private and public schools, and funding for these categories, and a similar debate about the merits of selective and comprehensive public schools were constant themes that the SMH intersected with boys’ education. It could be argued that Fairfax Media as a
private economic entity had a predisposition to favour private enterprise in education which shaped the field and therefore the dispositions of journalists working for this company. It appears that the SMH was running a consistent campaign to put educational systems firmly in the mind of the public. This could be read as offering deliberate, knowing support for private vested educational interests by consistently favouring the private education sector. It is also possible that the SMH was responding to perceived parental concerns that they identified as relevant enough to their customer base to keep readers coming back to the SMH. It is likely that the readership of the SMH comes from a middle to high income base and that the readership of the education supplement are professionals either from the education field themselves or interested in it as parents of middle class children.

Education supplement feature articles were often about programs or initiatives in private schools. This emphasis was evident in the discussion about boys and education as many of the articles about the merits of single sex schools for boys or girls featured private schools or quoted spokespeople from private schools. The Sydney Morning Herald seems to give more positive coverage to private schools than public. In fact there was such a perceived bias in reporting that the SMH acknowledged this and was prompted to run a series of commissioned positive articles about successes in public schooling.

The increasing and sustained numbers and range of articles about boys’ education in the paper of this time period illustrates convincingly that boys’ education became an increasingly multi-faceted topical issue over this period, subject to changes within the intellectual field and outside of the field, particularly changes in policy. The government policy and program interventions in 2000, 2002 and continuing into 2005 clearly had an impact on the number and range of themes of articles in those years. There is a considerable broadening of topics away from a focus on the HSC results towards a focus on broader evidence of achievement. The policy and programs themselves are reported on, as well as theoretical and political stances on the policies. After 2003, initiatives by schools funded by the programs are featured in articles. It is clear from the content of articles that the SMH takes up reporting on gender policies related to boys’ education in ways that intersect with its ongoing theme of school systems, particularly the public/private divide and within that single-sex and selective schooling for boys and girls.
This broadening and dissipating of focus is significant, as it also occurs in the boys’ education field itself and is strongly influenced by the action of the state in directly funding school programs and devolving the control to decide the focus of those school based programs to the schools themselves. This could indicate the meta-capital or power of the political field and of the state over both of these proximal fields, education and journalism.

I now turn to some examples of spontaneous or intuitive field analyses by the journalistic field to illustrate how the thematic analysis of the SMH articles informs an analysis of the field of boys’ education. A finer grained discourse of one of these spontaneous field analyses will shed light on struggles within the field of boys’ education.

Conclusions

New entries to an academic field tend to use the media to gain a reputation or create an interest in their particular stance, in this way establishing themselves in the field and attempting to challenge the orthodoxies of the discourses in the field. These academics used newspaper articles, positions on government committees and consultancies with government to enhance their position in the field. This can clearly be illustrated in the critical incident around the articles about and by Victoria Foster, a rising feminist academic and Peter West, an advocate for boys’ education. In the case of Victoria Foster, she moved from positions in the bureaucracy to academia and then to academic consultancies with the NSW government. She regularly put her position in the Sydney Morning Herald by writing herself and making herself available to regular Sydney Morning Herald journalists. In analysing the gender distribution of HSC results, she strategically took up a narrow research emphasis of interest to both the media and government in the discourse on boys’ education. However, this accommodation to the field of power, in this case the bureaucracy, had the effect of weakening the field of boys’ education and gender in education and contributing to the neo-liberal accountability measures being imposed on the field by government.

It is also clear that there are periods of intensification of the discussion about boys’ education that are linked to government intervention at the time. While the media seemed to be consistent in its approach to difference, in relation to linking difference to schooling systems, it seemed to follow the lead of
government, reporting on boys’ education in relation to government policies. In relation to the academic field, there are moments when the controversy amongst academics at the time spills over to the public debate through the media. The following examples illustrate the complexities of the debates, the personal positions and the stances taken in ways that shed light on the field of boys’ education and on the ways a particular discourse and issue can give rise for opportunities for newer players in journalism as they intervene in public debates. I have chosen this article as it represents the rise of an epistemic player in the field of journalism that in part was created by the homologies across fields, as the government moved to shift the field of gender in education towards boys and Bettina Arndt rose as a social commentator supportive of the men’s movement’s calls for attention to the health, education and welfare issues of men and boys.

**Illustrative Example 7: CLA, Arndt, B. (2000).**

This text is by Bettina Arndt, a social commentator and paid columnist for the Sydney Morning Herald, who regularly writes on gender issues, taking a pro-male, non-feminist stance. It is the full text of a 2,100 word feature article published on Page 14 in the News and Features Section of the Sydney Morning Herald on July 17th 2000. I have chosen to analyse this complete article as it a very significant example of an attempt from the journalistic field to analyse issues about boys’ education as well as describe the internal moves within the academic field at the time. In many ways this article is a spontaneous or intuitive field analysis of the field of boys’ education. This goes some way to explaining why it provoked such a vehement reaction from players within the field. This incursion by the journalistic field into the field of boys’ education exposed the political and strategic struggles and characterised the cultural or ideological struggles within the field in ways that hardened the lines between academics taking various positions in these struggles.

Feature articles by three female commentators on gender and male issues appeared on a semi regular basis in the Sydney Morning Herald during the period of the study. In an apparent attempt at balance in the paper, Bettina Arndt was often juxtaposed against Adele Horin who was well known for her feminist stances, with columns on similar issues appearing in the same edition of the paper, a couple of pages apart. Miranda Devine, a self-proclaimed right wing columnist also occasionally commented on gender issues in her regular columns.
Newspaper feature articles are interesting in that they not only focus on a specific event considered newsworthy but the genre allows for a more detailed examination and analysis of an issue. The genre combines analysis and opinion allowing the author to construct an argument in some ways similar to academic writing in that the assertions in the article are usually attributed to credible sources or some other evidence provided, even though references are not required. While the text is that of the named author, the heading of a feature article may be decided by a subeditor, with an eye on grabbing the attention of the reader. This division of labour within the journalistic field sometimes explains why headlines appear sensationalist, taking a point of view that often bears no relationship to the balance within the text of the article itself (Fairclough, 2000, 2006). This feature article by Bettina Arndt follows the conventions of this genre. As for the headline, it is not known whether the author or a subeditor chose it.

In this article, Arndt uses the event of the announcement of a government inquiry into boys’ education to construct an argument about the need to address boys’ declining academic achievement and to analyse and comment on the field of boys’ education from her perspective. She constructs an argument that pits boys’ education against girls’ education and suggests that academics in support of girls’ education have been deliberately and obstructively resistant to changes that would support boys.

Not surprisingly, this article drew an unusual number of responses to Letters to the Editor, by academics with a personal interest, and by others interested in the debate. It is one of the few times during the whole period under study that academics discussed the internal workings of their field in the media. The Editor of the Letters pages, Jeni Harvie felt it necessary to reiterate the SMH policy on only publishing letters from named authors because of the response. On June 24, 2000, she wrote this postscript to the Letters page.

Bettina Arndt’s article “The trouble with boys” sparked a vehement backlash from academics who highlighted the complexities of educational research and sought to dispel the myth that boys suffer as a result of any focus on girls. It must be said that in addition to today’s letter from Gary Stowe, of Faulconbridge, I received a number of letter supporting Bettina’s position but they requested anonymity, a status granted only in extremely sensitive cases (Harvie, 2000, p. 7).

The academics who were prompted to write to the letters pages in the couple of weeks following the article were: Jane Walton, St James Ethics Centre;
Dr Wayne Martino, Murdoch University, Perth, Dr Victoria Foster, University of Wollongong and Dr Lori Beckett, from University of Technology, Sydney. Dr Foster's argument was that she had not been interviewed and she was misrepresented in the article. In directing the attention of readers to her own work, she says:

“There is a vital distinction to be made between simplistic, popular views of important social and educational issues of the day, and the results of academic research.

Dr Martino’s argument was that he wasn’t quoted or mentioned, even though he had been interviewed. He says,

Interestingly, Ms Arndt has chosen to omit our perspectives and research findings based on interviews with more than 100 boys from across the country, which present a more complex picture of the issues affecting boys at school than those presented in her article.

Dr Lori Beckett, admitting that she did not return Bettina’s calls, said she ‘did not want to be part of the populist media debate about boys and feed into the hysteria and anti-feminist backlash generated by the men's rights lobby’. She said that she had been personally damaged by trying to work with boys’ advocates on state and national gender equity committees, stating ‘I know what they’re like.’

Jane Walton writes,

“The issue isn't that the education system is failing boys, or girls for that matter, but that it fails to cope with difference of any sort.

I hope that I am mistaken in seeing Bettina Arndt's article as somehow suggesting that advances in girls’ literacy and success have been at the expense of boys’ achievement.

We are left to wonder whether the anonymous letters mentioned by the editor were from other academics in the field holding different positions in the cultural and political struggles in the field at the time. We do not know, yet it seems likely, that the terms of the debate had been framed such that people who did see a need to focus on aspects of boys’ education, did not feel that they were able to do so without being characterised as either anti-feminist or anti-girl, so did not want to be named publicly.
It is also interesting that in the main the academics who wrote to the Letters editor chose to attack the journalistic field and what they described as popular simplistic notions, rather than the positions of the several high profile academics quoted in the article by Bettina Arndt. In this way, as well as stating their own positions, they are attempting to protect the autonomy of the field against incursions such as this one from the journalistic field, yet are not willing to publically debate the issues under contention with their peers (Bourdieu, 2005). Bourdieu suggests this form of academic discourse disguises the political and strategic moves within the field, the very aspect that Bettina Arndt attempts to expose in this article (Bourdieu, 1988).

I now turn to an analysis of the text to demonstrate the effects produced by the way Bettina Arndt arranges and uses the textual features in her writing of this article.

Table 18: Textual Features Bettina Arndt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Text Features Highlighted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Federal Government has announced an inquiry into the education of boys. Bettina Arndt reports that despite evidence that boys are falling behind girls, education authorities have failed to act.</td>
<td>Agency in biline, Affirmative mood, colocation of adjectives and nouns for emphasis, Agency – name and position, colocation of adjectives and nouns and verbs and adverbs for emphasis, Agency – authority, Affirmative mood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EACH year fresh school results highlight the sorry story of boys’ underachievement. “There has been a marked deterioration in the school performance of boys in the last decade,” concludes a recent analysis of school results by Jennifer Buckingham, researcher at the Centre for Independent Studies.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buckingham’s paper The Puzzle of Boys’ Educational Decline shows that a decade ago boys dominated in both the top and the bottom HSC achievement bands. Now there are twice as many boys as girls at the bottom end and males at the top are thinning fast. In the 1998 NSW HSC</td>
<td></td>
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the average mark for girls was higher than that for boys in 64 out of 70 subjects. 

**Literacy testing shows** boys are not just doing badly in relation to girls, they are doing considerably worse than they were two decades ago. **The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth show** the proportion of 14 year old boys who failed to achieve basic literacy in 1995 was 35 per cent, up from 30 per cent in 1975. (The equivalent figures for girls were 26 and 27 per cent).

“It has long been obvious that boys are underachieving, with dramatic effects on their life chances”, says Dr. Ken Rowe, principal research fellow at the Australian Council of Educational Research.

Rowe last week attended an international conference held in Kuala Lumpur on child mental health which was abuzz with talk of the link between boys’ academic underperformance and rising rates of delinquency, youth suicide, drug and mental health problems and other self-destructive behaviours.

“Here were professionals from countries all over the world, from Britain, even from Iran and Botswana, all concerned that when boys are failing at school, it leads them into trouble,” says Rowe. He says education authorities in Australia are all too aware of the costs to society of the difficulty schools face in engaging boys in the educational process.

Last week the Federal Government called for submissions to a new inquiry into the education of boys, to be chaired by Liberal backbencher Brendan Nelson. It was prompted by the Education Minister, Dr David Kemp, responding to widespread community concern about boys’ underachievement.

So why then has it taken so long for politicians to take an interest?

In the United States, an answer was proposed in an intriguing cover story in last month’s Atlantic Monthly. The author, Christina Hoff-Sommers, attributed a widening gender gap in American education to inaction by an education establishment...
In her article The War on Boys, Hoff Sommers accuses these experts of distorting research findings to promote the myth that American schools short-change girls. She claims, on the contrary, it is boys who are doing badly, providing evidence that boys achieve lower grades than girls, are more likely to drop out or be held back, and are a full year and a half behind girls in their reading and writing skills.

Hoff Sommers calls for an end to the partisanship clouding the issue: "We should call for balance, objective information, fair treatment and a concerted national effort to get boys back on track. That means we can no longer allow the partisans of girls to write the rules."

So have the "partisans of girls" been writing the rules in Australia? Most of the academics who claim expertise on gender issues in education were supporters of the highly successful 1980s strategies promoting girls' education. A Sydney University professor of education, Peter Cuttance, believes this meant there was resistant to policies addressing boys’ disadvantage. “There was a strong alliance between these academics and people in the bureaucracy. For them it was always a girls’ issue rather than a gender issue. That group of people weren’t interested in boys’ achievement. The politics of the issue was they were there to bat for girls, which they did very effectively.”

Cuttance tangled with the gender equity push in the NSW Education Department in his previous job in the quality assurance section of the department. His section was asked to produce a report examining girls’ educational progress, in part to assess the effectiveness of the girls’ strategies promoted by the department. The report was finished in 1995 but only briefly saw the light of day.

Cuttance says the problem was the report showed girls were doing very nicely indeed they were outperforming boys in
almost every subject particularly in English.

“The girls’ report was withdrawn because some of the bureaucrats were playing games. They were worried about what this would lead to given the public attention being paid to boys’ underachievement.” He said, explaining the fear was that support for girls’ education would ease up if the girls’ results were known.

What made these bureaucrats nervous was that a groundswell of concern from parents and teachers about boys’ poor results had prompted an inquiry into boys’ education, led by then backbencher Stephen O’Doherty. This resulted in a boys’ education action plan designed to tackle the problem, which after a very positive response from schools, drew government support for an implementation strategy.

But then the Liberals lost power, O’Doherty became shadow education minister and Labor appointed as its consultant one of his more outspoken opponents, academic Victoria Foster, who had been prominent in her public criticism of what she saw as misplaced concern about boys.

When she gave evidence to the O’Doherty inquiry, she said a boys’ education strategy would set girls’ education back 20 years.

The gender equity policies which followed seemed to address boys only in so far as their behaviour interfered with girls’ education.

So sexual harassment, bullying and disruptive male behaviour received far more attention than critical issues such as boys’ poor literacy outcomes.

A spokesperson for the Minister of Education, John Aquilina refused to comment on past history, detailing recent initiatives such as pre-vocational courses, increased HSC subjects and middle year strategies likely to benefit boys.

Cuttance claims the influence of these gender equity experts has been felt in education departments throughout Australia. “It was basically there in all education systems, as a feature of
the late 1980s. But clearly these groups don’t have the clout they did 10 years ago,” he says.

A recent example of the greater scrutiny now being paid to gender issues is a research report which has been languishing in the Federal Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) since late last year.

The report on factors influencing educational performance of males and females and their destinations after leaving schools was commissioned from a group of academics led by Jane Kenway, a professor of education at the University of SA.

Last year a workshop was held to discuss the report and participants were told to expect its release late last year. But apparently the full report received a poor reception within DEETYA, with key bureaucrats concerned about the way the report deals with the poor performance of boys.

Seven months later, after strong suggestions the report was to be buried, DEETYA sources reveal it has been extensively rewritten and will soon be released.

A spokesperson from Kemp’s office says the delay is not unusual and any rewriting was simply “the normal process of dialogue between researchers and the department.”

Jane Kenway, who is working on a country boys project, states her document has not been rewritten.

An early version of the document made available to the Herald claims: “Gender differences are not as great as the public concern about boys’ literacy has implied.” Quoting data on basic skills tests and similar literacy measures.

A professor of education at Melbourne University, Peter Hill, is the former head of education in Victoria and an expert on literacy. He believes it is grossly misleading to draw conclusions about gaps in literacy simply on the basis of such basic tests.

“To talk about literacy in terms of basic skills is dangerous stuff,” he says, criticising researchers for failing to include
other achievement measures in reaching this conclusion. Had achievement tests such as the NSW HSC English results been used to make this assessment, a very different picture would have emerged, as here the gap between boys and girls is alarmingly large and extends right through the highest achieving groups. According to 1998 figures, females outnumber males by more than two to one in the top quarter of the English results.

**While** Hill is full of praise of the job done in schools to address the issue of girls’ underparticipation in maths and science subjects, he said there’s no question as to where priorities should lie.

“Now we have a gender gap in the opposite direction that is bigger than anything we saw in the past. We must attend to the problem of under achievers, of whom the majority are boys.”

He takes issue with the implication of the Kenway report that factors such as socio-economic background are just as important at determining school outcomes as gender.

“Socio-economic status is not an ongoing drag on kids it simply determines their starting point,” he says, referring to the most recent evidence that gender is a factor which continues to exert an impact on its own.

**Equally** there are flaws to Kenway’s argument that there’s no real concern about boys’ school results because they still do well when it comes to finding jobs.

Ken Rowe says that although some male early leavers gain the few apprenticeships still available, the evidence is that windows of opportunity for less literate boys are closing rapidly.

“**Our society** is demanding higher levels of sophisticated verbal reasoning and written communication skills”, he says. “**Our feminised curriculum** and its assessment reflects this new demand which is a key reason why boys on average are falling further behind.
“But unless we find some way of helping boys develop functional literacy skills, they will find themselves on the scrapheap when it comes to future employment.”

In Victoria, the message is being heard and the state government has already committed $102 million to an early years’ literacy scheme which has been shown to produce astonishing results. With new middle year strategies being put in place, Victoria is leading the way in programs likely to benefit males.

It is doing so simply by targeting poorer students. Hill feels it’s a better approach than fighting the gender war. “If you tackle the ideologues head on, you have an argument which is bloody and people run for cover. It’s better to target lower achievers and pick up disproportionally more boys in the process.”

Meanwhile out in the community, there are many taking matters into their own hands and seeking out strategies to help boys. Throughout Australia there is a huge demand from teachers and schools for such programs. Ian Lillicoe is a West Australian headmaster who has spent much of the past year on a Churchill fellowship researching developments in boys’ education, both here and in America and European countries.

He is being inundated with requests for information about the overseas research.

“I’m booked up right through this year, travelling to schools all over Australia who are so desperate to find out what works for boys,” he says. He has many suggestions, particularly from Britain, which is pouring resources into improving outcomes for boys.

Strategies include increasing structure in classrooms, greater emphasis on literacy and reading, reducing complex verbal instructions, more silent work, carefully structured homework tasks, consistent sanctions for uncompleted work, greater variety of testing instruments and high expectations.

Richard Fletcher is manager of the Newcastle Men and Boys
program, which has boys’ education as a primary focus.

Fletcher struggles to meet the demand for information about promoting boys’ school achievement. A conference on teaching boys being planned for Brisbane in August has already attracted participants from around the country.

“The calls are constant from teachers, schools and from parents of boys who are withdrawing, losing interest in their studies, parents concerned about sons who are depressed, violent, faced with expulsion from schools,” says Fletcher.

The new Federal inquiry into boys’ education should find no shortage of people keen to encourage the Federal Government to follow Britain’s example in making the issue a national priority.

Cultural or Ideological Work

The cultural or ideological work of any text can be seen in the propositions to which the authors are prepared to commit. Bettina Arndt’s extended feature article is constructed as a sustained argument with the main thesis being that boys’ educational achievement is an important educational issue that has not received the attention it warrants from the political field. She opens her piece with a description of a clear move by the political field to intervene in the field of educational research and practice, the Federal government announcement of the Inquiry into boys’ education, which is the event upon which her case is built. She suggests that boys’ academic achievement is declining and that governments have known this for some time. She constructs an argument that until the announcement of this inquiry, education authorities have not acted upon the evidence of boys’ lack of educational success. In this argument, she is clearly appealing to discourses about the need for evidence based practice in all social policy arenas. This could be construed as part of neo-liberal discourses about accountability or alternatively, as a more broadly supported critique of educational programs that are implemented with little evidence of their efficacy.

In the first section of her article, Bettina Arndt’s main theme is boys’ school performance and achievement. She uses several authors, reports and statistics to support the argument that, in general, boys’ academic achievement is
declining. The order in which the players in the field are named denotes the importance or status accorded to them by the author (Fairclough, 2006). In this article, the first named author is Jennifer Buckingham, from the right wing research agency, the Centre for Independent Studies. This is provocative by the author, as the effect of using Buckingham’s research as the first example of evidence in her case, will depend greatly on the political persuasion of any reader who is familiar with the field.

From the first paragraph, Arndt is throwing her weight behind a right wing argument about boys’ education. This will have incensed many readers who see Buckingham’s research as explicitly political and aimed at maintaining the status quo in power relations between men and women. Buckingham’s research on social policy is in a similar direction to other research by this conservative research centre aimed at maintaining unequal economic and social power relationships.

After using Buckingham’s analysis of the top and bottom bands of the NSW HSC results and literacy testing used by the Longitudinal Study if Australian Youth, as evidence that on average boys’ school results are declining, the next named author is Dr Ken Rowe, a well-established mainstream researcher for ACER, the major educational research body in Australia. The author uses the event of an international conference attended by Rowe to draw the reader to commit to the idea of a causal relationship between the rather narrow attainment evidence she first quoted to the much broader social issues of behaviour, delinquency and suicide. This is the position that Ken Rowe was suggesting at the time – that poor literacy outcomes resulted in inattention and bad behaviour in the classroom, rather than the reverse. In contrast, many feminist and other researchers were suggesting that hegemonic concepts of masculinity led boys to take up too much teacher time by disruptive power plays for attention in the classroom, and this led to lower literacy attainment. This was certainly a contentious issue in the field and one over which there were substantial cultural struggles.

The other effect of this paragraph about Ken Rowe’s conference attendance is that it invites the reader to accept the proposition that boys’ educational difficulties are a worldwide problem and concern about the issue is shared by educators from many different countries.
She next suggests that it is the scale of concern about the issues that have pressured the government to act in Australia. The collocations in the noun phrase widespread community concern are used to explain why the minister David Kemp acted to call the inquiry. She reinforces this later when discussing a groundswell of concern from parents and teachers in NSW. These phrases, linked with the previous idea of the global nature of the problem and the later examples of the large numbers of schools calling in boys’ education consultants has the effect of drawing the reader to the proposition that there are a lot of parents, practitioners and educational researchers concerned about the issue. In contrast, many academics had characterised the issue of boys’ education as a media-driven crisis.

Arndt then returns to her central thesis, suggesting that there are reasons why governments have not acted to date. She begins this section with the rhetorical question: So why then has it taken so long for politicians to take an interest? As readers, we are well aware that writers set up rhetorical questions. It is a proposition she is inviting us to agree to and is now about to tell us the answer she also wants us to agree with, which is why this device is frowned upon in academic writing. This device gives the article an explicit tone of a political speech, a hortatory call to arms, where supporters are invited to agree with the importance of the question and accept the explanation that follows, as a knowing expose on government inaction.

Interestingly, Arndt uses the work of another player in the journalistic field, US journalist Christina Hoff-Sommers, to construct her central thesis, and then quotes players in the Australian academic field to support this thesis. Borrowing or using ideas and structures from another journalist is possible now that global media is readily available to journalists and the public. This intertextuality can be read as one way media practices, and the issues it takes up, have become homogenised under globalisation. It also has the effect of evoking traditions of investigative journalism that exposes global issues previously hidden, in much the same way as radical sociologists see their task. One homology between fields is this tendency to be constructed around an axis of an old/new dichotomy, with new players in the field needing to prove that their analysis is different to the old, revealing something new. The cultural tradition of investigative journalism is built on this dichotomy.
She devotes five paragraphs to the article by Christina Hoff Sommers, sensationally titled The War on Boys. Having previously suggested the problems with boys’ academic achievement are world-wide, the effect of using the article from the USA is to suggest that the reasons they have not been addressed may also be similar in other countries. The central thesis of Arndt’s article is contained in a rather dense sentence, with many embedded clauses describing Hoff-Sommer’s article.

The author, Christina Hoff-Sommers, attributes a widening gender gap in American education to inaction by an education establishment captured by sex-equity exponents who have actively discouraged policies aimed at addressing boys’ disadvantage.

This sentence has multiple effects, situated where it is in the article. First, it links to the previous paragraphs about the Australian situation, and suggests there is a widening gender gap, both here and elsewhere in the world. Secondly it suggests that the reason for this gap is that governments in both the USA and Australia have failed to act. The next three sets of colocations link very important ideas in Arndt’s thesis. For the first time, she clearly constructs the gaps in educational attainment as boys’ disadvantage, thereby pitting their interests and achievements against girls in a social sense, rather than in a merely descriptive comparative sense. Until that point, it could be read that statistics about gender differences were used as a descriptive device merely to illustrate the extent of the problem with boys’ outcomes, because in an equitable society, we would expect boys and girls literacy rates and HSC results to be roughly the same.

She then suggests that the agents responsible for this disadvantage are sex-equity exponents, bringing to mind in the Australian context gender equity units of education departments. She puts the proposition that these agents are responsible for government inaction because they have deliberately worked against policies aimed at the supposed disadvantage of boys. In this way, Arndt, the journalist, is constructing an argument of ‘competing victims’ – an accusation often levelled at academic and practitioner advocates for attention to boys’ education. In linking the proposition that boys as a group are disadvantaged and that supporters of policies of girls are responsible, Arndt is depicting the cultural struggles in the field as a clear dichotomy–advocates for boys against advocates for girls. She draws the battle lines in the field in ways that hardened those already existing divisions. The construction of such a clear ‘competing victim’
argument made previously more fluid tentative alliances between feminist informed boys’ education academics and men’s movement boys’ education academics and advocates in the field impossible. She is arguing that feminist discourses have colonised gender equity discussions in education and attempting to marginalise other discussions about boys’ academic and social outcomes.

The next section, of the article, that mounts an argument that gender equity advocates for girls in NSW and Australia wide have indeed shaped and held back government attention to the education of boys, extensively quotes Peter Cuttance, a then Sydney University academic who had previously been head of the NSW State Department of Education Quality Assurance section. She devotes eleven paragraphs to constructing the argument that gender equity advocates for girls within the bureaucracy have worked against a turn towards attention to boys’ education, using the suppression of a NSW report on girls written by Cuttance’s unit as an illustrative example. Describing a shift in the political struggles in the bureaucracy, Arndt completes this section by quoting Cuttance again, “But clearly these groups don’t have the clout they did 10 years ago,” he says. Peter Cuttance then went on to head the evaluation team of the Boys’ Education Lighthouse Schools programme implemented by the Federal government following the inquiry into boys’ education.

Continuing the competing victim argument Arndt adds her own analysis to quotes from Cuttance, pitting boys’ literacy, as a critical issue against a list of other issues: sexual harassment, bullying and disruptive male behaviour, which presumably Arndt sees as minor issues. Clearly, Arndt’s arguments are against those who have advocated for attention to those issues impacting heavily on girls. Boys’ education advocates who were trying to construct a subtle complex argument that male behaviour is important in a number of ways including the effects on the identities of all males as well as relationships with girls, were also not well served by this dichotomous presentation which pitted literacy against social issues, rather than as a cluster of important issues all deserving of attention.

Arndt now returns to research. In the next section Arndt devotes 15 paragraphs to a discussion of a report that she attributes to Jane Kenway as first author, that was actually authored by Cherry Collins, as chief author, with Jane Kenway as second named author and Julie McLeod third (Collins et al., 2000a).
Constructing the argument that the report has not been released due to questions about its quality and tone, Arndt evokes insider knowledge gleaned by her investigative journalism by referring to key bureaucrats, DEETYA sources and an unnamed spokesperson from the minister’s office, as well as an earlier unpublished version of the report that she has managed to gain access to.

She then extensively quotes Peter Hill and Ken Rowe again who criticise the assumptions or arguments in the report. In this section, some of the major cultural struggles within the field over interpretation of educational statistics, theoretical and ideological positions and explanations for boys’ literacy or other educational and social outcomes are presented. The importance of family socio-economic status, the effect of the curriculum, and future employment opportunities for boys and girls are all major themes in the cultural struggles in the academic field and are important educational issues for governments to address through policy and practice. Using colocations such as feminised curriculum in the quote from Ken Rowe, the author invites readers to construct these cultural struggles within the field of gender in education as a battle of boys’ advocates against girls’ advocates, strongly supported by the quotes from the quoted academics.

The effect of these two sections of the article linked together is to construct in the mind of readers that there has been a conspiracy against boys’ education between feminist academics and bureaucrats and to then to discredit the quality of the work of these players in the field, by using one recent and then unpublished example by very well-known feminist academics. She uses quotes from other academics to strengthen her argument that these players in the field are losing power but that boys’ education will and should get the attention it deserves from governments who have now decided to act.

In the following paragraphs, Arndt then goes on to juxtapose the inaction or deliberate holding up of action in the research and bureaucratic fields with widespread concern and activity in the public, practitioner and educational consultant fields. This activity is all being carried out by systems and schools now willing to act and by advocates for boys’ education.

Victorian literacy programs, middle school reforms, vocational education programs as well as schools calling in boys’ educational specialists such as the named and quoted Ian Lillico and Richard Fletcher are all given as examples of work that could improve boys’ outcomes. Arndt uses colocations in lists to
describe the strategies suggested by Ian Lillico as likely to be successful. The effect of the list is to suggest to the reader that the items listed are equivalent in importance (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough (Fairclough, 1992) suggests that the device of a list is often used in political discourse to link unrelated things together to create the appearance of a coherent program that could be accepted. The reader presumes this list of strategies was provided to Arndt by Lillico: increasing structure in classrooms, greater emphasis on literacy and reading, reducing complex verbal instructions, more silent work, carefully structured homework tasks, consistent sanctions for uncompleted work, greater variety of testing instruments and high expectations. The provision of a grab-bag of unrelated strategies of enormously different order, some supported by research evidence and some merely anecdotal is one of the criticisms levelled at boys’ education advocates by researchers. In the next paragraph, Fletcher is quoted providing different lists, which focus on social issues: boys who are withdrawing, losing interest in their studies; sons who are depressed, violent, faced with expulsion from schools. While the tenor of Fletcher’s quote is one of sympathy and empathy for the parents and teachers who have called with concerns about boys, the list of issues he describes are not so dissimilar from the ones earlier suggested in the NSW policy: sexual harassment, bullying and disruptive male behaviour.

Order, Agency and Nominalisation
It seems in this article, the author is well aware of the cross field struggles between social science, the political field and the journalistic field and skilfully uses the cultural conventions of each field to construct a credible argument. In this article, all academics are named and described by their current employed position. The effect of this is first to create a sense that the academics are credible, their positions are important, and their ideas are substantiated by research evidence. It implies a respect for the academic field and the status of positions within the field by the academics quoted. Directly quoting players in the field adds weight to their arguments. It allows them to speak in their own voice directly to the reader who is invited to agree with them. Professor Ken Rowe and Dr Peter Cuttance are extensively quoted throughout the article as a specific devise for drawing the reader along to support each different proposition in the sustained argument.
The only academic player who is named but not quoted is Professor Jane Kenway, who is not able to speak with her own voice within the article, yet her work and that of her colleagues is criticised by several other named and quoted academic players. This has the effect of further marginalising the feminist academic position Arndt has constructed as inadequate.

Political spokespeople and bureaucrats are not named. Not naming the political spokespeople has the effect of making them appear ineffective and inactive. Their anonymity has the effect of making the ministers they speak for appear as if they could not be bothered to speak for themselves. This adds to the impression of political inaction on the issue by politicians. The lack of naming of bureaucrats has a different effect. By calling them DEETYA sources and key bureaucrats, the reader is left with the impression that Bettina, the author, has inside information from un-named bureaucrats who really know what is going on inside the department and the field of education, but as public servants are unable to speak publicly. This device has the effect of calling to mind the ethical tradition of journalists protecting their sources. The reader is led to believe that they are getting previously undisclosed information via Bettina’s insider sources.

This is an example of the author calling on the cultural traditions of her own field in a strategic move within the journalistic field that highly prizes scoops or inside information.

It appears that Arndt is also aware of the subordinated position of practitioners within the field of boys’ education. The order of the voices in the article evokes familiar hierarchical structures within and between fields of research, politics and bureaucracy and finally practitioners and ordinary people.

While leaving the consultants to last in the article, which could imply they are of least importance, they are depicted as in demand and busy, creating an impression that they are credible because many schools are employing them to help solve difficult problems. They are also directly quoted. Using the phrase *Meanwhile out in the community*, the author contrasts their activity with the ineptness and inaction of the academics and politicians and bureaucrats, casting them as leaders in the field willing to act before governments.

**Tenor**

Mood and voice are used effectively in the article to construct the sustained argument. Most of the article is in the affirmative mood and active voice, especially in the presentation of information by the quoted researchers and
consultants, giving this weight and credibility, leading the reader to accept the propositions by these quoted people and the arguments built around their quotes by the author. The imperative mood is used by Rowe, the researcher in the most authoritative position in the field and a well-known cultural warrior. Hill and Hoff-Somers also uses the imperative mood, creating the impression in the mind of the reader that there is urgency about the issues in Australia and world-wide. The use of this mood by an American author is effective as readers can use their intertextual knowledge that American news reporting is likely to be more dramatic and sensationalist than Australian, thereby allowing the Australian author and those quoted to step back slightly from this sensationalism, with their arguments appearing more reasoned. The use of the rhetorical question orients the reader to the argument that feminist bureaucrats have been stopping the necessary actions from being done. The range of players, from senior academics to senior education bureaucrats to education consultants using the active voice to describe people, institutions, emotions and actions that are being taken successfully creates the impression that the federal government needs to keep up with these players who have taken matters into their own hands.

**Strategic or political work**

Relative newcomers in any field need to establish their position as providing something new and different. The new/old dichotomy is one of the poles that characterise fields (Bourdieu, 1988, 2005). In the cultural struggles in the field of journalism, Arndt, a relative newcomer in the journalistic field of opinion writers positions herself on the right of the left/right dichotomy. As an advocate for men and boys’ issues, she positions herself on the anti-feminist side of the oppositional men’s movement/women’s movement dichotomy. By writing the long well researched and investigative article on this controversial topic she is strategically positioning herself in the journalistic field as an opinion piece writer that brings attention to the paper. The flurry of letters from academics and others who do not usually write to the paper confirms this.

This text was written as a clear intervention by the journalistic field into the academic and political field of boys’ education. It is a long opinion piece, constructing a clear argument and taking a clear position that the federal government should act following the Inquiry into boys’ education. The author is attempting to influence the outcomes of the Inquiry. The author positions herself
as an advocate for attention to boys’ education who has reached her opinion through investigative journalism, who has researched her topic both in Australia and internationally, quoting credible academic, departmental and consultant sources, and unnamed insider sources.

It is revealed in the letters pages that she ignored information from other sources that may not suit the purpose of her argument. As an opinion piece writer this would probably be considered acceptable in the journalistic field. The paper went on to regularly present articles on similar topics by both Bettina Arndt and Adele Horin. This may have the effect of appearing to be even handed to their readers. It would also make sure that readers from all sides of any debate would read both authors and perhaps engage in the debate by writing either supporting or criticizing one author or the other. A regular appearance in a major newspaper juxtaposed against one of Australia’s most well-known social commentators on feminist issues would have substantially increased Bettina Arndt’s cultural capital and strategic position in the journalistic field, establishing her as a serious social commentator.

**Moves in the academic field**

Many of the cultural struggles played out in the field of boys’ education were not only about theoretical positions on gender but were also about whether social theories of gender were more salient to boys’ education than practitioner concerns about boys’ education. While practitioners are often dominated within intellectual fields, the intervention of the state into boys’ education, in directly funding schools to conduct action research projects, in this case clearly favoured practitioner accounts of and experimentation about boys’ educational experience, rather than grand social theories about gender. Many of the cultural struggles within the field are in response to this intervention that shifted power relations in the field for a time. This was played out to a certain extent between feminist and pro-feminist players, and within these discourses, as can be seen with tensions within this group around the focus on literacy in boys’ education. More particularly this tension was played out between explicitly pro-feminist players against men’s movement protagonists, who were mainly newly arrived challengers in the field and also writing from a practitioner stance.

There are struggles among old and new players and between old players within the academic and policy field about a shared interpretive frame for the
field. In this period, there were clear struggles over what was at stake in the field of boys’ education, how such a field could be conceptualised and which ideas and theories could be regarded as legitimate in such a field. The field was alive with discussions over representation of boys as either essentialist or socially constructed; whether certain texts could be considered as analysis or dismissed as unworthy and popularist; research or opinion; radical or recuperative; whether boys’ education strategies were empowering or disempowering of girls. These struggles stem from tensions within the field about conceptualisations of the field itself and of conceptualisations of gender in education. Struggles were over how this field would sit in relation to the field of girls’ education and whether gender in education could be a field that encompassed concerns about both boys and girls.

The year 2002 stands out in this period of intensity as, in this year there was a culmination of actions by many players in the various subfields. Activities in this year illustrate the repercussions of the shock within the field delivered by the policy change. The level and nature of activity clearly shows that the field of boys’ education was experiencing an episode of contention. In 2000, the tide was indeed turning in the academic field. The political field and the field of power were intervening in the cultural struggles and players themselves were fiercely contesting the purpose of their field. They were questioning what was important in their own internal debates.

Among feminist authors and other social scientists there were internal debates and movement from structuralist positions, that analysed race, sex and class as separate parallel factors, to more fractured post-structuralist positions with a variety of concerns. This shift within the field made a unified feminist position on gender and education more difficult to argue. This contributed to a weakening of the field at the very time when the political field was also questioning the policy stances taken on the basis of research from the academic field.

Lingard et al. (Lingard et al., 2012) suggests that prior to this period there had been a ‘strategic essentialism’ among feminist and feminist supporting scholars that had strongly argued in terms of male/female, boys/girls dichotomies when calling for attention to girls’ education. While more recent research has been more nuanced, it was difficult for feminist authors to present a coherent argument for a continued focus on girls’ education and not on boys, when their own concerns were now diverse and many of these concerns also applied to
boys. The ‘which boys/which girls’ position was a strategic position that aimed to counter the move towards attention to boys that was hard to argue against in a boy/girl dichotomy framework. ‘Which boys/which girls’ did not sit well with a position that argued for a focus on gender power relations. There were many contradictions within it, as this position seemed to imply that feminist scholars should not be concerned with all girls or that there were no issues that were specific gender issues. The ‘which boys, which girls’ position marginalised some major concerns of feminist scholars, such as sexual harassment or gendered violence.

The argument that a focus on all girls and women was merely ‘strategic essentialism’ does not seem a strong one. Power relations between men and women, however they manifest, are fundamental to feminist theories. It is precisely this core concern that made it difficult for feminist sociologists to analyse boys’ learning as other than a manifestation of masculinity and power. And it was precisely this argument that was not supported by the political field that favoured arguments and solutions of a more educational systemic nature that could be controlled within their field. Arguments that pedagogy and teachers were responsible for discrepancies in outcomes and therefore could be held accountable were much more powerful to the political field.

What was really at stake in the cultural struggles of the field, when the political field, the journalistic field and the field of power was intervening, was not whether attention should be paid to boys, but whether feminist theorising and analysis about gender was the favoured theoretical position to be taken up by the government in awarding of research grants and deciding policy and policy consultants. In the strategic and political struggles in the field, feminist researchers were indeed fighting for their lives or at least their research grants, as were other players in the field. Feminist research, feminist concerns about girls and feminist networks in the bureaucracy that had been built up over the previous twenty years of cultural struggles, were now seen as old and not in step with new directions of the political field. In this era of evidenced based policy and accountability, researchers who could link the large data sets of national measures with curriculum, pedagogy, outcomes and other educational policy concerns of government were more likely to gain favour with the political field and the field of power.
In 2000, the debate about boys, rather than having a narrow focus on HSC results and literacy, as some scholars suggested at the time, actually continued to widen the gender debate to include all aspects of education and social and individual identities. This trend was already occurring in feminist theorising and was evident in the fracturing of concerns in the discussions about girls’ education. The debate about the relationship between gender and other social identity markers and learning outcomes opened the way for a re-emphasis on research that had a more psychological focus rather than the sociological dominance of the previous decade. It also opened the way for a re-emphasis on teaching and learning and how this linked with social and emotional aspects of students’ school experience.

**Homologies between the fields**

There are many homologies between the journalistic and the academic field to be drawn from an analysis of this article. The cultural struggles in the field are mirrored in the article. Familiar dichotomies are evoked by the author, the authors of the published responses to the article and many people quoted in the article: boy vs girl; feminist versus men’s movement; gender versus class or socio-economic status; research versus practitioner and public; journalism versus social sciences; action versus inaction; old versus new. While the academic field accuses the journalistic field of simplistic, un-nuanced use of dichotomies, both the quoted academics and those who wrote a response also use these in their arguments. Interestingly Bettina Arndt did not choose to evoke the gay versus straight dichotomy that she could have by including Martino’s research.

The strategic struggles in the field of journalism, similar to those in the academic field are also being played out with the SMH decision to publish this long article by Arndt. With this article, Bettina Arndt is establishing herself as an important new player in the journalistic field, in step with the politics of the time. Adele Horin while very respected, is seen as offering a perspective that is familiar and now established and old, in much the same way as the feminist scholars in the academic field are viewed by the political field and the bureaucracy. The rise of men’s movement positions on boys can be seen in the journalistic field, as well as the academic field, as the SMH seems to going out of its way to give both the newer player Bettina Arndt, supporting men’s movement concerns and longstanding feminist writer Adele Horin equal space in the paper.
The political field operates with its own logic and intervenes in academic fields to suit its own agendas. The then Liberal government made changes to and the possible threat to not publish the commissioned research of the Collins et al. report. This is exactly the kind of move made by the Labor Government, a few years later in 2006, when they failed to publish the final report on S4B. Labor had by then returned to the class emphasis in the parallelist position with a focus on low socio-economic groups. While maintaining the Gender Equity in Australian Schools Policy that had been current since 1996, it did not fund or support any further initiatives around gender in education and has never published the final report of this expensive program. The field of journalism contributed to discourses of difference and disadvantage in the emphasis within its articles, and the positioning of Bettina Arndt against Adele Horin as two epistemic players representing feminist and men’s movement positions in dichotomous opposition. Yet, the field structures and logic of editor’s roles, editorial policy, journalistic practices of professionalism and of the function of news articles in reporting specific events meant that the relationship between the fields was complex. The responses of education academics to an analysis of the field of gender equity in education was sharp and clearly disputed this journalist’s view by discrediting journalism as popularist and ill-informed rather than as a contested discourse about gender differences and equity that was happening across many fields. In itself, the rise of the men’s movement discourses about men’s health and well-being across fields indicates a homology of the always unfinished business of gender and difference in society. In my concluding chapters, I will summarise how these discourses were interpreted and re-interpreted throughout the layers of the field and discuss the implications for the field.
Chapter 10
Boys’ Education: the state of the field

The outcome is that we continue to accept some differences and exclude others, rather than accepting the reality of difference itself, and the demands this makes on what it is we do, would like to do, and what we feel comfortable about doing (Slade, 2002, p. 78)

Between 1996 and 2006, the field of Australian boys’ education was like a comet. It exploded into action, burned hot and fast and seemingly died suddenly, and is currently lying cold and almost dormant. And it appears to have taken girls’ education with it. Yet, it has left a long tail of unfinished business where bright sparks of reinvigoration could occur.

The most significant conclusion about the field of Australian boys’ education from my forensic analysis of the field is, that if Australian boys’ education can be characterised as a field, in the Bourdieusian sense of a structured space with a sense of purpose that make all players feel the game is worth playing, it was then and remains today a small, thin and fragile field with very little autonomy. It is a field that was and still is inextricably linked to girls’ education through layers of gender and wider equity in education discourses. It is a field that has confounding intersections of practice, academic, policy and political interests, priorities and discourses.

The methods of Bourdieusian and strategic action field analysis and Critical Language Analysis have enabled an investigation that led to this and other important conclusions about the field. The methodologies of a forensic investigation of a differentiated catalogue of a corpus of texts in each layer of the
field combined with a Critical Language Analysis of small sections of texts by epistemic players in the field have enabled me to reach conclusions by an analysis that mapped and traced the changes in the field through the discourses and actions of players in the field.

Utilising these approaches, I systematically answered the first of my research questions, relating to the changes and events that occurred in the field of Australian boys’ education between 1996 and 2006. I concluded that the political field, the state, in the form of the Commonwealth government was the most important player in this decade of great activity in and subsequent demise of boys’ education. The field of boys’ education was fuelled by substantial government intervention and when that intervention ceased and the government changed its direction in equity, a thin and disunited field of boys’ education could not sustain itself.

In investigating the intersections of the layers of the field, which was another of my research questions, I concluded that, in the turn towards boys’ education, the political field, the state, was acting within its own field logic and purpose, intervening to shape the direction and police the borders of other fields (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). It was also acting in its own interests, of maintaining an Australian position in a global education field, in orchestrating these interventions. While creating shock waves in gender in education and in wider equity discourses, the interventions had other far-reaching implications for education and for the interests of the state, particularly the Commonwealth government. The ongoing interests of modern national government concerns about public services such as education, which were successfully achieved in this period through the focus on boys’ education, are the systematic reporting of population-scale accountability measures on the internationally acknowledged indicators of high quality education systems of achievement in literacy, numeracy and science.

At the time, the Australian states were reluctant to comply with reporting and accountability measures. Intervening in boys’ education was useful to the Commonwealth government to ensure compliance. The shift towards statistical reporting of outcomes rather than activities became standard accountability measures for funded programs. It was established during this period that boys, as a gender group were over-represented in low and middle achievement bands in literacy. These disparities increased among low socio-economic and indigenous
students. While there did not seem to be major differences in achievement levels in science there were gender differences in the types of science subjects undertaken by boys and girls, with girls over-represented in biological sciences and boys in physical sciences.

Equity indicators such as participation and retention in schooling are the other internationally benchmarked measures of a successful education system. These were somewhat, though not significantly improved during this period. Retention rates for boys were significantly less than for girls overall, and especially in rural, low-socio-economic and indigenous communities. Retention rates have improved overall and among indigenous students, yet gender gaps across all social groupings are still evident.

Cost and responsibility shifting to the states was another interest of the Commonwealth government that was somewhat achieved in this period by directly funding schools and clusters of schools yet expecting states to comply with reporting requirements if funds were accepted. Recommendations for new programs to be funded by the Commonwealth were rejected. During this time, the Commonwealth government was a Liberal government and most of the states had Labor governments, so bringing the powerful equity units that were responsible for reporting equity initiatives under its control was an important aspect of the struggle within the state, enacted through boys’ education initiatives.

My analysis of changes indicated incremental shifts towards an equity focus on schools and students in low socio-economic areas during this focus on boys’ education. When the Liberal government lost power in 2006, the Labor government continued this shift towards low socio-economic status in its equity in education focus. It also continued the reporting requirements for equity programs but it discontinued any funding specifically for boys’ education, leaving a trail of unfinished business in the field. In the current attacks on education through austerity budget discourses and actions reviewing education by a new Liberal government, which include large cuts in funds to state education departments, the Commonwealth government is unlikely to support any sustained equity programs in relation to gender or other equity issues, apart from universal literacy or numeracy programs. The field of equity in education is in urgent need of revitalisation, as it proved very vulnerable to incursions by the state and to the whims of successive governments.
Strategic actions and change

Another major finding about change in the field was that the state of flux and de-census evident in boys’ education operated to further fragment the focus on equity in education (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). This finding arose out of the investigation of my research question about inter-relationships within and outside of the field. While the political field was a major initiator of the rapid change towards boys’ education, indicating that change came from outside the field, or from the top-most political layer of the field, these interventions only partly explain the comet-like heat that was generated through the rapid and contested changes occurring from 1996 to 2006 that created a de-census within the field itself, and between the layers of policy, academia and practice. The changes contributing to this state of flux came from complex intersections of interventions from the field of politics, journalism and social science, all operating within the internal logic of their own fields and for their own purposes. It also came from disruptions caused by newer entries into the field, making claims that boys as a gender group could be regarded as in some ways disadvantaged. These disruptions by newer players challenged existing doxas and exposed already existing fractures and logical inconsistencies that had been papered over or were considered not important within the focus on girls’ education.

The relatively autonomous field was vulnerable to interventions from the field of power and politics because of these dissonances. The changes represented disruptions to the field of girls’ education and to the discourses of gender and equity that this field was built upon. Previous incremental changes towards post-structuralist notions of individual agency and away from notions of universal gender differences in the field of girls’ education, which were generated from within the field, could be accommodated in a stable field that was united by a common sense of purpose. However, ruptures appeared when the focus turned towards boys’ education, because of unresolved tensions between equity discourses that emphasised difference and those that emphasised disadvantage and logical inconsistencies in the use of universal and specific categories within these discourses. These tensions were heightened in discussions about boys, and the relationship between boys’ and girls’ education as sub-fields of gender and equity in education became highly contested. Boys’ education did not achieve the kind of field stability of a field that can accommodate difference, discussion and debate within a united purpose. Questions about the nature and
purpose of a field of gender equity that could be inclusive of all boys and girls and the multiple diversities and intersections within and between these categories have not yet been resolved. The relationship between universal or specific categories and essentialising notions of any category is part of the unfinished business of the field.

All fields have histories, well-established conversations and sets of relations that are both constraining and enabling of change. In the field of gender and education from the 1970s to the 1990s, girls’ education had largely been synonymous with gender equity. Feminist and pro-feminist players were well established and feminist theories of gender from social science, particularly sociology, were the dominant discourses in the doxa of the field. When boys’ education became the focus, the changing positions within these established doxas were challenged. In the ensuing struggle, established players, in particular epistemic players, acted strategically to maintain these positions and defend the established doxas of the field. At stake, from some feminist points of view was a struggle for the autonomy of girls’ education and for the situation of girls and women to be the centre of gender equity disadvantage discourses, with boys seen in relation to the situation of girls. And for newer men’s movement discourses, boys’ social and educational situations were legitimate issues of disadvantage and difference in their own right as well as in relation to girls.

An important finding about the question of the intersections between discourses was that field structures operated to continue fragmentation within these discourses in the field and against cooperative action that could enable an open discussion of this fragmentation. In this period of de-census and rapid change, shock waves reverberated through all layers of policy, academic research and practice. In the period from 1996 to 2006, the political field intervened in the equity discourses of the autonomous field of education, where girls’ education discourses sat comfortably nestled in gender and equity discourses and boys’ education sat rather uncomfortably beside it. By conducting a public inquiry into boys’ education, accepting almost all the recommendations of that inquiry and committing almost thirty million dollars to research, practice and professional development in boys’ education, the state disrupted the structures and discourses of the field in every layer of the field.

The 1996 policy change away from girls’ education towards gender equity and the unsuccessful attempt at recasting this policy towards dichotomous girls’
and boys’ education policies and strategies in 2003 have resulted in a policy hiatus. While the 1996 policy document remains current today, it is largely ignored by state jurisdictions and in schools.

In funding schools or clusters of schools directly and in developing professional development materials for schools, the Commonwealth government privileged the practice layer of the field above that of policy and theoretical social science explanations of gender relations. In the BELS program it opened up the field to a great deal of practitioner experimentation and discussion about learning differences. These diverse and sometimes unproductive directions have been widely criticised by some academics as contributing to essentialist discourses of gender differences (Keddie & Mills, 2007). Yet, the recognition and challenge of understanding and accommodating the enormous diversity among male students was a conclusion arising from many of these school-based experiments (Cuttance, 2006). Creative ways of acknowledging and challenging difference were again brought to the forefront of equity discussions in this focus on boys. In the S4B program, models of practice that linked gendered social identities and interests to learning in an integrated way were privileged. Some nuanced discussions of when and how differences can be utilised as strengths in learning and relationships and when they become disadvantages were generated as players in the field investigated strategies for various categories of boys and the patterns of over or under representation evident in different contexts. However, the rich accounts of successful local initiatives in many different community contexts were never published in a final report on this program. While there was a large amount of practitioner activity, particularly in schools and clusters funded by the Commonwealth BELS and S4B programs, a continued focus on gender in education with boys at the centre of inquiry was not sustained after this funding ceased. There is very little funding available now for research or practice initiatives specifically exploring gender and education in relation to boys’ or girls’ experiences of schooling. Explorations of other categories such as low-socio economic background or indigenous students often do not include any discussion of gender differences within these groups.

**Intersections, movements and homologies**

In this period, the relatively autonomous field was opened to public discourses about boys’ and girls’ situations in schools that challenged academic discourses
about gender and enabled this rapid shift of the focus of gender in education from girls to boys. These public discourses and those of newer men’s movement players in the field always sat uncomfortably with gender in education discourses formed historically in girls’ education in collaboration between feminist and pro-feminist players in the practice, academic and policy layers of the field (Daws, 1997). The shift was hotly contested by established players in girls’ education, and the result of the contestation was that the equity field move away from gender altogether to parallel divisions of race and class, rather than an academic engagement with men’s movement and newer queer gender identity research accounts of difference, identities, disadvantage and change for boys.

Most activity in the academic layer of the field still concentrates on critiques of this era, rather than a direct productive engagement with gender and education discussions that are inclusive of successful social and academic outcomes for all students and conceptualise positive aspects of gender identities as well as the negative consequences of narrow definitions of gender and of discrimination, harassment or violence (Lingard, 2003). Some schools continue initiatives targeted towards boys or specific categories of boys. Some schools have carefully investigated their own school statistics to see where there are gendered disparities resulting in disadvantages that need addressing and some schools have focused on whole school inclusive approaches for girls and boys and across differences. Most states have gender equity policies inclusive of girls and boys. Yet the signs of an ongoing sustained and supported conversation between policy, academia and practice about boys’ education, girls’ education or gender in education are very weak.

While the state was the most significant player, I concluded that complex interconnections between external and internal factors influenced the heightened activity and contestations in the field in this turbulent time, contributing to de-census in the field. The fields of politics, social science and journalism were all vying to be influential in this struggle. The state was not monolithic in its influence on the field and its strategic actions were a complex set of interconnections with its own interests and with perceived public opinion.

Public debate, fuelled and shaped to a certain extent by journalism was influential. The actions of the state seemed to be responsive to wider public opinion, as well as acting to shape that opinion. Public calls for attention to boys’ education could in some ways be characterised as a social movement for
changing gender relations, in the specific economic and social climate of this decade. They were not galvanised around as significant and coherent equity discourse influencing educational discourses as the women’s movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Yet men’s movement activists seemed to tap into the mood for a change in focus in gender in education in Australia, and other countries in the global north, built upon ideas of individual men and boys as both reeling from and needing to respond to social, cultural and economic changes of the times. While there was strong evidence that there was a need to address educational, social and health issues for men and boys and that those issues were exacerbated in communities of greater social and economic disadvantage, this movement was fuelled by the strongly essentialist discourse of some popular writers (Biddulph, 1994, 1997; Bly, 1990). Yet the movement was not monolithic or united. It included an inter-section of pro-feminist, men’s healing and specific group accounts of difference and disadvantage. Specific groups including men, such as indigenous, ethnic and queer cultures were also exploring positive explanations of difference, noticing how positive change could occur through these discourses and moving away from positioning themselves as always disadvantaged (Anderson, 2009; Tsey, Patterson, Whiteside, Baird, & Baird, 2002). There were conservative and recuperative groups within the men’s movement, who attempted to position themselves of victims of feminism and changes in women’s position in society. Yet, the intertwining and sometimes defining explanations of difference, identities and disadvantage also drew upon a different and positive sense of gender relations in younger generations of men and women including a growing feeling by younger women that equitable gender relations could be achieved through an intersection of the concerns of men and women and a sense that both men and women could be active agents in creating the gender identities and relations they envisaged. New social and economic circumstances where it was becoming common, desirable and necessary for both men and women to pursue careers and to be active in the nurturing of children shaped these intersecting visions of equality. The public sentiment that shaped the need for attention to boys’ education was constructed from realist experiences, positions and dispositions of men and women, that intersected with the media and the state. I concluded that the state and the men’s movement responded to these public calls for attention to boys’ education as well as influenced the discourses in which they arose. While characterised as essentialist, this universal
focus on boys as a gender group ultimately drew attention to the intersection between diverse identities, difference and disadvantage and to logical inconsistencies in the application of these notions in gender equity discourses. Further nuanced investigations of these intersections for any category of student could be the spark of an invigorated field of equity in education.

An important finding of my discourse analysis is that universal accounts that bring together rather disparate sets of circumstances, inequities and identities into a coherent narrative of disadvantage are very powerful in advocating for any group. Universal accounts of disadvantage have been used very strategically by both the women’s movement and men’s movement in advocating for legitimate gendered issues to be addressed. One explanation for the effectiveness of universal accounts is that in drawing together sometimes logically unrelated circumstances, disparate groups can all ‘see’ their own experiences reflected in the universal narrative.

In investigating the question of intersections of field structures and the homologies between fields, I concluded that the role of journalism while somewhat influential was not as significant as internal field struggles within education. Journalism’s role in leading a particular discourse about boys’ education seemed to be mediated by the internal field structures of journalism that shaped how journalists operated. My analysis of texts from the Sydney Morning Herald indicated that the field structure and logic of reporting specific events as news in journalism meant that journalists were more likely to follow and describe actions by players in the education field than influence them. In many articles, however, conservative discourses about education tapped into public fears about the future by a continuous thematic framing of education in terms of a competition between different groups of students and different systems with boys or girls as winners or losers. Boys’ education issues also intersected with ongoing discourses about the purpose and structure of education which often framed boys’ education debates within the dichotomies of public versus private systems or selective versus comprehensive schools, shaping the debate in terms of whether boys or girls would benefit most from single-sex, private or selective schools. These debates reignited older discourses about difference from which the incremental changes towards post-structuralist theorising about education had moved. Yet the ways these strategies and structures had contributed to
gender equity for some girls and not others were now exposed and open for discussion.

My analysis of the actions and discourses in the political, policy, academic and practice layers of the field as well as in the field of journalism illustrated how the competitive adversarial structures of the field, with established and newer players vying for valued capital and positions in the field and the lack of autonomy of the field to set its own agenda, outside of the agenda of the state, constrained moves towards productive collaborations in boys’ education between feminist and pro-feminist and other men’s movement players.

It is very clear that an unfortunate consequence of these changes was a ‘see-sawing’ away from girls’ education issues as boys’ education issues were established as significant in a number of ways and few schools were able to sustain a continued focus on girls’ programs (Kenway, 2013). On this seesaw, as attention to boys’ education rose, girls’ education fell. And while educational gains for some girls were not significantly wound back, and the boys’ education focus has contributed somewhat to feminist concerns over control over bodies, share of labour and freedom from violence, different disparities and discrepancies in gender and equity remain. And so do the sometimes dangerous or misleading universal categories or essentialist discourses that are used effectively in advocacy discourses yet can also continue divisions and inequalities, as recent calls for renewed attention to legitimate demonstrated world-wide issues for girls illustrate (Healy, 2014). In this dichotomous and adversarial context of boys versus girls that the field of boys’ education struggled to find an autonomous vision and purpose and remains somewhat caught in these adversarial dichotomies. While the field of politics was instrumental in instigating change, and there was a public movement interested in the well-being of men and boys as distinct from and intersecting with feminist accounts of gender relations, and journalism played a part, the internal structures of the field were also significant in creating the adversarial positions and dispositions that were formed and hardened in this period of de-census and flux.

Positions and dispositions within the field

My attempts to answer the research question about the intersections between discourses in layers of the field have proved to be the most challenging, interesting and complex aspect of the research. In this analysis, the intersections
between field structures and struggles for strategic positions within these structures and cultural positions and the dispositions of the players became clearer, as I drew on the different methods and methodologies I'd chosen.

I concluded that, in the shift in focus from girls' education to boys' education, the field structures of incumbent and challenger were very significant as the strategic struggles between players intersected with the cultural and strategic struggles in the discourses in the field. Bourdieu (1988) emphasises the hidden nature of field structures, suggesting that the dispositions of players within a field are such that the logic of the field seems natural to them, so they act in sometimes knowing and sometimes unknowing ways. He suggests in dominated fields such as academia, particularly fields like education and social science that are fighting for recognition as relatively autonomous fields, boundaries of fields are often policed in highly adversarial ways ungenerous to newer players. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) tend to emphasise the knowing ways that actors collaborate while also suggesting that the impact of their actions is not always clear or known to players.

While there were many intersections and some moves towards collaboration across differences, the most significant distinctions were between feminist and pro-feminist and men's movement players in the field (Skelton, 2001). This distinction was shown to be very significant, particularly in the academic and policy layers of the field. Feminist and pro-feminist players who were incumbents in the field of girls' education were able to move across to boys' education transferring their considerable cultural capital. In this somewhat paradoxical situation, as incumbents they were in relatively powerful positions in the field, yet often saw themselves as part of a social justice movement against power imbalances which also affected them as women or as members of specific interest groups, such as diverse sexuality, class or race categories (Kenway, 2013; Lingard, 2013). They had also been part of long collaborative struggles to ensure girls' education policies and strategies were enacted. Men's movement players moved into the field with a focus on boys' education in the early 1990s and challenged these cultural positions, yet strategically they were new-comers to the field, needing to build their cultural capital.

While there are multiple intersecting views within the men's movement, these newer critiques saw social justice issues for boys in terms of: harm to the emotional, mental and physical health and well-being of boys and men; difficulties
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with deficit accounts of boys and men’s behaviour and dispositions; and a challenge to dichotomous assumptions in some accounts of inequality that if systems or situations were not working well for girls and women then they must be working in the interests of boys and men. Men's movement discourses intersected in complex ways with pro-feminist and group specific concerns about restrictive and positive versions of masculinity, sexuality and cultural differences, confounding the clear dichotomy between men’s movement and feminist positions, especially in the often very similar practical strategies and solutions suggested by explicitly pro-feminist and other men’s movement activists utilising ecological models to analyse situations in specific contexts.

Kenway (2013) suggests that feminist players lost the argument about competing victims and the view of essential differences is still strong among practitioners. The findings of my thematic and discourse analysis suggest that while the men’s movement used universal notions of men and boys in their strategic moves to draw attention to boys’ educational issues, inconsistencies in the logic of most discourses about difference and disadvantage have helped to create this difficulty. In moving away from arguments of difference towards disadvantage in equity discourses, theorists have missed an opportunity to understand the intersection and integration of these two factors. Such an understanding could enable a celebration of differences. The field structures of challenger and incumbent player made it difficult for feminist and pro-feminist players in epistemic positions to engage with any men’s movement discourses. Interestingly, feminist and pro-feminist players who were able to do this were from smaller universities where collaboration between academics of different theoretical disciplines or traditions was enabled and perhaps necessary in such a small pool (Nichols, 2009; Nichols & Cormack, 2009; Slade & Trent, 2000a, 2000b). Another notable distinction was players who were able to move towards engagement with these ideas as an applied or practice focus (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997a, 1997b; Clay, Andrianius, & Howard, 2009; Clay & Hartman, 2006; Wheldall & Beaman, 2002). Another important distinction is the engagement with the views and concerns of teachers, students and community members, those most affected by the implementation of educational policies (Dalley-Trim & Alloway, 2010; Nichols & Cormack, 2009; Trent & Slade, 2001). While similar boys’ educational issues were raised in other countries, evoking similar critiques and some collaborations among feminist and pro-feminist players (Martino &
Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Weaver-Hightower & Skelton, 2013), some international collaborations were also possible among men’s movement players (Ykema et al., 2006). Yet, these were hampered by divisions among men’s movement players in a movement hampered by unspoken distinctions along a continuum between conservative and radical accounts of masculinities. These divisions are evident in attempts to set up journals and disciplines of boyhood and male studies, particularly in the USA.

Newer and only partly theorised accounts of difference are strongly embedded in notions of positive yet diverse identities in specific interest groups such as gay and lesbian, black American and indigenous groups. In viewing difference as a factor of interest, it also allows for a critical examination of when differences become disadvantage. To ignore or deny any gender differences is illogical and goes against the underpinning of gender categories where gender will always be linked in some ways to biological sex. The growing interest in the situation of children whose biological sex cannot be determined at birth and the physical and social treatment of these children and their parents seeking solutions at the hands of health and welfare professionals and wider society are a very relevant example of the need for collaboration across disciplines and layers of the field to engage with emerging issues that confound theories of sex and gender coming from any one discipline. The emerging evidence of extremely high rates of bullying of transgender students and of suicide among young adults in this category underscores the importance of these kinds of collaborations and nuanced explanations (McGuire, Anderson, Toomey, & Russell, 2010). Newer explorations of brain development and hormonal influences need not lead to essentialising of gender differences, but could be part of sophisticated explanations of difference that could inform an agenda that has equality for all as its purpose. Inquiring and open explorations of difference can include explorations of commonalities and the understanding that while differences are sometimes important and significant, our common humanity is always at stake in attempts to achieve equity and this is what is diminished or compromised when inequities occur.

Equity debates about boys circled around the often unstated questions of whether boys could be considered as either different to girls or as disadvantaged in society. The incremental shifts in feminist discourses have moved the field away from relying on the arguments of difference implied in ‘girl friendly’
strategies. The ‘which boys, which girls’ position moved gender away from a category of disadvantage. In the political context at the time, with Labor regaining government in 2007, the effect of this was a move back to a more structuralist parallelist position of a focus on class or socio-economic disadvantage. Yet, in my analysis of the ways field actors used various conceptualisations of boys’ education, gender and equity strategically, I concluded that the field structures of incumbent and challenger exacerbated the tendencies for academics and practitioners to speak only to those who already shared their views and to not only fiercely guard the capital they had already amassed but to open spaces in the field only to newer players who would build on rather than challenge their capital. The textual strategies of incumbent players, especially those holding epistemic positions were often not obvious or disguised because of their standing in the field. Textual strategies such as making sweeping claims about other positions without citing any references to authors who were purported to represent these positions (Gilbert & Gilbert, 2000), only citing authors from an author’s own tradition in making a case against another position (Mills & Keddie, 2005); overstating claims by selectively citing some evidence and ignoring other evidence (Kenway, 1995a; Vimpani et al., 1995); or using a very small number of events such as newspaper headlines to make a more general claim about the media (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004), or presenting an extreme version of another position yet citing authors who did not hold that position, thereby attempting to discredit an entire movement or argument (Martino, Lingard, & Mills, 2004; West, 2005) were more often used by incumbents and also sometimes by challengers in the field. Challengers were more likely to ignore the arguments of incumbents altogether often citing either mainstream authors or statistical evidence (Weatherburn, 2003a) or taking hortatory stances to argue and impassioned case without the use of references (Fletcher, 2005b).

The fact that in this field those established players with capital were largely feminist and pro-feminist players both confounds and extends Bourdieu’s notions of homologies between fields which would suggest that those in stronger positions in one field usually have stronger positions in others and that arbitrary and constructed cultural distinctions often become social distinctions. In the policy context where a move towards gender equity policy occurred through a ‘seesawing’ between girls’ education policy and strategies and boys’ education strategies, the academic and personal dispositions of players in the field inter-
connected with cultural struggles about constructions of gender equity and strategic struggles to maintain valued capital and standing in the field. These inter-connections coincided to intensify the within field struggles, as feminist and pro-feminist players attempted to resist a shift away from girls' education, and for a view of boys in relation to girls and to other social factors among boys and men’s movement advocates sought a legitimate space in the field for an engagement with boys’ issues in their own right.

The adversarial actions of some epistemic players in the field from policy and politics, from mainstream research, from some men’s movement and some feminist and pro-feminist perspectives illustrate the ways texts operated to shore up or build up strategic positions in the field. These actions of textual mud-slinging, labelling, silences, gaps and strategic or discursively blind use of categories of difference to support any given proposition as well as the absence of real academic and practice debate across different perspectives seem to support Bourdieu’s view of the importance of field structures in shaping the dispositions and positions available in any field. The positions and actions of incumbent and challenger seemed to operate in this field in much the same ways as in any other.

Despite these ‘symbolic violence’ struggles to capture public and practitioner support for specific explanations and visions of boys’ education by policy and academic players, there were intersecting and somewhat different priorities and concerns in the practice layer of the field. In the practice layer, theoretical distinctions about gender and other social differences were mainly significant in so far as they inter-connected with a fundamental concern about learning and teaching. This concern was captured well by the often articulated question in professional development programs about boys’ education - “Isn’t this just good teaching?” This concern, in the minds of teachers and in the heart of classroom interactions, did link with concerns about equity and social justice, particularly in public schools and schools with a high proportion of indigenous students, recently-arrived migrant populations or students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In these schools, the compounding factors of high proportions of disadvantaged students and the high proportion of boys experiencing disengagement and represented in low-achievement bands created specific boys’ educational issues. At stake in the practice layer of the field were claims to resolve boys’ educational issues in order to achieve good and equitable
educational outcomes for all students. While debates about how this could be achieved were intense, this overarching concern was common across many divisions in the practice layer of the field, including the feminist and pro-feminist and men’s movement divisions and elite private schools and public schools. Through a focus on a specific issue such as literacy, or on positive relationships or inclusive pedagogies or school cultures, many schools did manage to use the focus on boys’ education to develop models of practice or programs that were demonstrably successful for both boys and girls and also addressed other inequities. While physiological, physical and learning preference differences between boys and girls were explored extensively, and were hotly contested as a dangerous return to essentialising of difference, many private and selective boys’ schools explored differences in ways that enabled them to nurture and expand the range of male identities, which enabled them to strategically market their schools as ‘boy friendly’. This distinction serves to highlight that, propositions are made and used to enhance both cultural and strategic positions in each layer of the field. The various explorations of differences and strategies to overcome disadvantage often did expose gendered and within-gender patterns and tendencies in interests, behaviours and experiences that could be and were addressed by building on these interests to ‘expand the repertoires of practice’ of any group. Yet the short time frames, lack of consistent evaluation of school-based initiatives and lack of a final report on the S4B program has meant that the lessons of these initiatives have not been well documented.

The outcomes of these strategic struggles in the field are that many experienced and newer feminist and pro-feminist players in the academic layer vacated the field, shifting towards a focus on policy sociology, using their critiques of this era of boys’ education as cultural capital in this shift. Others shifted sideways towards broader men’s movement concerns about fatherhood and service delivery practices for men and boys, building upon their advocacy for boys’ education as cultural capital in the proximal fields of health and family studies in practice-based research. Some feminist and pro-feminist and men’s movement academics remain in the academic field focusing on teaching or research. While some teachers and schools have been able to retain some gender focus in practice, professional development in this area has declined significantly. Gender is currently not a major policy concern in equity policies in Australia. It seems that the practice layer of the field, subject to constraints from
the political, policy and academic layers has been unable to sustain a consistent focus on either boys’ or girls’ education, yet gender considerations are always relevant to their core concerns for learning and teaching and many gendered educational issues remain. The contestations that preceded these moves away from the field have left a wake of critique of this era by established and newer players which in some ways continue the unproductive adversarial nature of the field at the time. An invigorated field would need to move beyond this.

**Discourses and texts**

If the field structures of incumbent and challenger were significant in shaping the actions and dispositions of the players, they were also important in shaping the cultural struggles about the knowledge produced and in what was recognised and misrecognised in texts and discourses in this period. Bourdieusian analysis suggests that it is the structures operating in the field that largely determine what is thinkable and unthinkable or expressible or inexpressible (Grenfell & James, 2004).

In answering my research question about discourses by my Critical Language Analysis of texts produced by epistemic players in each layer of the field, I examined the ways texts contribute to field contestations, change or stability. I examined how players used texts within the field structures and struggles to do propositional, ideological or cultural and strategic work (Albright, 2008; Fairclough, 2003; Wallace, 1992). Texts operated in relation to the capitals that were at stake for different players in the field. Discourses and texts were the strategic and cultural or ideological tools open to players to be used in the accumulation of valued capital within the logic and structures of this intellectual field.

In many ways the textual strategies utilised by authors were in response to the then unthinkable question – “What about the boys?” which was raised in the public arena in the 1990s. A focus on boys was definitely achieved during this period when this seemingly very ordinary question disrupted the hidden field structures and logic of gender in education. This question was unthinkable only within rather narrow compensatory equity discourses that positioned girls’ education strategies in relation to previous and current exclusions from educational opportunities for all girls. These policy notions of equity both drew on
and privileged certain discourses and rhetorical devices within a strong social movement.

From the 1970s, advocates for girls’ education used the universal categories of girls and boys to highlight both structural inequalities between girls and boys and men and women and to successfully advocate for gender equity policies for all girls and women. The use of these universal categories was successful, despite much available evidence of differences between groups of girls and indeed between boys and girls in terms of educational achievement and outcomes as early as the late 1970s. The movement for girls’ education was able to flourish despite and perhaps because of its ability to draw on differences and divisions in the women’s movement between radical feminist accounts emphasising differences between men and women, socialist feminist accounts emphasising class divisions among men and women and specific groups’ emphasis on sexuality or ethnicity. Yet compensatory policies did not initially include all of these perspectives. As the field of girls’ education became established, incremental changes were able to develop, built on a common purpose of the field united by the strategic use of the universal category of girls. In incremental changes over this 40 year period, poststructuralist explanations of girls and equity that emphasise individual agency and the dangers of universalism and essentialism have developed and are now more dominant within equity discourses (Kenway, 2013; Parkes et al., 2010).

Yet, the enduring binary of male/female, boys/girls, men/women is such a powerful distinction that men’s movement advocates were also able to use the universal categories of boys and girls in the decade from 1996 to 2006 in much the same strategic ways as the women’s movement had earlier, tapping into public sentiments and anxieties about boys and men in this different historical and contextual set of economic and social relations in Australia and other westernised nations, to draw attention to a different set of issues for boys. These issues arose partly in response to the changes for girls and women in society (Yates, 1997). While not so strong or coherent, boys’ education was also sustained by a social movement calling for changes in the lives of men and attention to the health, well-being, social relations, education and employment of boys and men. In the adversarial field context, any calls for attention to boys’ issues which were not explicitly pro-feminist have been labelled recuperative (Mills et al., 2007). Advocacy for attention to boys’ issues has been characterised...
by players in dominant positions as ‘competing victim’ syndrome (Collins et al., 2000b; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012) and unthinking essentialism (Ailwood, 2003) in ways that have undermined the field, ignored the differences in men’s movement positions, dismissed some legitimate boys’ educational and social issues and contributed to the de-census characterising the field of boys’ education.

I emphasise this, not to discredit feminist and critical analysis, much of which is well supported by evidence and is an important ongoing discourse in keeping equity on the education policy agenda. These critiques necessarily highlighted the ways some men’s movement discourses about boys pitted boys’ interests against girls’, suggested the issues were because of gains made by girls and ignored negative impacts on girls, particularly in relation to gendered violence and intimidation.

Nor do I say this in support of unsustainable essentialist discourses about boys, who clearly are not all in the same circumstances or facing exactly the same learning and social issues, just as girls are not. My analysis has highlighted that the field structures and linguistic logic of dichotomies are powerful structures that shape who we are, what we do and what we say. Categories of difference and distinction including dichotomies help us make sense of the world. Critical post-structuralist theories following Foucault alert us to the ways all categories can be dangerous (Gore, 1993). Bourdieusian theories alert us to the ways dichotomies create imbalances (Bourdieu, 2001). Reflexive and reflective research would allow us to examine the discursive ways we have all used binary categories to support certain propositions about equity or social justice. Bourdieu warns that advocacy is not a substitute for empirical science (Swartz, 1997), so advocates for gender equity must always be open to different categories and explanations and to reflect on strategic and even unethical ways we might use categories to obfuscate and argue for positions that cannot be sustained or need revisiting in new circumstances.

Slade (2002) has argued that the universal categories of boys and girls are both dangerous and not dangerous at the same time. He argued that the calls for further divisions and fragmentation of these categories of students at the time helped to obfuscate the similarities between young people, including boys and girls. A consequence of a failure to listen to young people’s relatively united critique of schools as boring and disempowering was that responsibility for
difficulties in school engagement, achievement and retention was largely attributed to boys' behaviour. He also suggested the logical inconsistencies, paradoxes and inabilities of the pedagogy, curriculum and school structures to prepare students for the future they will experience were not adequately addressed in this period. Another related difference not adequately explored was that between the lives and expectations of the future of young people and those of the increasingly aging teaching workforce that may have had a range of different visions of the future to those of their students (Slade, 2002).

This era has been characterised as a backlash against girls’ education and the focus on boys’ education as an attempt to return to an older recuperative masculinity and unequal gender relations (Mills et al., 2007) and there is some justification for this in some of the explanations of difference at the time (Nagel, 2005; West, 1999) and in the ways the state intervened to dramatically shift the focus away from girls’ education. It is clear that a focus on girls was not well-sustained during this turn towards boys.

Yet it also seems unlikely that ongoing incremental changes in girls’ education would have resulted in the dramatic turn towards the interconnection between identities, motivation and learning and the differentiated experiences of boys and girls across all social groups without the movement that called for a focus on boys. Boys’ education advocates were indeed a dedicated, diverse, collaborative and strategic movement encompassing a variety of cultural or ideological stances on boys’ identities, relationships, learning and school systems. They were challengers in the field structures that shaped what was possible in the field at the time. They used textual devices in ways open to challengers and in similar ways to feminist players in their struggles against mainstream and men’s movement cultural and strategic positioning.

In the small and dominated field of Australian boys’ education, all players, politicians, policy makers, academics and practitioners used various rhetorical strategies to influence the field towards their own theoretical and philosophical positions and stances towards this question. Discourses about accountability, about difference, about equity and about the nature of teaching and learning were drawn on in multiple ways by the players in this period of cultural contestation. These discourses and the textual strategies of field (in the linguistic sense), tenor and mode (Fairclough, 2003; Wallace, 1992) were also engaged to
shore up or improve cultural capitals and positions in the field, as I have described above.

I concluded from my forensic discourse analysis of each layer of the field that the field showed a tendency to an inconsistency in the use of categories of difference leading to discursive blind spots. It also showed a tendency to ‘see’ some differences as deficits and to ‘see’ and present propositions from within established theories or positions and ignore other possibilities. A lack of reflexivity and a lack of engagement with the views of the subjects/objects of analysis, boys, groups of boys, young people also characterised some sections of the field.

Unlike the incremental building on concepts in reference to each other that characterised previous gender discourses in the stable field of girls’ education, the cultural struggles between feminist, pro-feminist and men’s movement players in this period were largely conducted through textual silences and gaps, overstating or understating of cases and through deliberate or unknowing misuse, confusion and conflation of categories of difference. In the within field struggles, authors used textual strategies such as only or mainly citing those in the same cultural tradition as themselves in arguing a case and making generalisations about another position or tradition yet only citing one or two authors to support the proposition they were claiming. In the struggles between social science, journalism and politics, academics often quoted one or two newspaper headlines rather than articles when making a claim about journalism, ignoring the logic of journalism which means that it is mainly the editors who decide on headlines, rather than the journalists who write the articles.

My analysis of the variety of positions and dispositions of players in the various layers of the field emphasised how ideas and discourses are both historical and also get transferred through time, continue and overlap with new ideas through texts. As all divisions have meaning, my field and discourse analysis has traced the important meanings embodied in the texts produced in each layer. I examined what meanings have been lost, confused, distorted and changed in each layer through the various incursions and disruptions that I have described as events in the social field of boys’ education in this decade.

During this period, characterised by de-census and rapid change, driven by public discourse and social action, state intervention, and responses to newer entries into the field, the field both fractured and broadened (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). Debates about boys’ education were not narrow, as has sometimes been
suggested in the literature (Blackmore & Thorpe, 2003). A wide range of intersecting issues was discussed in every layer of the field. The themes I identified in the public submissions to the Inquiry into the education of boys and in the practice journals were: identities; relationships; learning and systems. These were very similar to the range of issues addressed in girls’ education strategies, illustrating some common concerns for both boys and girls within gender and education discourses over time. In the academic layer of the field, these broad themes were also evident in reports about gendered experiences of schooling, about literacy, pedagogy and learning outcomes and about motivation and engagement. The incremental and sometimes dramatic shifts in emphasis in this literature were generally away from universal notions of gender towards the well-established disparities or gaps between outcomes for indigenous and low socio-economic students and others. There were also shifts towards an intersection of individual and social aspects of student identities, in socio-psychological models of student motivation and engagement in learning, in these groups.

Accountability was an overarching discourse in this era. It was used in the federal government’s moves to ensure state jurisdictions reported on literacy, numeracy and retention outcomes and in debates about the interpretations of data on educational, social and economic outcomes. Discourses of accountability and responsibility were often confused and intertwined in competing explanations of boys’ behaviour and the role of the teacher. These confusions were often exacerbated in some equity discourses where accountability and responsibility easily slid into either blame or deficit accounts of many categories: all boys and their masculinities; particular social, cultural or socio-economic groups of boys (for example dominant, sporty, white or indigenous, gay or straight); teachers (either male or female, older or younger); or parents (fathers or mothers, absent or present). These deficit accounts were to a certain extent countered by ‘strengths-based practice’ discourses describing teacher, student and sometimes community collaborations, yet often these accounts lacked a critical analysis (Hartman, 2008a). Social justice accounts of education sometimes over-stated the emancipatory possibilities for teachers and understated possibilities for student actions or collaborations between teachers, parents and students (Gore, 1992). In fact the agency of students is surprisingly missing in many accounts of boys’ education in this era (Nichols & Cormack, 2009; Slade, 2002).
My analysis showed the ways players utilised these multiple and changing categorisations, divisions and distinctions of difference in discourses about boys. The most significant pattern to emerge through this textual analysis was, in fact, authors’ approaches to difference. Deliberately or unknowingly blurred conceptualisations were used strategically by many players in this adversarial moment in a field that both confused and confounded and further hardened some distinctions between feminist and pro-feminist and men’s movement players in the field. The tensions between notions of equity as nurturing for all students or as compensation for past injustices became problematic in a focus on boys. Propositions or truth claims about boys in general or specific groups of boys were made that could not always be substantiated and were not always logical. Discursive blind spots were evident in many of the propositions within the texts in all layers and from all positions.

Positions on the enduring binaries of sex and gender; male and female, boys and girls were at the heart of these distinctions. Binaries create meaning in the world. They are linguistic signposts that help us make sense of the world and as such we cannot do without them (Swartz, 1997). Yet all categories can be dangerous. Bourdieu (1990) warns that binaries are constructed as oppositions of other and of power. Slade and Trent (2000a), drawing on philosophical rather than sociological traditions suggest two important logical inconsistencies that have plagued propositions made about boys’ education, which were supported by the data in my study. The first is an inconsistency in the use of categories of difference or distinction and the second is the tendency towards fragmentation rather than interconnectedness. They suggest that the dominant cultural logic of fragmentation rather than interconnectedness encourages dichotomies such as those that separate masculine from feminine, emotion from reason, strength from sensitivity, competitiveness from cooperation, self from other, and success from failure. The problem articulated by Slade (2002, p. 78) is the persistence of ways of thinking about difference in terms of sameness and norms rather than sameness and norms in terms of difference. Describing the field of education, he says ‘particular differences are declared acceptable or preferable, thereby excluding others and displaying inflexibility, a lack of understanding about what it means to think in terms of difference, and a seeming lack of awareness that this amounts to self-referential inconsistency’ (Slade, 2002, p. 78).
These inconsistencies can be seen in the ways players constructed propositions about gender identities, gender relations and equity in boys’ education. For example, despite a strong critique of universalism in post-structuralist theories of education (Parkes et al., 2010) there was a tendency among feminist and pro-feminist players to use universal descriptions of boys, denoted by the plural ‘boys’, able to be read as ‘all boys’, when describing problems they suggested were created by boys’ behaviour or disengagement. In contrast, men’s movement players were more likely to use universal categories when describing problems they suggested were experienced by boys, particularly those with enormous emotional impact, such as suicide rates. However, both universal and specific depictions of boys were used by all players in the field, no matter what tradition they came from or position they took, in order to support the propositions about boys that they were making as well as to strategically to enhance their positions with readers and the field. For example discourses about ‘which boys, which girls’ and ‘competing victims’ were used strategically to shut down and marginalise some researchers and positions on boys as well as in genuine attempts to raise attention to important and well-established differences in the experiences and outcomes of students from different groups of boys and girls.

Universal and differentiated categories of boys and girls, males and females were significant in discussions about students, peer groups, learning styles, teachers, parents and role models. Categories distinguishing urban and rural, low and high SES, indigenous students from the ‘mainstream’, some ethnic groups from the ‘mainstream’ were called upon. Accusations of essentialism were raised when the distinction between sex and gender, that was made in terms of brain differences and learning in this era, evoked earlier oppressive constructs of sex differences (Nagel, 2006).

Yet, many players worked with interconnections between these universal and specific categories in productive ways. While many schools were drawn to arguments of universal differences between boys and girls, schools often then focused on specific groups of students. Explorations of universal learning styles sometimes resulted in a much more nuanced understanding of individual differences. Grants for boys’ education in the BELS and S4B programs were deliberately distributed to ensure schools catering to rural, indigenous linguistically diverse and low-socioeconomic groups were included in funding.
These categories of difference were intertwined with discourses about gender relations and with a larger discussion of equity. They were also used in practice discourses of teaching and learning where another important set of distinctions were made between affective and cognitive domains of learning, linking into debates about the gender of the teacher and the importance of male role models and fathers. The tension between moves towards fragmentation or connectedness can also be seen in other apparent dichotomies: between universal teaching models and small-scale local experimentation or between universal pedagogical models and practitioner strategies to focus on individual differences and strengths (Gore, 1993; Parkes et al., 2010); research and practice solutions (Smyth & Hattam, 2001); the affective and cognitive domains in education (Clay, 2008); or between sociological and psychological explanations of boys’ educational issues (Martin & Marsh, 2005; Sawyer, 2004).

An examination of the ways authors used categories of division and distinction has helped both an understanding of the ways field structures operate to shape discourses and actions and the ways textual features were used in multiple cultural and strategic ways in relation to valuable capital at stake in the field (Albright, 2008; Wallace, 1992). My analysis of the continuing tensions between fragmentation and interconnection that characterised the field and that cannot be easily overcome would be a useful investigation for an examination of any field. They enable conclusions about the state of the field as a whole and point to possible productive future directions for a field. A clear and reflexive understanding of the ways texts are used strategically may offer a way out of discursive blind spots and unnecessarily adversarial field struggles towards a more collaborative and open approach to differences in positions in the field.

While these findings of this forensic examination of the layers of the field and the homologies between fields point to a fragmented field in a state of flux without a clear purpose, I suggest that there were many connections and intersections made during this period of a focus on boys’ education that could be built upon to reignite the field of equity in education. In the final chapter, I look towards the future by examining positive and productive outcomes of this intense period.
Chapter 11
Looking forward: towards an equity force field

In this field and discourse analysis I’ve suggested that, despite some gains, the intellectual field has now shrunk and lost some impetus. After 2007, gender as an equity issue for both boys and girls has lost policy currency and funding. After these ten years of debate, the field of power seems content to let gender in education policies remain in a rather moribund position, with gender in education issues of concern to all in the field currently underfunded and under-resourced and the inadequate 1996 policy document still current. My analysis points to a loss of coherent purpose during this adversarial time where the focus was on boys’ education. The interventions of the state and the field structures of incumbent and challenger positions intersected with the cultural struggles between feminist and men’s movement players in ways that led to de-census in the field. Many feminist players saw the continuation or demise of girls’ education as what was at stake during this period, so the cultural struggles were fierce. Yet for many practitioners, including some feminist and some from the men’s movement, attention to the diverse needs of boys was clearly necessary as well as complementary to, rather than always in opposition to, the needs of girls. This period of focus on boys has been described as an endgame for girls’ education and clearly girls’ education initiatives were not emphasised during the turn towards boys and there is much unfinished business in relation to girls and equity in Australia and globally. The field of boys’ education is not fixed or stable either.
In many ways its autonomy is untenable, nestled in layers of gender and equity in education, where both difference and interconnection will always be important. This is not to say that the categories of boys and girls will not remain both useful and problematic. Attention to the specific and multiple experiences, concerns and inequities for girls and boys in schools is definitely unfinished business in equity and education politics, policy, academic work and teaching practice.

If the field is now diminished the question of what would ignite it remains. The embers of re-ignition lie in the changes, successes and challenges of this period of focus on boys and the previous period of a focus on girls. If the field of boys’ education is thin and almost burnt out, then the embers still glowing that could reignite equity discourses that could include a more nuanced discussion of boys’ education must surely come from the strategic and collaborative actions of those players in all layers of the field who have a feel for the game and a passion for transformative education that nurtures all students and overcomes injustices.

There were promising moves during this period towards a better understanding of difference and interconnections. By the end of this period, boys’ education had shifted significantly, from advocacy for attention to boys’ education to a much more nuanced understanding of the enormous diversity of boys’ experiences of schooling and the intersections of multiple identities, relationships and learning in different systems. During this period, there were some promising developments in theory and practice in the field, towards an examination of the inter-connections between equity, identities and pedagogy, as boys’ education intersected with middle-school reforms happening simultaneously with the focus on boys’ education (Smyth & Hattam, 2002; Smyth et al., 2000) and with individual, school and community cooperation to support motivation and engagement in school in low income and indigenous communities (Munns et al., 2006) and with father engagement in schools (Nichols, 2009; Tranter, 2005). There were productive alliances between players who could bridge the divisions created by the notion that attention to literacy was narrowing the field of gender and education by addressing literacy concerns in ways that were interconnected with the interests and experiences of boys in particular locations and situations and with strengths-based pedagogical principles (Alloway & Gilbert, 1997a; Clay & Hartman, 2006). These alliances and models connected with practitioner concerns in ways that took some of the heat out of the differences between
feminist and other men’s movement players, in the shared concern for schooling that could create success for all.

One of the most important and promising moves during this era has been the possibility of seeing the strengths and enabling factors in the many varied gendered identities available to students and for students, teachers and parents and community members to focus on positive aspects of their own and each other’s dispositions or habitus as a teaching and learning resource that enriches us all. This attention to positive gendered identities had not been emphasised in critical theories of gender in education to this point.

Some important positive shifts towards an awareness of the interconnectedness of the affective and cognitive domains within gendered and cultural identities of students occurred during this period. As relationships were highlighted as an important factor in school success, the central importance of teachers was firmly established during this period and was agreed upon by authors across most divisions. The interconnections between teachers’ relationships with students, teachers’ own dispositions and the pedagogies and curriculum teachers use were explored to a certain extent during this period and would be a productive site for more integrated cross-disciplinary teacher, community and researcher collaborations that would link place-based innovations with broader models of pedagogy and wider concerns for equity (Fischetti, Imig, Ndoye, & Smith, 2010; Fischetti, Schlichting, & Williams, 2013; Gore, 2001; Parkes et al., 2010). During this period, there was also a sustained funded reform of middle-schools and indigenous education and some continued funding for low-SES communities. There has also been ongoing work on the importance of the teacher, pedagogy and curriculum. The inter-sections between these efforts which also have much unfinished business and that of gender, relating to boys and girls offers much possibility for a reinvigorated field of equity in education.

These shifts towards inter-connectedness point towards conceptualisations of equity which connect specific programs based on compensation to a focus on education as enabling transformation for all students (The New London Group, 2000). These connections could be built upon in an invigorated field. The parallelist position of a defined and limited set of differences significant to equity no longer seems to adequately explain the complexities faced by young people in an increasingly globalised, interconnected and complex world. Attention to positive qualities as well as negative disparities and consequences for
educational outcomes could enable the inter-connectedness of identities, relationships and learning and teaching to be made for all students. Equity policies and strategies that can focus on a positive, enabling school culture and climate for all students as well as specific groups could support interconnected models of practice (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). While some innovations have been enduring, the complex intersections between positive and negative factors that contribute to successful girls’ and boys’ educational and social outcomes remain important and only partially resolved issues for most schools and communities.

Moves towards an equity and difference force field?

Central to my thesis is the conclusion that while field structures seemed to work against certain types of collaboration and inter-connections, particularly across different theoretical or cultural positions, there were still some promising moves in this direction at the time that may be built upon vertically in a reinvigorated and inclusive field investigating equity and difference in education. This force field could include practitioners, academics, policy makers and students, parents and communities who are so often missing in these endeavours. Attempts to move the attention of the field away from boys, upwards through the layers towards gender equity, embodied in the question ‘which girls, which boys?’ (Kenway, 1997a) were only partially successful in this decade, as they were read by government and men’s movement players as a strategy to sabotage boys’ education as a field. Calls for attention to a gender jigsaw rather than a dichotomy were not overtly supported by most in the men’s movement despite a large degree of support for the notion that there were many differences among boys and that boys’ education strategies should not disadvantage girls. These questions were often read as provoking either deficit or blaming accounts of boys when combined with some depictions of masculinity. Indigenous boys and low-income boys or boys who left school early seemed to be positioned by these questions as either victims, failures or to blame for their own situation, rather than their situations regarded with sympathy or empathy and their dispositions regarded as capable of the agency for changing their situations.

Yet, after the fierce struggles and lessons learnt through the era of the boy turn, and with strong positive discourses about students, teachers and communities available in many accounts of boys’ and girls’ education, indigenous
education and within lower socio-economic communities, perhaps the time and conditions are now favourable towards moves in the field to get off the seesaw and to recognise that questions of gender and other identity and equity categories are never unfinished business. Rather than a static jigsaw, a stronger metaphor for an autonomous field might be to imagine the field as a magnetic force field, where players with certain positions and dispositions are drawn in specific moments and specific circumstances to take up specific concerns about differences, diversity, identities and disadvantage.

Moving towards an understanding of an equity force field could offer a clearer picture of interconnections between the gendered experiences of students in a wider equity and social justice force field. A commitment to developing these understandings could offer some ways out of the seemingly intractable divisions and oppositional positions between feminist and men’s movement discourses. It has some potential to move the field away from fragmentation and the playing of ‘endgames’ towards a settlement build around interconnections and an approach to differences. A force field would allow for researchers and practitioners to set their own directions, to uncover and discover certain issues and concentrate on the group that their disposition led them to have most sympathy or empathy with at any one time. Yet, it would enable an empirical investigation of the evidence and circumstances, rather than a self-referentially and discursively blind approach to any group. While poverty and indigenous background have been clearly established as significant factors in educational attainment, these categories can also be dangerous if approaches to male or female students or communities in these categories are deficit-based and narrowly defined. Differing gendered experiences within these groups also need to be taken into account.

A newly imagined field of equity in education could offer a space to develop multiple perspectives, explorations and visions of differences, including gender relations and of gender identities, school experiences and success, beyond dichotomies or parallel notions of racial, sexual and class divisions (Ladwig, 1996). It would not be confining in its categories of interest – all differences might be interesting and also informative about difference more generally. Current growing interest in the experiences of trans-gendered children in schools is an example of changing concerns. In the changes that occurred in the decade from 1996 to 2006, described in this study, there are signs that an inter-connected
trans-disciplinary field addressing equity and quality in education is slowly emerging.

Overcoming current tensions in the field of boys’ education and moving towards a focus on difference and interconnection would include: how to focus on universal quality teaching models as well as strategies that directly address the educational needs of specific groups and the inter-relationships between the dispositions of teachers and students; how to give attention to academic as well as social and emotional outcomes; how to encompass understandings of biological and psychological developmental stages as well as the social and sociological dimensions of gendered identities; and how to address the gender identity and equity concerns of girls as well as boys, or the identity and equity concerns of specific socio-economic or cultural groups as well as boys and girls generally.

If all categories are dangerous, they are also useful to us all. The question is how they might be useful, what needs emphasising when and how and what interests are served in emphasising any category or any difference at any time. If we are to move beyond some unhelpful adversarial field structures and divisions then it is very important to closely examine our own use of difference and categories and be aware of our tendencies to discursive blind spots.

A robust, healthy field would be one where distinct research agendas, methodologies and emphases could all be pursued within a field where equity and excellence for all girls and boys was an underlying concern. Such a field would engage in robust debate directly interacting with conceptual framings from other disciplines and research traditions. The move towards mixed methods in educational research and moves towards an investigation of interactions between individual habitus and social field in sociology and the moves towards bi-ecological models and evidence-based practice in psychology and health, or randomized control trials in quality teaching are all examples of useful directions the field could pursue. Public health and psycho-social program models of universal and targeted programs could be explored in areas where gender impacts on learning outcomes and in programs to develop gender awareness for all boys and girls and for specific groups of boys and girls.

The thematic, discourse and field analyses in this research have identified the need for a broader and more nuanced evidence-base for equity work and the space for both large scale and local contextual research.
Discussions that could reinvigorate the field lie in research and practice about non-deficit, strengths-based practices and recognition of gendered identities as important positive individual and social identities that are formed within a unique set of bio-ecological circumstances. The extent to which gender is also a constraining influence, or gender distinctions are used to create power imbalances, would be a very important area of study within a reinvigorated field. Schools can be places where possibilities for positive gendered identities and transformations of individual identities are enabled and where constraining influences can be ameliorated.

Teachers are the most significant element in this picture. To develop a robust picture of this flourishing force field with the underlying purpose of equity and quality in education, strengths-based collaborations between students, practitioners, parents and community members and researchers in different disciplines to inform policy makers could be pursued. Quality teaching researchers in NSW public schools (Amosa, Ladwig, Griffiths, & Gore, 2007); Gore (2001); (Griffiths, Amosa, Ladwig, & Gore, 2007) have suggested that evidence-based models of pedagogy could overcome disparities evident in the slowly changing or continuing patterns between groups of boys and girls and between boys and girls in those groups. Yet they have also reported that the domain of Significance designed to allow for multiple and different student perspectives and interests is the area of pedagogy most difficult for teachers without specific professional development in quality teaching models. Competing demands on teachers make it difficult for teachers to live up to the multiple notions of the ideal teacher, including being able to cater for, advocate for and be able to point out and stand up against oppressive or unfair practices or structures that create unequal divisions and outcomes for students (Gore, 1992). It seems that the connections between the disposition or habitus of teachers and that of students may be one of the missing directions in developing equity and social justice agendas that interconnect concerns for all with concerns for specific groups through a focus on the whole child (Fischetti et al., 2010; Fischetti et al., 2013).

A collaborative research culture builds vertically on concepts from a broad range of theoretical, epistemological and practice traditions, rather than constantly stretching to new horizons in the quest for distinctive theoretical framings in an adversarial strategic field (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Ladwig,
While post-structuralist feminist and Bourdieusian approaches seem to be productive in both conceptualising methodologies that are inclusive of diversity, emancipatory for those currently disenfranchised and transformative for all students, a vision of equity and quality that crosses all constructed boundaries in society would need to be inclusive of differences and similarities. Some post-structuralist feminist and Bourdieusian research approaches seem to have incorporated self-reflective and reflexive researcher stances that could enable a dialogic relationship with researchers in other traditions, including men’s movement activists, researchers and practitioners. Some researchers informed by men’s movement concerns are keen to further investigate the complex intersections of gendered experiences from strengths-based ecological and critical perspectives.

Collaborative projects that would further turn these self-reflective and reflexive researcher stances on the field of education itself and the ways that field structures, operations and the behaviours of field players in incumbent and challenger positions have contributed to the demise of relative field autonomy would be useful. Post-Bourdieusian researchers investigating the boundaries of critical analysis are exploring ways researchers could analyse and reflect on their own propositions and truth claims and ways that settlements could occur in fields in a state of flux. While these explorations have been outside of the scope of this research, they could well inform future projects in field and discourse analysis (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006).

Ladwig (1996) has labelled research that investigates connections between curriculum and pedagogy and social inequities as ‘science with attitude’. In concluding this study, I am advocating for ‘science with attitude and heart’ an open and reflexive approach that could overcome some of the unproductive divisions and distinctions within the field that left the field so vulnerable to incursions by the state. I suggest that an imagination that could envisage education that would truly prepare students for the lives they will lead in the future, that is inclusive of difference, quality teaching for all and social justice for all, would need to be an imagination with attitude and heart. As well as an advocacy attitude, drawing attention to differences that lead to social distinctions that translate as inequities, it could include an empathetic and inquiring disposition, open to an exploration of all differences. In particular, it would need to include the disposition to struggle against incumbent and challenger field
structures as well as social inequities, even if those challengers are not within our traditions and pose questions about our hard-won positions. It would include a reflexivity that would enable us to move out of the self-referential logical inconsistencies of any positions we might hold. Science with attitude and heart would need to engage and inter-connect the specific concerns and capitals at stake in each layer of the field, practitioner, academic, policy and political.

**Researcher stances with attitude and heart**

In analysing the complexities of the various positions and dispositions of players in the various layers of the field, I have come to a greater appreciation of my own position and role within the field, as a female academic advocating for strengths-based practice in boys’ education, with male colleagues from the men’s movement, during this highly contested adversarial time. In conducting this field and discourse analysis I have become aware of some of my own discursive blind spots, located in these practitioner stances, such as my move away from theoretical rigour and critical positions in an attempt to develop strengths-based inter-connections between disparate aspects of boys’ experience. While the *Working with Boys, Building fine Men* conferences run by colleagues and me at the Family Action Centre were strengths-based celebrations of boys and teachers and attempted to draw together disparate views in productive dialogue, it has been suggested that there was a reduction in the number of speakers from critical traditions over time (Weaver-Hightower, 2008). Similarly the practice accounts of boys’ education initiatives in the *Boys in Schools* Bulletin did not include a large number of feminist accounts of boys’ programs, partly because these were not in abundance, as many teachers did not write from specific theoretical frameworks, and some feminist teachers did not engage in boys’ programs or submit articles to the Bulletin, in part because feminist practitioner voices were diminished during this era. A danger in positive strengths-based accounts is the dismissal of differences that lead to disadvantage of another group and the potential to essentialise the similarities in groups without noticing some important differences. While attempting to be inclusive, the patterns of themes and suggested solutions to boys’ educational issues in the Bulletin contributed to these essentialising discourses in some unproductive ways.

Undertaking this Bourdieusian and strategic field analysis has proved to be very challenging and productive to my re-engagement with theoretical rigour that
I now will apply to the area of Family Studies and to the intersections between Education and Family Studies, where I am now involved. I am in a better position now to exercise a different sociological imagination and envisage a future research agenda that is theoretically robust, cross-disciplinary, mixed-method and inclusive of many perspectives. Conducting a field and discourse analysis has enabled me to develop a better ‘feel for the game’ within all layers of the field. It seems very unfortunate that contestations in the field meant that despite such huge amounts of funding and much activity, so many opportunities for productive collaboration and conversations across disciplines and theories were lost. I will pursue potential areas of alignment and collaboration across theories and methodologies for social justice and pedagogy that includes perspectives from the men’s movement that boys and men need both support and challenging and that they can and should be instrumental in creating conditions for their own well-being which include changes towards equitable relations with others. Some feminist and critical theorists are already doing productive work in this area (Nichols, 2009; Parkes et al., 2010) and some men’s movement theorists are also conducting interesting analyses of positions on men’s health that move beyond adversarial, deficit and essentialist depictions of men and boys (King, 2005, 2004; Macdonald, 2006).

In this study I have attempted to avoid the ‘academic arsehole’ game of attempting to carve out a unique position for myself in the field by discarding theories and discrediting other players. My decisions to work with the methods of Bourdieusian field analysis proved very productive for understanding the structures and positions in the field that shaped the actions of all the players. Recognising that this method may have some limitations in analysing how change occurs, I incorporated the strategic field analysis of Fligstein and McAdam who draw upon Bourdieu as well as social movement theory to explain how changes occur incrementally and routinely within fields as well as more dramatically. These analyses together proved very useful to maintaining a focus on the actions and reactions of the players within the field as well as the moves made by the state and political players. Bourdieusian methods require that an investigation of the field not only analyses the objective positions and forces within the field but also the role of the habitus of the players in shaping what seems possible or impossible, thinkable and unthinkable.
Fligstein and McAdam (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012) emphasise the ways players collaboratively act and the human imperative to connect and cooperate. In this study, I was not able to fully explore this human element. The focus on texts in this regard has been both an advantage and a limitation. Its strengths lay in the ways I could understand how players used texts and how textual strategies operated with field structures. The argument catalogue methodology and the CDA analysis has gone some way to ensuring my selection and interpretations of text were transparent and have been explicitly used in a multi-disciplinary approach combining a linguistic and social analysis. Building on the conceptual work of Albright (2006) and Wallace (1992) has greatly assisted a multi-disciplinary, social and linguistic analysis by making explicit how texts operate in a field and the role of epistemic players in field struggles. This multi-disciplinary approach to a certain extent overcame some difficulties with Critical Language Analysis that has been criticised for an un-reflexive and selective use of texts to fit an argument. It also overcame criticisms of some applications of field analysis, as overlaying a theory of fields over any social issue without robust empirical grounding.

However, the investigation of the ways the field structures and the individual habitus of the players inter-connected in this study was limited by the range of texts able to be analysed, by the texts produced by players and by my limitations in overcoming discursive blind spots. A reliance on texts rather than interviews has not allowed for full explorations of the habitus, intentions and motivations of the various players, or for a personal cooperative engagement with the players. Yet a recently published book, Leaders in Gender and Education (Weaver-Hightower & Skelton, 2013) offered some revealing insights into the dispositions and habitus of some of the feminist and pro-feminist players in this study. These heartfelt stories of the academic lives and backgrounds of these players draw together some sense of their academic habitus and dispositions, their positions in field struggles and their standing in their traditions in the field. Their reflections underscore their sense of themselves and their dispositions as intellectuals being part of important struggles for social justice through education. Texts like this, as well as interview material would be a rich source of further analysis of the inter-sections between habitus, disposition and field in a future study.
As a female academic advocating for strengths-based practice in boys’ education, with male colleagues from the men’s movement, during this highly contested adversarial time, I was often in metaphorically uncomfortable positions. Reading some of the feminist and pro-feminist texts at the time, I felt hurt and regret at the ways men’s movement players were depicted and a sense of loss and disquiet that in this blanket analysis of a movement, I could no longer be considered part of the social movement for social justice with which, as a teacher in rural and indigenous schools, as an indigenous teacher educator and as a feminist mother of sons, I have always identified. I held out hope that these divisions could be crossed.

At other times, in the rush to advocate for a legitimate place for attention to boys’ educational and social issues, in the excitement of organising well-attended conferences and speaking to packed school halls, working with dedicated and inspiring teachers, interviewing boys eager to share their views and writing with and about other women also passionately involved in boys’ education, I have felt the same sense of collaboration, of standing with and beside people in their struggles that I have experienced with Aboriginal colleagues and friends. In late night conversations with male colleagues, after we’d pulled off a successful conference, planning the next move, developing tactics and strategies for alliances, thrashing out differences and sharing stories of our diverse gendered experiences, joys and sorrows, I have felt a similar privilege of being let into a world that is both the same and different to mine. I experienced a collegiate feeling I have experienced in other social movements, working for peace or equitable housing or the environment. I felt I understood the pull to collaborative action across differences and the need to understand difference without losing critical perspectives. Working with Bourdieu’s (1990) concept of field structures in conjunction with Fligstein and McAdam’s (2012) concepts of strategic action within social movements has helped me understand these complexities.

Developing deeper understandings and models of the ways texts work to do both propositional and strategic work for authors in field struggles has enabled me to better understand the complexities of any discourse within a field (Albright, 2008; Wallace, 1992). The analysis of texts uncovered some logical inconsistencies in the arguments and propositions put by players in texts. This led to an almost genealogical analysis of how ideas become embedded and transferred in discourses that I was not able to fully explore in this already
complex study. In future studies, genealogies of ideas informed by those working with the theories of Foucault (Hayes, 2003; Parkes et al., 2010) and the limits of analysis within a critical or any other tradition informed by post-Bourdiesians (Boltanski & Thevenot, 2006) could be further explored.

I have found this study analysing the work in this period very confronting. I felt an enormous pull to justify positions, to find and use textual examples that ‘proved my point’, to act like a challenger, advocating for and defending positions on boys’ education, rather than be the kind of strategic player in productive equity discourses that my analysis suggests the field needs. Attempting to avoid this ‘performative contradiction’ and to be reflexive about my own stances has afforded another illustration of the strength of field structures that work against reflexivity and collaboration. Struggling against field structures as well as for the relative autonomy of a field may well be the most challenging and productive aspect of any intellectual field. I am in a better position now to exercise a different research and practice imagination and envisage a future research agenda that is theoretically robust, cross-disciplinary, mixed-method and inclusive of many perspectives. Conducting this field and discourse analysis has enabled me to develop a better ‘feel for the game’ within all layers of the field.

To be convincing to those outside the field, including the politicians, the field must be capable of moving beyond adversarial dichotomies, towards both universal and targeted practice approaches and towards notions of interconnectedness in policy and theoretical depictions of educational issues. An equity force field addressing identity and equity issues in education could include multiple identities, perspectives, positions and dispositions simultaneously.

In suggesting that an invigorated field of equity in education is possible through science with attitude and heart, I argue that such an imagination would need to be not only sociological. It would be trans-disciplinary. Science with attitude and heart would encourage an inclusive field, a field thick with collaborative discussions of meaning and difference from many different positions. It would encourage dispositions of collaboration and clarity and openness to differences that may not seem significant in a specific tradition but take on significance in others. Its purpose could be redefining and reinvigorating concepts of equity including gender equity in education, building generative bridges across gender, culture, income and geographic location. There will
always be a need to include multiple perspectives in a field. A strong and robust field must be able to incorporate difference and to see difference as a given.

Genuine equity and quality for all in education is at stake in this field. Without defining the boundaries of the field, I suggest a wide range of research and practice could be included. The experience of students, teachers, parents, communities and systems would be legitimate areas for research and practice. Investigations of strong connections between the affective and the cognitive domains in individual dispositions and groups of students and between teachers, pedagogy, curriculum and school structures would be fruitful areas of equity research.

A focus on any particular group at any particular moment in history or any place would or could be appropriate. Gender is an enduring binary embedded in our languages, our bodies and our dispositions, yet this does not preclude a wide variety of identities and experiences of gender. The significance of gender, and any other distinction, is always in relation to specific contexts in a moment in time. Generational differences, cultural differences, geographical, socio-economic, sexuality and gender differences and differences in researcher dispositions and positions have all been identified in the course of this research. Collaborative approaches to equity could move the field forward towards recognition of these complexities and out of seesaws and parallel divisions.

The embers of robust hope for education as a transformative experience and a vehicle for quality and equity are still glowing despite the setbacks during this adversarial period. Cultural capital in understanding difference, in moving away from deficit accounts of difference, in listening to and including voices of all students, teachers and mothers and fathers in deep, strengths-based, critical and reflexive explorations of school experiences, pedagogies and curriculum in local community contexts has been amassed. Multi-method and trans-disciplinary research projects linking these experiences with wider systems level equity goals can now be envisaged. A renewed focus on difference and similarity, and on how strengths could be utilised for transformation could galvanise an invigorated field.

Science with attitude and heart would move beyond our differences: well beyond characterisations of boys as bad, sad or mad and girls as victims of boys’ behaviour; beyond characterisations of any group as either victims or failures; towards notions of positive gender identities which are important to all individuals and can take many forms. The development of a visionary, rather than
presumptive model of equitable gender relations could be an aim of equity policy. Equity models and policies could be clear about their purpose of developing engaging education for all and be inclusive rather than specific to account for positive manifestations of difference and diversity as well as negative aspects of exclusion or disadvantage.

Universal pedagogical models can be helpful for all students if they take account of difference and allow for curriculum to be significant and relevant for students taking different perspectives and in different positions. It is hard for practitioners to see themselves as agents of structural change except through transforming individual lives in ways that create equity and possibility. That’s where robust hope lives in the classroom. In policy and practice discourses and research there could be a stronger emphasis on strength-based transformational practices in specific contexts. As well as identifying the strengths that any individual student or teacher has at their disposal these practices could also fully interrogate individual responsibility for oppressive actions and inactions as well as the opportunities for group actions to change oppressive circumstances within the structural context.

Such an approach to difference could unite people in robust hope and generative discussions around explicit positions, reflexive practice and deep and ethical considerations of their own practice. It could support moves towards an ethical culture for the field as a whole as well as simultaneously inculcating personal ethical practices in players that would address tendencies to ‘speak’ only to those we already agree with and to only be open to certain categories of difference and not others.

In arguing for a science with attitude and heart, I am not suggesting that these imaginations and dispositions are easily achieved. Having advocated for attention to boys’ education, and in now suggesting a more inter-connected approach to difference, equity and quality is required, I am mindful that all differences between and among boys and girls require close attention. I am mindful that it is easy to fall into deficit discourses when mounting a case for any particular difference and to fall into essentialism when describing the strengths of any group. I am also mindful that teachers are often caught between deficit and strengths discourses and between the competing demands to produce high quality pedagogy for all and attention to the specific equity concerns of different groups or individual students.
There is indeed much unfinished business in the field of gender in education and equity in education. My hope is that this field and discourse analysis of a particular field at a particular time and place has shed light on the struggles that practitioners, academics and policy makers must conduct together in creating equity in education and in overcoming hidden field structures that lead us away from a collaborative and open approach to difference that will help us move beyond our differences.
References


References


References


References


References


References


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Appendix 1


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Rowe, K. J., & Rowe, K. S. (2002). What matters most: Evidence-based findings of key factors affecting the educational experiences and outcomes for girls and boys throughout their primary and secondary schooling. Melbourne: ACER


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References

*the Education of Boys*. Canberra: Department of Education and Workplace Relations.


Appendix 1

Submissions to Inquiry into the Education of Boys
Argument Catalogue Categories and Analysis

Numerical Analysis

Table 1: Author type by Number (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author type</th>
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<td>Representative bodies</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>321</strong></td>
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</table>

Author Category Code Book

(1) Public: included people or groups who were not directly involved in delivering educational services or in the education industry, so could be considered as interested yet outside of the field. The sub categories were: individuals, parents, parent bodies, special interest groups or lobby groups, e.g. Institute of Men's Studies, non-government service organisations, e.g. Scouts Australia.

(2) Practitioner: included people or groups directly involved in delivering educational services. The sub categories were: individual teachers; groups of teachers; individual schools; groups or clusters of schools; professional associations and representative bodies such as teacher unions.

(3) Policy maker: included people or groups directly involved in decision making about the delivery of educational services. The sub categories were: federal and state government departments of education; and submissions from system level bodies such as Council for Government Schools, Catholic Education
Office or Association of Independent Schools. It also included a submission from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

(4) Academic: included people or groups directly involved in research or research based professional development about the delivery of educational services. The sub categories were: university researchers, schools or faculties; and research-informed commentators such as consultants, writers in the field, professional development consultants and program developers.

**Submission Logic Code Book**

After careful reading of a number of submissions, patterns in the internal logic of submissions were identified by the researcher. A coding system was devised that took account of the internal logic of each paper, no matter what the length. In this way, the length and type of submission became less important for further analysis than the internal logic and content. This approach enabled the main concerns and strategies offered to be compared across author categories.

The submission logic coding categories are:

- **Concern 0 (C0)** – presented a personal view without addressing issues or providing ideas for strategies to address issues.
- **Concern 1 (C1)** – raised specific issues relating to the education of boys and offered ideas for strategies to address issues.
- **Concern 2 (C2)** – raised specific issues relating to the education of boys and offered ideas for strategies to address issues.
- **Concern 2 with Informed Judgement (C 2XJ)** - raised specific issues relating to the education of boys, offered ideas for strategies to address issues and gave an analysis of evidence for strategies.

**Submission Logic Descriptions**

**C0** Submissions that fell into the C0 category presented a personal view without addressing issues. An example of this category was a two paragraph submission from a separated father who expressed anger that he was denied access to his children. Submissions in this category were excluded from the content analysis as they largely reflected a personal story or grievance without specifically addressing the issues of the Inquiry and therefore could not be compared for content analysis with the other categories.

**C1** Submissions that fell into the C1 category raised specific concerns or issues relating to the education of boys, yet did not offer any suggestions or strategies to address the issues raised. An example of this category was a one
page submission from a concerned citizen who knew of seven young men from economically and culturally advantaged backgrounds who were not fully engaged in or able to take advantage of their education, raising the concern that boys’ education was not exclusively an issue related to socio-economic disadvantage (Legg, L, 2000, Submission 29). Submissions in this category were also excluded from the comparative content analysis as although they specifically addressed the issues of the inquiry, they did not offer any suggestions for strategies to address the issues and therefore could not be compared for complete content analysis with the other categories. They were however included in the numerical frequency analysis of issues raised.

C2 While many members of the public did not claim to be experts in the field, the submissions in this category were a considered response to the issues, often based on personal experience of school or school systems for their children. They outlined their concern, raised specific issues relating to this concern and were able to offer possible strategies to address their concerns that logically flowed from and were connected to the issues they raised. Submissions in this category offered a useful comparison to submissions in the other categories and were therefore included in the qualitative comparative content analysis. An example of this category was a submission from a mother whose concern was that her two sons were experiencing difficulty in literacy and suggested that it was very important that appropriate programs were put in place early so that all boys could take full advantage of educational opportunities (VanLangenberg, C, 2000, Submission 17).

C2XJ Submissions in this category raised specific issues relating to the education of boys, offered ideas for strategies to address issues and gave an analysis of evidence for strategies. For practitioners, many submissions in this category described strategies or activities undertaken at a specific school that they considered or had demonstrated were successful for engaging boys. For policy makers and academics, submissions in this category usually identified and analysed evidence of specific concerns and offered a theoretical framework for addressing the concerns. All submissions that were placed in the C2 or C2XJ categories were then further analysed using a comparative, qualitative analysis.

**Submission Logic Analysis**

**Table 2: Author and submission logic categories**

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<th>Author</th>
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<th>Average Length of</th>
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**Thematic Categories Codebook**

**Thematic Descriptions**

**Table 3: Thematic content categories**

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<td>Differences...</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
<td>Teacher/student</td>
<td>Government or private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>Single-sex or co-educational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Differences...</td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>People in control of system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Male learning...</td>
<td>Male role models</td>
<td>Gender in control of system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>Male interests</td>
<td>School/community</td>
<td>Systemic changes needed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Factors
Sexuality
Self-concept
Self-esteem

Thematic Analysis

Table 4: Author type by concern and critical factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combination</td>
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Table 5: Sociological Theory Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociological Theory</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. social construction of gender</td>
<td>Theory of gender as a social category which is constructed through society and institutions, sometimes actively by individuals. Analysis of gender power relations in society and between men and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.a equity theory</td>
<td>Analysis of structural inequalities in society and education, gender linked with race, class ethnicity, indigenous identity to affect educational outcomes. Some analysis of relative importance of each factor to school outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. masculinity theory</td>
<td>Sociological/psychological explanation of limiting/limited nature of male identity. ‘hegemonic’ masculinity and its detrimental effects on male identity for individuals and groups and men as a whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. masculinist</td>
<td>Specifically anti-feminist critique of gender regime/theories/activities in schools or school systems, which suggests feminists are in control and policies to favour girls have been to the detriment of boys. Some analysis of statistics as evidence that girls strategies not needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. system critique –</td>
<td>Critique of gender policy and activities in schools or school systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
argument of difference that suggests both boys and girls have differing, not necessarily competing needs which should be encompassed in different ways in policy and practice.

Table 6: Learning Theory Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1</th>
<th>Discipline specific e.g. literacy approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Gender differences in maturation, development and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3</td>
<td>Early intervention - learning difficulties, special needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L4</td>
<td>Specific pedagogical approaches/models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L5</td>
<td>Critique of specific pedagogical approaches/models</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Strength-based Practice Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SBP 1</th>
<th>Pedagogical approaches or programs that explicitly recognise and build on existing capacities of individuals, families and communities, including school communities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SBP 2</td>
<td>Consultative processes - consulting with groups concerned with recognition of ability to make decisions and change with a positive orientation to future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBP 3</td>
<td>Holistic approaches to issues with a recognition of transformation or regeneration within personal, friendly, respectful, supportive and collaborative relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Author type by Theory/assumptions by Number (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Public (N39)</th>
<th>Practitioner (N25)</th>
<th>Policy (N4)</th>
<th>Academic (N5)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Evidence based | 16 | 8 | 2 | 4 |